



**Thèse Présentée par  
Jules-Alain SANGALE  
MEGBEKA**

**UNIVERSITE DE  
YAOUNDE II**

**Mutations du système  
international et résolution du  
conflit de l'Erythree**

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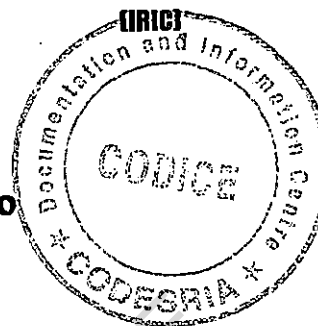
**1999-2000**

UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDE II  
THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE II

Institut des Relations  
Internationales du Cameroun  
(IRIC)



International Relations  
Institute of Cameroon



Année Académique 1999 - 2000

**MUTATIONS DU SYSTEME  
INTERNATIONAL ET RESOLUTION DU  
CONFLIT DE L'ERYTHREE**

Thèse présentée et soutenue publiquement  
en vue de l'obtention du Diplôme  
de **Doctorat 3<sup>ème</sup> Cycle en Relations Internationales**  
Option : **Diplomatie**

Par :

**Jules-Alain SANGALE MEGBEKA**

Sous la Direction de :

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Professeur de Sciences Politiques  
Institut des Relations Internationales du Cameroun (IRIC)

**Thèse honorée d'une subvention du CODESRIA**

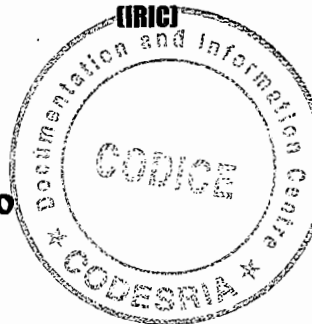
Yaoundé, Novembre 1999

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**DEDICACE**

- ❖ A ma mère, Mme SANGALE née Isabelle NGAMVIE ESSOMBA
  
- ❖ A mon père, M. Arnold SANGALE
  
- ❖ A ma feu grand-mère, Joséphine Abeng "*Mema NYAVOE*"
  
- ❖ Et à la mémoire de mon grand frère Jean-Luc Rigobert Henri AMOUGOU, décédé brutalement le 20 janvier 1992 à Belabo.

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHÈQUE

**REMERCIEMENTS**

## *Remerciements*

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Je voudrais remercier ici un certain nombre de personnes qui ont participé de façon directe ou indirecte, moralement, matériellement ou d'une autre manière tout autant importante à la réalisation de cette thèse de doctorat en Relations Internationales.

D'abord, je remercie particulièrement Mon Directeur de recherche et en même temps mon professeur d'Analyse de Politique Internationale à l'I.R.I.C., M. Dieudonné OYONO à qui je dois non seulement mon orientation dans ce champ de la recherche mais encore qui a suivi nos travaux tout au long de ces dernières années avec cette grande attention qu'un modeste disciple comme moi n'était en droit d'attendre d'un maître tant convoité et sollicité.

Mes remerciements vont également à deux éminents professeurs de l'Université de Yaoundé II à Soa, à savoir d'une part M. François MBOME, Docteur d'Etat en Science Politique qui tout au long de notre séjour à la Faculté de Droit et de Sciences Economiques de l'ancienne Université de Yaoundé nous aurons initié à l'étude de la sphère des Relations sociales nommées "*Internationales*", et de l'autre M. Luc SINDJOUN, Professeur agrégé en Science politique qui nous a inculqué l'esprit d'abnégation, de patience dans la quête de la vérité scientifique.

Qu'il me plaise aussi de rendre un hommage collectif à mes professeurs, ainsi qu'à mes camarades de la promotion 1993-1994 de l'IRIC que sont : Gervais BINDZI, Martin EBOLO, ANTEM AGBOR, Noëlle ASSOMO MEVA'A, CHINTOUE SANATOU, SALNDJOUKOU NODJITOLOUM, ABBA BAÏDJOUE, Evariste NELDE et Alain GODWE dont les enseignements, les discussions avec les premiers et les commentaires avec les

## *Remerciements*

---

seconds ont contribué incontestablement à donner un sens à nos travaux tant au niveau de la conception du sujet, qu'à son organisation et à sa finalisation.

Je tiens également à remercier toutes ces autres personnes qui ont participé de manière peut-être discrète mais tout aussi certaine à la réalisation de ce travail. Je me permettrai d'en citer quelques unes ici :

- ⇒ Mes parents M. et Mme SANGALE.
- ⇒ Mes frères et sœurs Roger SINDJA SANGALE, Serge Bertrand SANGALE, Rosalie Evelyne SANGALE épouse NANA, Emmanuel Gervais SANGALE MBARGA, Renée Marguerite SANGALE AKOUMOU, Céline Nicole SANGALE YANGA, Corine Désirée SANGALE, sans oublier Balbine PANE, Gabriel GAM-GAM, Annie Marcelle SANGALE, Justin Michel SANGALE, Jean-Pierre EMINA, Dominique SANGALE.
- ⇒ Mademoiselle Raymonde OYONO, M. et Mme. YAYI SOULE Vincent, M. ZAMBO AMOUGOU de la MAETUR à Yaoundé.
- ⇒ Mes oncles et tantes Zacharie MBATSOGO du MINEDUC, René NADIA, ESSOMBA AMBANI Rachel, Théodore ALIMA, Dominique GBAMAN et les autres à NDEMBA I par BELABO ; Bosco LOBE à NDJANGANE et toutes celles et tous ceux de la descendance de feu Jonas ENDOMO MBARGA de MVOUTESSI II par SANGMELIMA.
- ⇒ Docteur NANA ABOUBAKAR DJALLOH, Mme SINDJA Marie, M. ZO'OBO MENDOUA Joseph



## *Remerciements*

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- ⇒ Mes cousines Mme NDE née NGONE Julienne, Mme ZO'OBO née VIAKANE Blandine, Mlles ABENG Joséphine Lucie et MBALLA OTTOU Sylvie.
- ⇒ Mes cousins Joël Parick ETOGO, Francis BUENDE, Paulin ALIMA, DENG et Hervé OYIE OTTOU, METSE ESSOMBA.
- ⇒ Mes nièces et neveux Isabelle Solange NGAMVIE, Phallone SINDJA, Nina MANKATA, Thierno ABOUBAKAR DJALLOH, Franky SANGALE, Aurélien FOMBASSO, AMOUGOU SANGALE Henri, Mireille AMBANI et Christian MVOE-MBAM.
- ⇒ Mes aînés académiques Louis-Marie NKOUM-ME-NTSENY et Renner ONANA.
- ⇒ Mes amis Marie-Claire KONKOMBO, Christian Fleury NDANGA DOGOUA et Mme, Roger MEBALE, Martin et Angèle ZAMBO, Guy ZAMBO, Lucien Marc MBOUMA MBOCK, Luc Thierry DIMI, Charles AYANGMA, Charles Le Roi TJECK, NGWA ZANG, Patrick MESSI et Luc SANDA pour ne citer que ceux-là.
- ⇒ MM. MANDJAME et Louis-Marie NGOUMOU de la bibliothèque de l'I.R.I.C..
- ⇒ Enfin MM. DOPSOUMNA Daniel et NKUTNJEM Clément, pour la mise en forme définitive du présent travail.

**AVANT-PROPOS**

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHEQUE

A la veille de la chute du mur de Berlin, pendant l'été de 1989, Francis FUKUYAMA écrit dans la revue National interest un article intitulé "La fin de l'histoire."<sup>\*</sup> Dans cet article il annonçait l'idée suivante :

*"un consensus assez remarquable semblait apparaître ces dernières années concernant la démocratie libérale comme système de gouvernement puisqu'elle avait triomphé des idéologies rivales ; monarchie héréditaire, fascisme et tout récemment le communisme."*

Il suggérait en outre que : *"la démocratie libérale pourrait bien constituer le point final de l'évolution idéologique de l'humanité et la forme finale de tout gouvernement humain, donc être en tant que telle la fin de l'histoire."*

Autrement dit, avec la fin de l'affrontement idéologique, prisme à travers lequel on saisissait les conflits du temps de la guerre froide, le monde à venir devait être paisible et à la limite même ennuyeux. Une telle assertion au-delà des multiples critiques, ouvrages et autres études qu'elle a suscitées chez les divers spécialistes des sciences sociales en général et particulièrement des sciences politiques posait implicitement le problème des mécanismes de résolution des conflits reliés à la matrice centrale de la confrontation Est-Ouest. Comment ces conflits périphériques allaient-ils être résolus ? C'est à cette préoccupation d'ordre général que la présente thèse de doctorat se rattache en s'appuyant particulièrement sur le cas érythréen.

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<sup>\*</sup> Cet article fera l'objet d'un ouvrage écrit par Francis FUKUYAMA avec comme titre La fin de l'histoire et le dernier homme. Paris, Flammarion, 1992, 1<sup>ère</sup> édition. 452 p

## *Avant-propos*

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Ainsi, la présente étude se veut une contribution du reste modeste, à la réflexion sur les mécanismes de résolutions des conflits après les mutations survenues dans l'ordre mondial.

Belabo, le 6 novembre 1998

Jules-Alain SANGALE MEGBEKA

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHEQUE

**LISTE DES ABREVIATIONS**

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHEQUE

## *Liste des abréviations*

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- A.B.C.** : Afrique Biblio-Club
- A.F.P.** : Agence France Presse
- A.N.D.M.** : Amhara National Democratic Mouvement
- C.O.P.W.E.** : Comité pour Organiser le Parti des Travailleurs de l’Ethiopie
- D.E.R.G.** : Conseil Militaire Administratif Provisoire
- E.D.O.R.M.** : Ethiopian Democratic Officers Revolutionary Mouvement
- E.P.D.M.** : Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Mouvement
- E.P.R.D.F.** : Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
- E.H.** : Ethiopian Herald (Addis-Abeba)
- E.U.** : Eritrea Update (London)
- E.R.C.** : Eritrea Referendum Commission
- F.L.E. (E.L.F.)** : Front de Libération de l’Erythrée (Eritrean Liberation Front)
- F.L.E. – F.P.L.** : Front de Libération de l’Erythrée – Forces Populaires de Libération
- F.L.O. (O.L.F.)** : Front de Libération Oromo (Oromo Liberation Front)
- F.P.D.J.** : Front Populaire pour la Démocratie et la Justice
- F.P.L.E.** : Forces Populaires de Libération de l’Erythrée (avant 1977)
- F.P.L.E. (E.P.L.F.)** : Front Populaire de Libération de l’Erythrée (Eriean Peoples Liberation Front (après 1977à))
- F.P.L.T. (T.P.L.F.)** : Front Populaire de Libération du Tigré (Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front)
- G.O.E.** : Government of Eritrea
- I.G.A.D.D.** : Inter-Government Authority on Drought and Development
- I.O.N.** : Indian Ocean Newsletter (Lettre de l’Océan Indien (Paris))
- I.U.H.E.I.** : Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales
- J.M.C.** : Joint High Ministerial Committee
- M.E.I.S.O.N.** : Mouvement Socialiste Pan-Ethiopien

## *Liste des abréviations*

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<b>M.L.N.</b>	:	Mouvement de Libération Nationale
<b>O.N.U.</b>	:	Organisation des Nations Unies
<b>O.P.D.O.</b>	:	Oromo Peoples Democratic Organisation
<b>O.U.A.</b>	:	Organisation de l'Unité Africaine
<b>P.C.M.</b>	:	Petite Collection Maspero
<b>P.C.U.S.</b>	:	Parti Communiste d'Union Soviétique
<b>P.G.E.</b>	:	Provisional Government of Eritrea
<b>P.N.B.</b>	:	Produit National Brut
<b>P.U.F.</b>	:	Presses Universitaires de France
<b>R.E.S.T.</b>	:	Relief Society of Tigray
<b>R.F.E.P.A.</b>	:	Revue Française d'Etudes Politiques Africaines
<b>S.W.B.</b>	:	Summary of World Broadcast
<b>T.G.E.</b>	:	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
<b>U.N.O.V.E.R.</b>	:	United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea
<b>U.R.S.S.</b>	:	Union des Républiques Socialistes Soviétiques
<b>U.S.</b>	:	United States
<b>U.S.A.</b>	:	United States of America

**LISTE DES CARTES**

CODESRIA - B  
THEQUE



	Page
<u>Carte N°1</u> : Contexte régional .....	2
<u>Carte N°2</u> : Les provinces de l'Erythrée.....	3
<u>Carte N°3</u> : Localisation des groupes ethno linguistiques.....	38
<u>Carte N°4</u> : Projets géopolitiques et formation de la grande Ethiopie.....	151

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHEQUE

**LISTE DES TABLEAUX**

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHEQUE

Tableau N°1 : Balance commerciale des Etats de la corne de l'Afrique..... 15

Tableau N°2 : Balance des paiements des Etats de la corne de l'Afrique.....15

Tableau N° 3 : Les offensives du Front Populaire de Libération de l'Erythrée (F.P.L.E) et du Front de Libération de l'Erythrée (F.L.E). (mars 1977-janvier 1978).....88

Tableau N°4 : La présence militaire du Bloc de l'Est en Ethiopie .....105

Tableau N° 5 : Pertes éthiopiennes pendant la bataille de Massawa (février 1990).....123

Tableau N°6 : Résultat du référendum de l'Erythrée.....170

**LISTE DES DOCUMENTS ANNEXES**

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHEQUE

**1948**

***Document 1 :***

Lettre datée du 15 Septembre 1948 depuis la France, l'URSS, le Royaume Unie de G. B. et l'Irlande du Nord et les USA demandent que la résolution du problème des anciennes colonies italiennes soit ajoutée à l'agenda de l'Assemblée Générale.

**1949**

***Document 2 :***

Résolution de l'Assemblée Générale (A.G.) concernant la gestion du placement des anciennes colonies italiennes.

***Document 3 :*** (voir 2)

**1950**

***Document 4 :***

Rapport de la Commission des Nations Unies pour l'Erythrée.

***Document 5 :***

Rapport du Comité Intérimaire de l'A.G. : considération du Document 4.

***Document 6 :***

Résolution de l'A.G. concernant le rapport de la Commission des Nations Unies pour l'Erythrée et le rapport du Comité Intérimaire de l'A.G.

**1957**

***Document 7 :***

Bulletin de progrès du Commissaire des Nations Unies en Erythrée durant l'année 1951

**1952**

***Document 8 :***

Résolution de l'A.G. des dispositions financières et économiques se rapportant à l'Erythrée.

***Document 9 :***

Rapport final du Commissaire des Nations Unies en Erythrée.

**Document 10 :**

Rapport du Gouvernement du Royaume Uni concernant l'administration de l'Erythrée pour la période de Décembre 1950 à Septembre 1952.

**Document 11 :**

Résolution de l'A.G. concernant le rapport du Commissaire des Nations Unies en Erythrée.

**1990**

**Document 12 :**

Appel urgent à la 46<sup>e</sup> session de la Commission des Droits de l'Homme soumis par plusieurs O.N.G.

**1991**

**Document 13 :**

Lettre datée du 13 Décembre 1991 du Président du Gouvernement de Transition de l'Ethiopie adressée au Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies concernant les résultats de la Conférence de Paix et Démocratie tenue en Ethiopie en Juillet 1991.

**1992**

**Document 14 :**

Lettre datée le 15 Janvier 1992 du S.G. des Nations Unies au Président du Gouvernement de Transition de l'Ethiopie concernant l'implication (l'engagement) des Nations Unies dans le processus de référendum en Erythrée.

**Document 15 :**

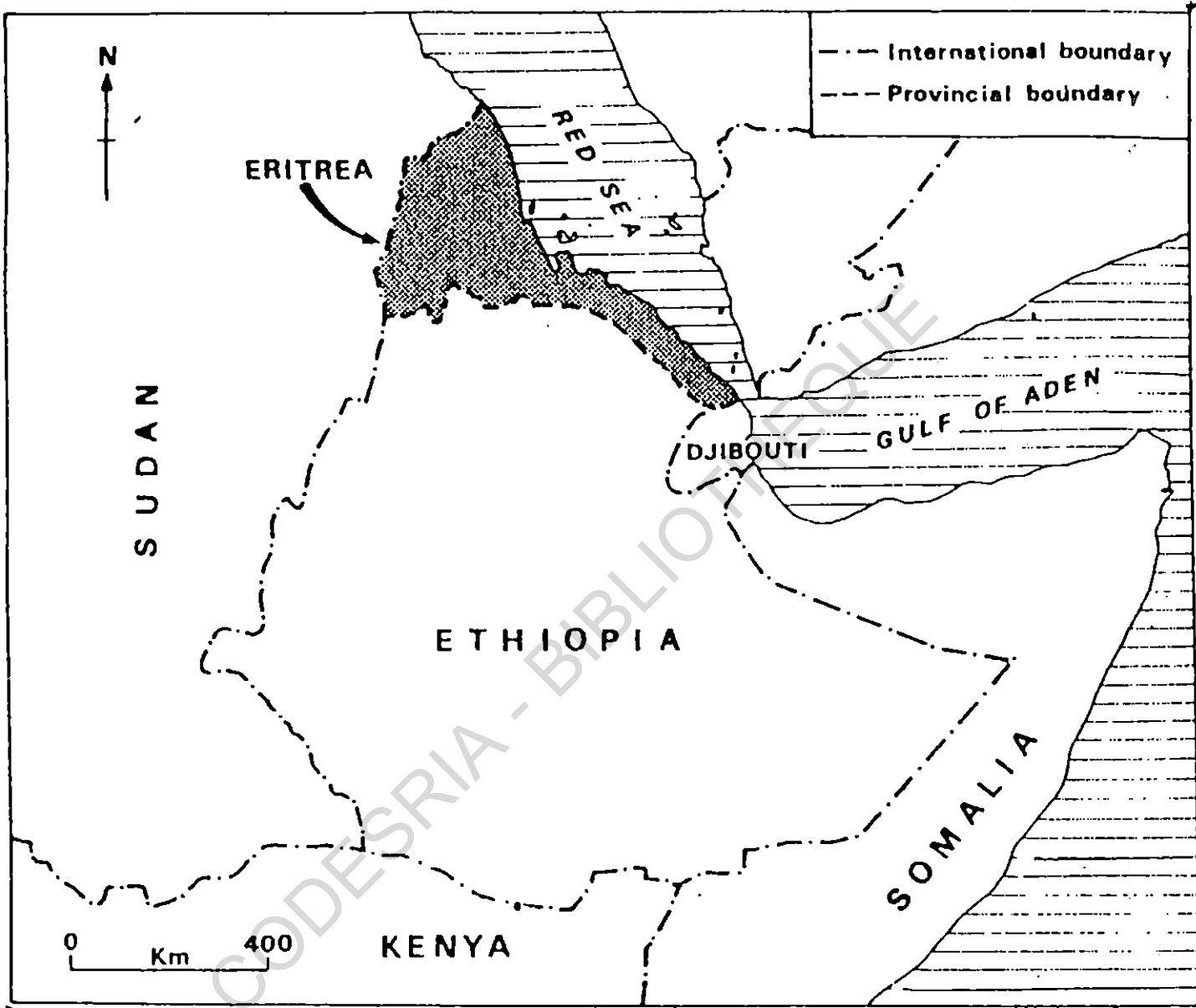
Lettre datée du 19 Février 1992 du S.G. des Nations Unies au Président du Gouvernement de Transition de l'Ethiopie concernant l'implication (l'engagement) des Nations Unies dans le processus de référendum en Erythrée.

**Document 16 :**

Proclamation de la Nationalité Erythréenne (de l'Erythrée) issue le 6 Avril 1992 à Asmara.

**INTRODUCTION**

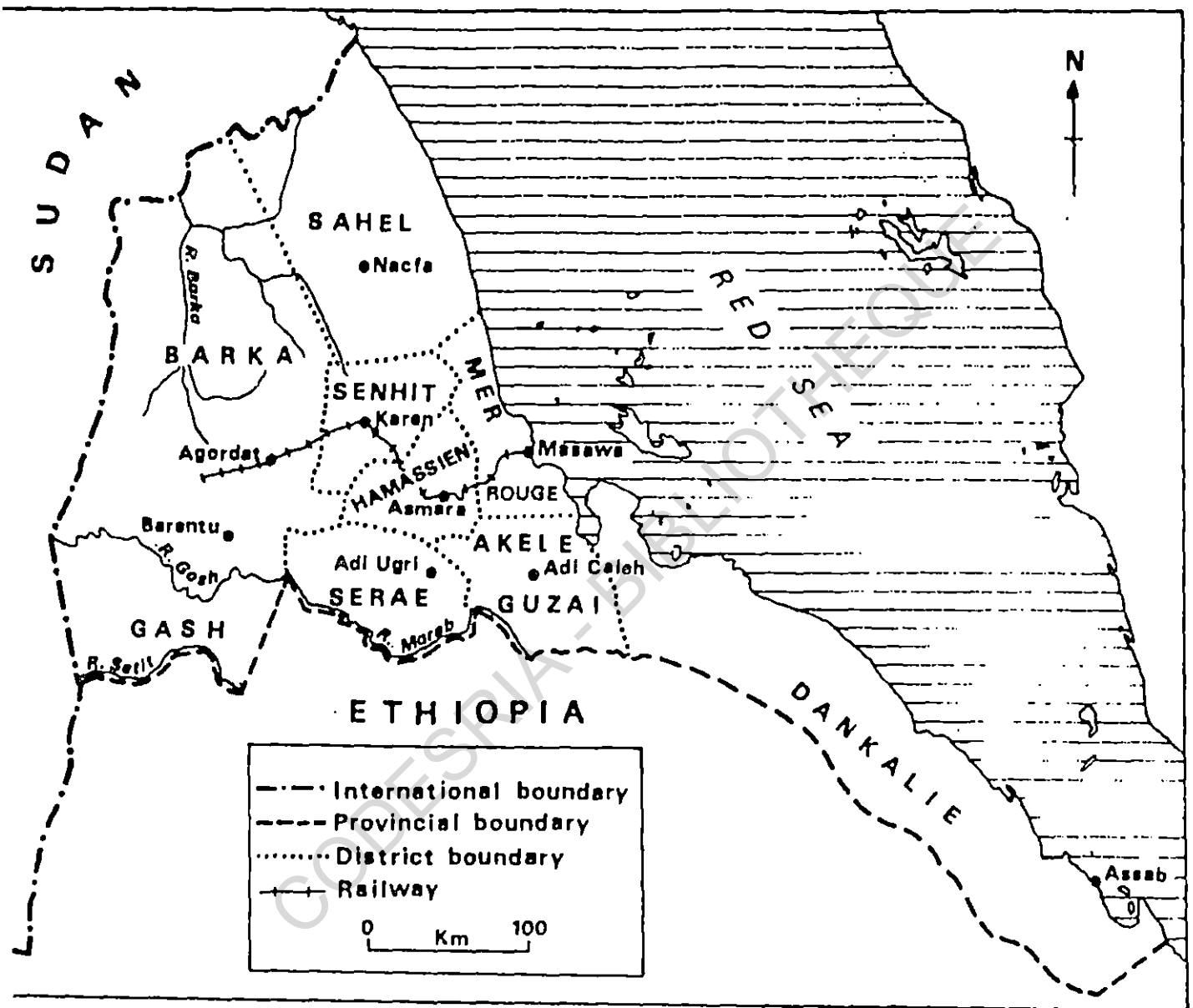
Carte n° 1 : Le contexte régional



**Source :** CAHSAÏ (B) et Williamson (E). Erythrée, un peuple en marche  
Paris, l'Harmattan, 1985 P. 4



Carte n° 2 : Les provinces de l'Erythrée



Source : CAHSAÏ (B) et Williamson (E). *Erythrée, un peuple en marche*  
Paris, l'Harmattan, 1985 P. 14

## *Introduction*

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Le conflit de l'Erythrée commence en septembre 1961 par des troubles chez les Beni amer du Plateau occidental. Il oppose les nomades musulmans des basses terres qui recevaient l'aide de l'Egypte et du Soudan au nom du panarabisme et de l'islam au gouvernement impérial éthiopien. Ce conflit allait au fil du temps et au gré des interventions extérieures se radicaliser et devenir un affrontement local, régional et international. Il y a eu d'abord la participation des Etats-Unis aux côtés du régime impérial éthiopien de 1961 à 1976. Après cette date qui marquait leur départ de l'Etat abyssin, les Américains avaient établi une base en Somalie et avaient des amitiés au Soudan et en Egypte. Et la Somalie, le Soudan et même l'Arabie Saoudite accordaient de l'aide aux MLN érythréens. Il s'agissait là d'un moyen pour les Américains d'appliquer la théorie de l'hégémonie par la négation que TSHIYEMBE MWAYILA définit comme étant

*"l'action d'une grande puissance qui pour sauvegarder ses intérêts dans une région dont elle ne veut pas être le gendarme exerce une influence accrue par petites puissances interposées afin d'empêcher l'autre puissance concurrente d'y prendre pied"<sup>1</sup>*

Toutefois, avec l'arrivée de Ronald Reagan à la tête des Etats-Unis, les Américains mettent au point la *"Doctrine Reagan"* relative aux modalités d'intervention américaines dans les conflits régionaux.<sup>2</sup> Cette doctrine consiste pour les Etats-Unis à soutenir activement les insurrections anticommunistes, dans le tiers-monde face à l'expansionnisme soviétique. En un mot un devoir pour les Etats-Unis de passer à l'offensive et œuvrer concrètement au renversement des régimes pro-soviétiques. William SCHNEIDER, sous-Secrétaire d'Etat américain s'exprimera alors en ces termes :

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<sup>1</sup> TSHIYEMBE MWAYILA ; Théorie et pratique de la stratégie Est-Ouest en Afrique : 1<sup>ère</sup> partie. Le mois en Afrique juin-juillet 1986.

*"Pendant trop longtemps, les nations libres se sont contentées de tracer les traits sur la poussière reconnaissant aux communistes, leurs conquêtes et au mieux s'efforçant d'empêcher de nouvelles conquêtes. Maintenant en aidant les guérillas anticomunistes, elles doivent "mettre les apparents totalitaires sur la défense pour contribuer à faire entrer l'incertitude dans leurs plans impérialistes."*<sup>3</sup>

Pour l'appréciation de cette doctrine, le Congrès américain revient sur l'amendement Clarck afin de permettre à l'administration d'aider les contrats antisandinistes, ainsi que les forces antigouvernementales en Afghanistan, en Angola, au Cambodge et dans d'autres pays du Tiers-monde dirigés par des régimes alliés à l'Union Soviétique.<sup>4</sup> Est-ce le renversement de la stratégie américaine ou l'échec de plus en plus croissant du socialisme comme modèle de développement qui a amené le FPLE en 1987 à abandonner le marxisme ? Nous ne saurons avoir une réponse tranchée ici, il demeure néanmoins qu'au lendemain de l'adoption du modèle capitaliste, les batailles au front érythréen allaient prendre de l'intensité. Mais sur l'instant l'Ethiopie accusait l'Arabie Saoudite allié des Américains de fournir de l'aide aux Erythréens.<sup>5</sup>

L'U.R.S.S. a participé à la périphérisation du conflit érythréen en soutenant dans un premier temps les MLN érythréens et dans un deuxième en assistant militairement l'Ethiopie dans la guerre.

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<sup>2</sup> KLARE Michael ; Conflits de faible intensité : la nouvelle doctrine d'intervention américaine. Le Monde diplomatique Mars 1986 p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Cité par KLARE Michael ; Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Cette doctrine sera reprise par George BUSH. Lire KOLKO Gabriel, la politique du nouveau président des Etats-Unis, Le Monde diplomatique Juin 1989 p.5.

<sup>5</sup> LEYMARIE, Philippe. De Djibouti au Sud-Ouest de l'Océan Indien. Une aire stratégique dévolue aux Français in Le Monde diplomatique Mars 1989 p 23.

## Introduction

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Depuis l'affaire des missiles de Cuba, les Soviétiques ont fait des conflits régionaux le moyen principal grâce auquel ils pouvaient faire valoir leur influence. Cette politique d'interventionnisme s'insérait dans la stratégie d'affrontement entre les nationaux communistes ou dirigés par les communistes.<sup>6</sup> Au sortir des années 1974, les MLN érythréens principaux à savoir le FLE et le FLPE étaient dirigés par des marxistes léninistes. Alors qu'une visite de l'empereur à Moscou en 1970, avait poussé les Soviétiques à couper toute aide directe aux Erythréens, les Cubains eux allaient continuer largement à former les cadres militaires érythréens.<sup>7</sup> Fidel CASTRO ne souffrait pas des scrupules de Moscou à offenser Addis Abeba. Et désirant passionnément développer les mouvements révolutionnaires dans le Tiers-monde, il devint très attaché au combat de l'Erythrée.

Et révolutionnaire, le combat érythréen l'était devenu avec la naissance du FPLE dont la nouvelle idéologie *"était à la fois spartiate et égalitaire, imprégnée de CABRAL et de MAO."*<sup>8</sup> De ce fait l'idéologie nouvelle du FPLE, socialiste allait placer la lutte dans le cadre de la *"Révolution nationale démocratique."*<sup>9</sup>

Après avoir aidé modestement et clandestinement les MLN érythréens, l'U.R.S.S. et ses alliés assisteront militairement l'Ethiopie dans le conflit au lendemain de l'engagement de MENGISTU Hailé Mariam Chef de l'Etat éthiopien au Marxisme-léninisme.

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<sup>6</sup> Initiée par KHROUTCHEV, cette politique sera pérennisée par Leonid Bréjnev qui allait multiplier en Afrique en général les zones de conflits régionaux, têtes de port de l'expansion soviétique.

<sup>7</sup> Le bloc soviétique assistait depuis le milieu des années 1960 les MLN érythréens le FLE, était resté en contact avec le KGB.

<sup>8</sup> PENINO Jean-Louis : Les origines du mouvement national érythréen, in *Erythrée une lutte pour l'indépendance nationale*. Colloque de l'université de Jussieu, Paris VII p25.

<sup>9</sup> Association des étudiants érythréens en France. *Points saillants de la lutte érythréenne*. Brochure stencillée, Paris, 1976 p16.

## Introduction

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Le renforcement de la capacité militaire de ses alliés était l'un des objectifs principaux de la politique soviétique du temps de la guerre froide. La puissance militaire d'après Vassili KULISH était :

*"fonction de la nécessité de prévenir les guerres locales et pour les cas où il est indispensable de prêter un soutien militaire à toutes les nations qui luttent pour leur liberté et leur indépendance contre les forces de la réaction internationale et les ingérences de l'impérialisme."*<sup>10</sup>

C'est dans l'optique de l'accord d'aide militaire signé entre l'Ethiopie et l'Union soviétique en 1976, suivi d'un "pacte secret" en Mai 1977 que les Soviétiques livrent à l'Ethiopie des armes pour l'équivalent de 500 millions de dollars.<sup>11</sup> Les Soviétiques installent des bases aux îles Dahlaks. Les Cubains eux s'installent à Dire Dawa et Addis-Abeba avec au total un effectif de quinze mille hommes. L'Ethiopie signe également des accords avec d'autres alliés de l'Union soviétique comme la Bulgarie et l'Allemagne de l'Est. Les Soviétiques fournissent aux Ethiopiens des conseillers militaires et des équipements militaires tout au long de la guerre froide. Ainsi, en 1988, le montant de l'aide totale fournie à l'Ethiopie est estimé à trois mille millions de dollars US avec une dette militaire estimée à deux mille millions de dollars. La majorité de l'équipement reçu des instructeurs et des conseillers soviétiques ont servi après la guerre de l'Ogaden sur le front érythréen.

Jusqu'à la chute du mur de Berlin, les conseillers soviétiques se trouvaient encore en Ethiopie. A la stratégie directe des Soviétiques, les Américains allaient opposer une stratégie indirecte du au fait qu'ils ne voulaient pas pousser l'Ethiopie dans le camp socialiste dans un premier temps et dans un deuxième

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<sup>10</sup> (Cité par WINDSOR Philip, la puissance militaire, instrument de la politique soviétique. Politique étrangère n° 1982, pp 199-212.

<sup>11</sup> HERMAN, Richard. Op. cit. p 90 et p 96.

## *Introduction*

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parce qu'ils ne souhaitaient pas affronter directement les Soviétiques dans le Tiers-monde. La participation des superpuissances et leurs alliés au conflit allait avoir des effets au double-plan des acteurs et des enjeux.

La participation des grandes puissances particulièrement celle de l'URSS venait superposer aux enjeux locaux et régionaux existants des enjeux idéologico-stratégiques. La présence des Soviétiques en Ethiopie représentait pour les Américains une menace grave pour leurs intérêts dans la région particulièrement en ce qui concerne leur ravitaillement en pétrole du fait de la proximité de la péninsule arabe pétrolifère et les routes des Indes. A cette fin qui restait la protection de leurs intérêts, les Américains sous Ronald REAGAN devaient mettre sur pied comme principe d'action le globalisme régionalisé.<sup>12</sup> L'enjeu diplomatico-stratégique devenant ainsi l'enjeu dominant, l'Ethiopie dans un contexte de rivalité devait avoir une large capacité de marchandage. Il fallait compter des alliés. C'est ce qui importait. Et l'Ethiopie avait des atouts démographique et géographique importants sur lesquels l'URSS pouvait s'appuyer en cas de guerre totale contre les Etats-Unis.<sup>13</sup> Le 15 février 1984, le Secrétaire d'Etat américain précisait encore les lignes de force de la politique américaine en Afrique :

*"L'enjeu géopolitique de la sécurité sur le continent et les océans qui le baignent est considérable au large se trouvent d'importants axes de circulation, ce en particulier qui assurent l'approvisionnement en sources d'énergie de nos alliés Européens. Nous sommes directement concernés lorsque les Soviétiques, les Cubains ou les Libyens cherchent à étendre leur influence sur le*

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<sup>12</sup> D'après ZAKI Laïdi, le globalisme régionalisé est un activisme régional relié aux impératifs de la rivalité globale avec l'Union soviétique. Lire Les contraintes d'une rivalité : Les super puissances et l'Afrique (1960 – 1985) Paris La Découverte 1986 p. 170.

<sup>13</sup> CAO-HUY THUAN Les Etats-Unis l'Europe et l'Ethiopie in La corne de l'Afrique. op. cit. pp 7-94.

*continent par la force menaçant l'indépendance de l'Afrique et les intérêts occidentaux.*"<sup>14</sup>

En plus des enjeux, la participation des superpuissances a des effets sur le nombre d'acteurs.

La participation directe des superpuissances a contribué à multiplier le nombre d'acteurs. De ce fait, le processus de résolution devait tenir compte s'il voulait aboutir de la capacité d'action positive ou négative que l'un des acteurs même indirect pouvait avoir sur le conflit. Mais dans un contexte de rivalité, la puissance conduisant le processus révolutionnaire ne tenait jamais compte de ces facteurs les posant comme absents et inexistantes.

Ainsi, l'histoire du conflit érythréen est également celle de l'implication de multiples acteurs indirects qui y ont interféré pour une raison ou pour une autre. Il y a eu la Chine dont l'objectif était de favoriser dans l'Océan Indien la naissance d'un socialisme authentiquement africain c'est-à-dire contraire à la doctrine soviétique. A cet effet ils ont aidé le FLE à partir de 1967. Il y a l'Etat d'Israël qui s'est aligné derrière l'Ethiopie impériale amie des Etats-Unis. Il y a la majorité des Etats arabes favorables à la transformation de la Mer Rouge en Lac Arabe. Ce sont la Syrie, l'Irak et l'Arabie Saoudite. Il y a la participation des Etats qui ne sont pas favorables à la présence soviétique en Ethiopie, les régimes arabes radicaux tel la Libye ennemie déclarée du Soudan malgré l'accord d'Addis-Abeba du 28 février 1972 par lequel le Soudan et l'Ethiopie renonçaient mutuellement à soutenir les mouvements « sécessionnistes » contre l'un et l'autre pour reprendre la collaboration avec les Erythréens<sup>15</sup> ; il en sera de même pour beaucoup de pays arabes conservateurs tels l'Arabie Saoudite, les

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<sup>14</sup> Cité par VERLET, Martin. Les Etats-Unis et l'Afrique dans le monde. In *Aujourd'hui l'Afrique* n°45 Juin 1992 p.6.

<sup>15</sup> RONDOT, Philippe, Le Soudan du Général Nimeiry *Revue française d'étude politique africaine* n°148 Avril 1978 pp 68-85.

Emirats Arabes Unis à l'anticommunisme reconnu qui pouvaient jouer un rôle dans la réussite ou l'échec de toute tentative de résolution du conflit.<sup>16</sup>

Ceci dit, le caractère périphérique du conflit érythréen ne souffre d'aucune ambiguïté. Situé loin du champ central de la confrontation Est-Ouest, il s'en est retrouvé tout de même rattaché. La conséquence en a été la graduation des enjeux et la métamorphose du conflit passant d'un conflit local et régional à un conflit international. Après de nombreuses tentatives de résolution aussi bien pacifique que militaire initiée dans un contexte de rivalité planétaire entre les deux grands, la question érythréenne allait prendre une nouvelle tournure dès 1989 à Atlanta. De nouvelles négociations entre Erythréens et Ethiopiens sous la houlette des deux Grands allaient déboucher en 1991 sur les accords de Londres puis à l'accession de l'Erythrée à l'indépendance le 24 mai 1993.

En juin 1993, l'OUA dont l'Ethiopie abrite le siège à Addis-Abeba depuis sa création tient au Caire en Egypte son 29<sup>ème</sup> sommet. Dans la dynamique de ce sommet, en vertu de l'article 3 ont lieu les travaux de l'un de ses plus importants organe de direction et de décision : la Conférence des Chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement.<sup>17</sup> Parmi ceux des Chefs d'Etats présents, se trouve celui de la République érythréenne M. ISSAYAS Afeworki. La seule présence du Chef de ce nouvel Etat qui avait longtemps combattu et parfois même dans l'indifférence feinte ou réelle d'une bonne partie de la communauté internationale<sup>18</sup> contre l'Ethiopie suscite de nombreuses interrogations. Dans le cadre de la présence d'étude et partant du fait que l'Erythrée appartient à une zone, la corne de

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<sup>16</sup> Le Soudan jouerait un rôle important lors de l'accord passé entre les différents fronts en 1978 à Khartoum.  
Lire : LEYMARIE Philippe Op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Lire :

- 1- KAMTO (M.) PONDI (J.E.) ZANG (L.) *L'OUA. Rétrospective et perspective africaine*, Paris Economica 1990 338p.
- 2- JOUVE (E.) *L'Organisation de l'Unité Africaine* Paris P.U.F. 1984 p55 et s.

<sup>18</sup> Lire sur le principe de l'intangibilité des frontières héritées de la colonisation prôné par l'OUA, ZANGA (A.) *L'O.U.A. et le règlement pacifique de différends* Malesherbes, ABC 1987 pp. 32-39.



l'Afrique ayant été l'objet d'âpres rivalités entre les superpuissances pendant la guerre froide, nous nous limiterons à savoir si l'accession de l'Erythrée à l'indépendance ne traduit-elle pas les manifestations du *relâchement de l'ordre mondial* en Afrique ?

Aussi devons-nous d'ores et déjà préciser les raisons qui ont déterminées le choix d'un tel sujet.

### I- L'INTERET DU SUJET

Ce sujet à première vue se situe à la confluence de plusieurs disciplines académiques dont le droit, les relations internationales, l'histoire des relations internationales, analyse des politiques internationales, la science politique, etc. De ce fait, son étude soulève, cela va de soi, de nombreuses difficultés parmi lesquelles notre volonté de rester à l'abri des partis pris véhiculés sur le plan international par les ouvrages, les articles, les mass média etc. n'est pas la moindre. Malgré tout il y avait des raisons, des intérêts tant à choisir qu'à maintenir ce thème. Nous avons regroupé en deux. Il y a les raisons scientifiques et les raisons pratiques.

Sur le plan scientifique, notre thème en même tant qu'il nous initie à la recherche en sciences sociales et singulièrement dans la diversité des outils qu'il emprunte aux autres sciences sociales à saisir concrètement l'esprit des cours dispensés à l'Institut des Relations Internationales du Cameroun. En effet la question érythréenne présente une nature particulière avant les différentes mutations connues au monde à partir de 1988 sur lesquelles nous consacrerons nos développements futurs.

De même, notre thème nous amène à saisir pratiquement sinon en totalité du moins en partie les évolutions de la politique mondiale et ses implications dans les zones périphériques. Notre sujet nous permet de déceler étant nous même africain de surcroît, "l'effet émergent"<sup>19</sup> de la fin de la bipolarité dans les zones situées hors de l'Europe champ central d'affrontement Est-Ouest mais où il s'est néanmoins intensément manifesté.

Enfin, il est un moyen d'accession à la connaissance des fondements des conflits ainsi qu'aux mécanismes qui en conditionnent sa résolution. Mais avant d'entrer profondément dans l'étude de notre sujet, nous devons préalablement le délimiter.

## **II- LA DELIMITATION DU SUJET**

Notre étude peut être délimitée spatialement et temporellement.

### **A- Délimitation spatiale**

L'espace de notre étude est celui sur lequel s'est déroulé le conflit, l'Erythrée. Cette région est située en Afrique de l'Est, dans la zone dite de la corne de l'Afrique. Elle est délimitée au Nord et à l'Ouest par le Soudan, à l'Est par la Mer Rouge et au Sud par l'Ethiopie. c'est l'espace réel du conflit. A cet espace réel s'associe l'espace régional que constitue la corne de l'Afrique.

Inconnu dans les ouvrages de géopolitique, l'espace-Corne de l'Afrique est une invention des géostratèges qui peut néanmoins être circonscrite au plan

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<sup>19</sup> Pour la notion d'effet émergent, voir BOUDON (R.) La logique du social Introduction à l'analyse sociologique. Paris Hachette 1979 1<sup>ère</sup> édition.

géographique. Nous tenterons de définir ce concept puis d'en relever les principales lignes de force.

Le concept Corne de l'Afrique désigne la région qui termine l'Afrique à l'Est. Elle tire ce nom de sa représentation sur une carte où elle ressemble effectivement à une corne de rhinocéros plantée sur la côte orientale du continent et qui s'enfonce au nord de l'Océan indien, au sud de la Mer rouge et de la péninsule arabique.<sup>20</sup> Pour les géographes, la Corne de l'Afrique est une sorte de triangle dont la pointe serait le Cap Guardafui dans le golfe d'Aden et la base, une ligne joignant la presqu'île de Bori (sur la Mer rouge au sud de la ville de Massawa), à l'embouchure de Djouba dans la ville de Kismayo au sud de la Somalie.<sup>21</sup>

Cette définition stricte qui exclue du champ ainsi délimité une partie de l'Ethiopie et de la Somalie pour se limiter à Djibouti ne peut nous satisfaire dans le cadre de la présente étude. Aussi adopterons-nous celle de Concolato qui inclut dans cette région outre Djibouti, la totalité de l'Ethiopie et de la Somalie, les pays limitrophes comme le Kenya et le Soudan, mais aussi les deux Yemen (unifiés en 1990) et même l'Arabie Saoudite.

Toutefois, et compte tenu du fait que notre étude porte sur la corne de l'Afrique, nous excluons du champ délimité par Concolato, les Etats non africains.<sup>22</sup>

Ainsi donc, notre Corne de l'Afrique s'étendra sur la région que les géographes appellent l'Afrique noire orientale ou la corne orientale du continent Kenya compris. Sur le plan des repères cartographiques, la Corne de l'Afrique se situe entre le 5<sup>e</sup> degré de latitude Sud (ville de Kidimou au sud du Kenya) et

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<sup>20</sup> Nseke (G.), "Les rivalités américano-soviétiques dans la corne de l'Afrique" Mémoire DESS IRIC, 1984.

<sup>21</sup> Deschamps (H.), Op. cit..

<sup>22</sup> Lire CONCOLATO (JC), "Une situation de crise", in RFEP n°161-162, mai-juin 1979, pp. 28-63.

le 22<sup>e</sup> degré de latitude nord juste au sud d Tropicque du cancer (pointe nord-est du Soudan) et entre le 22<sup>e</sup> degré de longitude Est (vers El Geneina à l'ouest du Soudan) et le 51<sup>e</sup> degré de longitude Est (Cap Guadafui au nord-est de la Somalie).

Nous présenterons la Corne de l'Afrique sur les plans politique, économique, social et physique.

Centre endogène de haute pression géopolitique, la Corne de l'Afrique comprenait à la veille de l'accession de l'Erythrée à l'indépendance, 5 Etats : l'Ethiopie (1 223 000 Km<sup>2</sup>) ; la Somalie (637 000 Km<sup>2</sup>) ; le Soudan (2 506 000 Km<sup>2</sup>) ; Djibouti (23 200 Km<sup>2</sup>) ; le Kenya (583 000 Km<sup>2</sup>).

Ces différents Etats entretiennent entre eux des modes diversifiés d'expression conflictuelle.<sup>23</sup>

La Corne de l'Afrique est surtout connue pour la grande misère qui y règne, résultat des calamités naturelles et sociales dont les principaux indicateurs sont la famine et les réfugiés. Cette région évolue malgré ses multiples problèmes économiques vers l'extraversion en rang dispersé. On y trouve les pays pauvres parmi les plus pauvres du continent, voire du monde. Ses ressources minérales sont très limitées. En plus de sa pauvreté en ressources naturelles, elle a des réserves en eau insuffisantes. De même, la Corne de l'Afrique est pauvre en moyens de production. Et lorsqu'elle réussit à produire malgré tout, elle le fait de manière artisanale tant des modes de production rurale et traditionnelle sont prévalants dans la région. Enfin, la Corne de l'Afrique présente des carences en ce qui concerne les voies de communication. Les conséquences de cet état de chose sont doubles.

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<sup>23</sup> Lire TCHANDEU (L.) Le système international conflictuel de la Corne de l'Afrique, IRIC, Thèse, 1990, pp. 41-115.

D'une part elle maintient les populations dans un état de misère criarde entretenant chez les hommes une frustration génératrice de leur agressivité individuelle collective. De l'autre elle fait le lit de la dépendance économique des Etats qui peut être apprécié à travers une balance commerciale déficitaire et un gonflement de l'endettement extérieur et de l'aide internationale (voir tableau 1 et 2).

**Tableau n°1 : Balance commerciale des Etats de la Corne de l'Afrique en 1987.**

Pays	Commerce de marchandises (millions de dollars)		
	Exportations	Importations	Solde E – I
Ethiopie	402	1150	-748
Somalie	94	452	-358
Soudan	482	694	-212
Kenya	961	1755	-794

Source : Rapport Banque Mondiale 1989, Tableau 14, p. 214.

**Tableau n°2 : Balance des paiements des Etats**

Pays	Balance des opérations courantes (millions de dollars)			
	Après transferts publics		Avant transferts publics	
	1970	1987	1970	1987
Ethiopie	- 32	- 264	- 43	- 475
Somalie	- 6	248	- 18	- 59
Soudan	- 42	- 422	- 43	- 702
Kenya	- 49	- 497	- 86	- 639

Source : Banque Mondiale, op. cit., Tableau 18, p. 224.

Au vu de ces tableaux, on peut affirmer qu'aucun Etat de la Corne en 1987 n'était en mesure de financer ses importations avec le seul produit de ses exportations. Logiquement, pour survivre, ils étaient obligés de recourir à l'emprunt ou à l'aide internationale.

Au plan social, la région présente une grande hétérogénéité tant les populations qu'on y trouve sont de diverses origines. De manière générale, les populations blanches du Soudan septentrional côtoient les populations négro-africaines au Sud. Deux grandes civilisations (chrétienne et islamique) se partagent la Corne de l'Afrique. Chacune d'elles porte une conception de l'Etat dans ses rapports à l'espace qui prend racine dans une vision de l'histoire proche du temps long braudelien.<sup>24</sup>

La principale caractéristique de la Corne au plan social est que la guerre y constitue un rite géographique "régulateur".<sup>25</sup> Aussi Alain GASCON, constatant cette situation a-t-il pu écrire que :

*"Dans la Corne de l'Afrique, les affrontements réguliers dans l'espace et dans le temps absorbent les tensions politiques et sociales (...) cette socialisation par la guerre la rend normale, habituelle. L'honneur passe avant la paix. Le répertoire de la vengeance, de la violence ouverte est socialement légitime. Il diffracte le territoire et perpétue les systèmes d'opposition rendant impossible toute unification même par la force."<sup>26</sup>*

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<sup>24</sup> Lire GASCON (A.), "Etat contemporain, Etat ancien, l'Ethiopie" in Terray (G.), L'Etat contemporain en Afrique, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1987, pp. 141-156.

<sup>25</sup> Formule de BONNEMAISON (J.) Communication au colloque ethnographique, Bordeaux, 1990.

<sup>26</sup> GASCON (A.), "La guerre comme rite géographique : l'exemple de la corne de l'Afrique" in La prolongation des conflits, Centre d'étude des conflits Paris, L'Harmattan, n°1, 1990-1991, pp. 69-84.

La population était estimée en 1988 à 96 millions d'habitants répartis ainsi qu'il suit : Ethiopie 44 millions, Soudan 23 millions, Kenya 22 millions, Somalie, 5,7 millions, Djibouti 370 000.

Au plan physique la corne de l'Afrique se caractérise par un relief varié allant des hautes terres d'Ethiopie et du Kenya aux plaines et plateaux du Soudan et de la Somalie. On y trouve une végétation de forêt au Kenya qui contraste avec les steppes désertiques du Soudan septentrional.

Au plan climatique, la corne de l'Afrique connaît une succession de climat correspondant à son étalement à la fois en zone équatoriale et tropicale. De manière générale, le climat est diversifié et comprend toute la succession des climats intertropicaux avec une moyenne thermique annuelle de 22 °C. C'est ainsi que la région tropicale connaît un climat chaud et sec ; les régions côtières ont anormalement un climat sec et parfois même désertique dans le cas de la Somalie où les températures atteignent couramment 40° C contre 26° C pour les autres régions. Le climat tropical est modifié en Ethiopie par la haute altitude de ce pays. La température moyenne varie alors entre 15 et 20°. Les climats chauds, désertique ou sémi-désertique réduisent les superficies favorables à la vie et à une activité prospère des hommes. Ceux-ci sont alors obligés de se concentrer dans quelques espaces exigus et de se les disputer. Les zones ayant les meilleurs climats à l'instar du Kenya et de L'Ethiopie sont les plus peuplées. En dehors de quelques zones limitées notamment au Soudan, les vastes régions sémi-aride de la corne n'offrent que des possibilités très réduites pour les activités agro-pastorales sédentaires.

Mais en limitant notre sujet à cet espace, nous éliminons de fait certains Etats de la région et d'autres acteurs qui de façon essentielle ont déterminé le cours des Relations Internationales en général et du processus résolutif en particulier. Il s'agit de l'Etat d'Israël, des Etats arabes à l'instar du Yémen, de l'Arabie Saoudite, de la Syrie, de l'Irak, etc.. Aussi allons-nous néanmoins intégrer ces différentes composantes dans notre étude.

Notre thème peut également être délimité quant au temps.

### **B- Délimitation temporelle**

En principe nous partirons de la date de la première rencontre au sommet entre les différents protagonistes au mois de Septembre 1989 à Atlanta à celle de l'accession de l'Erythrée à l'auto-délimitation en mai 1993. Mais ces deux dates ne sont que les bornes indicatives que nous pouvons dépasser soit en amont, soit en aval.

En amont parce que l'analyse nous oblige à remonter plus loin dans le temps ; en aval aussi parce que nous évoquerons les conséquences, la portée de la résolution du conflit pour la région.

Brièvement nous éviterons de nous enfermer dans les dates qui en science politique en général et en Relations Internationales en particulier n'ont très souvent qu'une valeur indicative.

Bien que la délimitation du sujet soit une étape importante dans la recherche, elle ne saurait en être l'unique justification. L'état de la question en constitue certainement une autre.



### III - L'ETAT DE LA QUESTION

"On est rarement le premier à aborder un sujet" écrit Jean-Pierre FRAGNIERE<sup>27</sup>. Cette assertion ne trouve pas sa limite ici. En effet le conflit érythréen fait l'objet de nombreux développements dans le cadre des ouvrages généraux, de travaux de recherches, des articles dans les revues spécialisées voire dans des journaux. De la lecture de ces différentes publications, nous sommes arrivés à un triple constat.

Le premier est que la plupart de ces publications s'appesantissent sur l'évolution du conflit et non sur les mécanismes de résolution qui ont été présentés aux différentes parties antagonistes<sup>28</sup>.

Le second est que le temps a eu raison de plusieurs ouvrages sus cités quand bien même ils tentaient d'aborder le conflit érythréen dans son angle résolutif.

Le troisième constat enfin est que les études récentes sur le conflit érythréen ont enserré son processus résolutif dans le cadre global de la résolution des conflits Africains<sup>29</sup> ou alors dans la perspective de la dynamique sécessionniste en Afrique.<sup>30</sup>

Notre étude au vu de ces limites entend apporter une "*carte mentale*" du conflit érythréen qui tienne compte du présent et des spécificités des

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<sup>27</sup> FRAGNIERE, Jean-Pierre Comment réussir un mémoire, Saint-Etienne 1990, 1<sup>ère</sup> éd., p 22.

<sup>28</sup> A titre d'exemple on peut citer sans prétendre à l'exhaustivité les ouvrages suivants :

a LEGUM, Colin ; Huy THUAN, CAO, FENET, Alain, HALLIDAY Fred, MOLYNEUX Maxime, La corne de l'Afrique question nationales et politique Internationale, Paris, l'harmattan, 1986, 1<sup>ère</sup> éd., 261 p.

b FENET Alain, CAO, HUY THUAN, TRAN VAN MINH, La question de l'Erythrée, droit International et politique des deux grands, paris, PUF, 1979, 157 p.

c CAHSAI Berhane, WILLIAMSON Elisabeth C. Erythrée : un peuple en marche XIX et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles, paris, l'harmattan, 1985, 188 p.

d (1) MACCAR S MACCAR, "The evolution od erythrean secessionists mouvements" IRIC, mémoire, 1978 ;

(2) TCHANDEU Laurent, "Le système International conflictuel de la corne de l'Afrique", IRIC, thèse, 1990.

<sup>22</sup> ONANA Renner Mamert Lie, Les Superpuissances et les conflits Africains, IRIC, mémoire, 1990.

mécanismes actuels de résolution des conflits. Toutefois n'oublions pas que la "carte mentale" reste d'après BAHGAT KORANY ce qui :

*"Détermine ce que nous voyons et ce que nous ne voyons pas. C'est la lentille conceptuelle, le filtre qui facilite le décodage d'un événement et guide notre comportement."<sup>31</sup>*

Cette autre vision du conflit érythréen passe par la position du problème que suscite notre sujet.

#### **IV – LA PROBLEMATIQUE**

Depuis 1961 un conflit armé oppose les Erythréens par le biais de leurs mouvements de libération nationale, le FLE et le FPLE, aux Forces Armées Ethiopiennes dont l'enjeu principal est l'accession de l'Erythrée (ancien territoire colonial italien rattaché à l'Ethiopie sur la base d'une fédération, par l'Assemblée Générale de l'ONU en 1952 et annexé par l'Ethiopie comme faisant partie intégrante de l'Empire en 1962) à l'indépendance. mais l'Ethiopie dénie à l'Erythrée le droit à l'autodétermination. Elle réussit donc par des manœuvres politico-militaires à maintenir le territoire érythréen sous sa domination. Et ce malgré plusieurs tentatives de résolution du conflit effectuées dans la région de la Corne de l'Afrique.

Au lendemain de la chute du Mur de Berlin, une nouvelle tentative de résolution politique conduite par les Etats-Unis débouche sur la reconnaissance du droit de l'Erythrée à l'autodétermination et au maintien du droit d'accession de l'Ethiopie à la Mer. De ce rappel des faits une question centrale autour de laquelle s'organise toute notre étude se pose :

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<sup>23</sup> BATHA Marc Antoine, La dynamique sécessionniste dans l'Afrique indépendante, IRIC, mémoire, 1993.

*"Comment les changements constatés au sein du système international notamment la fin de la guerre froide, la disparition de l'URSS comme Superpuissance ont-ils permis ou facilité la résolution du conflit érythréen ?"*

De cette question centrale découle des questions secondaires :

1°) Pourquoi les tentatives des résolutions, initiées pendant la guerre froide, n'ont-elles pas abouti ?

2°) Pourquoi ces mutations ont-elles été déterminantes ?

Ce sont là autant de questions auxquelles notre étude se propose d'apporter des réponses définitives après la vérification de notre corps d'hypothèses.

### V – LE CORPS D'HYPOTHESES

L'hypothèse est la réponse provisoire à l'interrogation que nécessite la problématique. Pour perdre ce caractère provisoire, elle devrait être vérifiée par la suite.<sup>32</sup>

Notre corps d'hypothèses comprend une hypothèse centrale et des hypothèses secondaires.

#### **Notre hypothèse centrale est la suivante**

Les changements du système international après avoir enlevé au conflit son enjeu diplomatico-stratégique qui avait justifié sa périphérisation, ont permis aux Etats-Unis devenus l'unique Superpuissance d'arbitrer et d'imposer aux parties antagonistes une solution à la Conférence de Londres de Mai 1991.

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<sup>31</sup> BAHGAT Korany et Ali *Analyse des Relations Internationales Approches concepts et données*, Montréal, Gaétan Morin 1987 1<sup>o</sup> édition pp. 15-16.

<sup>32</sup> GRAWITZ, Madeleine, *Méthodes des sciences sociales*, Paris, Dalloz, 7<sup>ème</sup> éd., 1986, p 420.

Les hypothèses secondaires qui se greffent à l'hypothèse centrale se présentent ainsi :

1°) Les multiples tentatives de résolution ont toutes connues des échecs pendant la guerre froide du fait de facteur Est-Ouest. (Chapitre II)

2°) Les mutations ont éliminé les facteurs de freinage inhérents à la guerre froide derrière lesquels l'Ethiopie s'était abritée pour paralyser toutes les tentatives de résolution du conflit. (Chapitre III)

3°) Toutefois ces changements auraient été insuffisants s'ils n'avaient été suivis par des changements au niveau régional ou local. (Chapitre IV)

Notre corps d'hypothèses étant ainsi formulé, il convient de préciser les outils méthodologiques avec lesquels nous allons le tester.

### **VI – L'APPROCHE METHODOLOGIQUE**

La méthode est le fondement de la scientificité de toute la recherche. Elle constitue l'ensemble des opérations intellectuelles permettant au Chercheur de transcender les obstacles que Gaston Bachelard qualifie d' "épistémologique" et qui jonchent le parcours conduisant à la vérité scientifique.

De fait, il est banal de répéter après tant d'autres que quel que soit l'objet d'une recherche, la valeur des résultats dépend de celle des méthodes mises en œuvre.

Le but est de mettre en exergue le caractère déterminant du choix des méthodes. Ainsi, dans le credo du savant, le premier article de foi est cette conviction empiriste que s'il apprend à interroger la "nature" en des termes qui lui conviennent, il pourra découvrir les lois auxquelles elle obéit. Par contre, si nos problèmes sont mal posés, c'est-à-dire si nos observations ne sont pas faites

comme il convient dès le début de la recherche, aucune habileté d'interprétation si subtile soit-elle, ne pourra par la suite permettre d'atteindre nos objectifs. Ce qui peut y avoir de vrai ou de faux dans nos résultats dépend autant des questions que nous avons décidé de poser et du choix de nos méthodes que de la rigueur des raisonnements auxquels nous aurons soumis les réponses provoquées du *“syncrétisme méthodologique”* dont parle Burdeau car, *“lui seul permet d'accéder à une connaissance totale des phénomènes politiques qui se découlent à la fois au niveau réel observable et dans la profondeur d'un psychisme ou se côtoient le rationnel et le magique, la permanence de l'instinct et la fugacité du rêve”*.

Les objectifs de la méthode tels que systématisés par Karl Van Meter à la suite des conseils et avec le concours des membres du Comité de recherche sur la logique et la méthodologie de l'Association Internationale de sociologie sont les suivants :

- a) – Montrer la disparition ou l'obsolescence de la distinction entre méthodologie *“quantitative”* et méthodologie *“qualitative”*.
- b) – Montrer le caractère *“non universel”* de toutes les méthodologies, chacune se prêtant plus particulièrement à tel ou tel domaine.
- c) – La valeur de l'analyse *“multiméthode”* qui permet d'obtenir des résultats stables et de jeter des passerelles entre les disciplines des sciences sociales.

Seront donc manipulées tour à tour les quatre variables de l'esprit scientifique : l'observation, la description, l'explication et la prescription. Ainsi seront conciliés individualisme et holisme méthodologiques ; explications linéaire et systémique.

L'approche est une manière d'aborder l'étude d'une question.<sup>33</sup> Elle se veut donc moins une étape de systématisation de la technique et plus une attitude intellectuelle. La méthodologie quant à elle est "*un corpus de principes qui président à toute recherche organisée, un ensemble de normes permettant de sélectionner et de coordonner les techniques.*"<sup>34</sup>

Nous entendons donc par approche méthodologique l'ensemble des éléments qui nous permettent d'éclairer nos hypothèses et de déterminer nos conclusions. Dans le cadre de notre étude, l'approche méthodologique intègre la méthodologie, les techniques d'analyse et de collecte des données et les éléments théoriques et paradigmatiques. Autrement dit il s'agit d'un "*syncrétisme méthodologique*".

### A- Les méthodes

Nous travaillons sur un sujet de Relations Internationales. Et, les Relations Internationales n'ont pas à proprement parler, une méthode qui lui soit spécifique. A l'instar de sa mère, la science politique, les Relations Internationales empruntent aux autres sciences sociales leurs méthodes. En effet, comme le pense KI-ZERBO : "*quand on n'a pas de mère, on tête sa grand-mère.*"<sup>35</sup> Ceci dit, dans l'étude de notre thème, nous avons privilégié une approche transdisciplinaire où se côtoient les approches historique, sociologique et systémique.

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<sup>33</sup> *Micro Robert*, Nouvelle édition, Paris, Robert 1988 p.60.

<sup>34</sup> GRAWITZ, Madeleine, op. cit. p. 362.

<sup>35</sup> KI-ZERBO, Joseph, "Les méthodes interdisciplinaires" in *Une histoire générale de l'Afrique. Méthodologie et préhistoire africaine*. Tome I, Paris, Jeune Afrique/Stock/UNESCO/1980, p 384.

### 1- L'approche historique

Empruntée à l'histoire, cette méthode que nous envisageons dans la double perspective diachronique (qui tient compte du passé) et synchronique (qui tient compte des événements qui passent au même instant que celui qui est expliqué)<sup>36</sup> nous permettra d'analyser et d'expliquer le conflit érythréen aussi bien dans son processus évolutif que résolutif. Car, le "*savoir historique permet de relier les événements en apparence isolés dans le temps.*"<sup>37</sup>

En prenant comme "*matière première de l'histoire*"<sup>38</sup>, pour comprendre pourquoi la résolution du conflit érythréen n'a pas abouti avant les mutations du système international, nous sommes loin d'opérer une révolution méthodologique. Bien d'autres à l'instar de Philippe BRAILLARD pensent que :

*"Sans la prise en considération de la dimension historique des Relations Internationales, aucune étude sérieuse de ces Relations ne serait possible."*<sup>39</sup>

Malgré son importance certaine, l'histoire dans le cadre de l'étude d'un conflit aurait montré ses limites quant à remonter les types d'acteurs et leur motivation, terrain sur lequel la sociologie est d'un grand secours.

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<sup>36</sup> Lire à propos des méthodes diachronique et synchronique KAMTO Maurice, Pouvoir et Droit en Afrique noire. Essai sur les fondements du constitutionalisme dans les Etats d'Afrique noire francophone, Paris, L.G.D.J., 198, p 57 et 9.

<sup>37</sup> OYONO Dieudonné. "L'apport de l'histoire dans l'enseignement des relations internationales". Revue camerounaise des relations internationales, Octobre-Décembre 1983, n°1, p 24.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> BRAILLARD Philippe. Philosophie et Relations Internationales, Genève, I.U.H.E., 1974 ; 1<sup>ère</sup> éd., p17.

## 2- L'approche sociologique.

A côté de l'histoire, la sociologie est d'une importance capitale dans l'étude des *"faits sociaux internationalisés"*<sup>40</sup> La sociologie nous permet particulièrement dans le cadre de l'étude des conflits, ce qui est notre cas, de *"tenir compte du nombre d'acteurs en présence, des enjeux et des buts poursuivis ou de la psychologie des acteurs."*<sup>41</sup> C'est donc en puisant dans la sociologie que tout au long de notre étude les notions "d'acteurs", de "rôles", etc. seront introduites.

Raymond ARON n'affirme-t-il pas que :

*"Toute étude concrète des Relations Internationales est historique et sociologique."*<sup>42</sup>

## 3- L'approche systémique.

La troisième méthode qui sera utilisée ici, est le systémisme pris dans sa conception eastonienne. D'après Easton, cette méthode repose sur la notion *"d'un système immergé dans son environnement et sujet de la part de ce dernier à des influences."*<sup>43</sup> Sans chercher à revenir ici sur le mécanisme de cette méthode qu'EASTON a largement expliqué dans son ouvrage<sup>44</sup>, relevons que le système nous permettra de considérer le conflit érythréen comme un système qui réagit aux influences de son environnement intrasociétal qui est l'Etat Ethiopien y compris l'Erythrée et extrasociétal qui est constitué par la région de la Corne de l'Afrique et le reste de l'environnement international.

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<sup>40</sup> HUNTZINGER, Jacques, Introduction aux Relations Internationales, Paris, Seuil, 1<sup>ère</sup> éd., 1987, p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p 14.

<sup>42</sup> ARON, Raymond, "Qu'est-ce qu'une théorie des Relations Internationales ?" in Revue française de science politique n°5, Octobre 1967, p 852.

<sup>43</sup> EASTON, David, Varieties of political theory, Englewood, Cliffs, 1966 pp 143-154.



Nous avons choisi cette méthode pour analyser notre thème pour l'unique raison, empruntée à Marcel MERLE qu'elle nous "*oblige à tenter la radiographie des conflits et des acteurs aux prises avant que puisse être porté un jugement de valeur sur la nature sinon sur l'existence du Système international tel qu'il essaye de fonctionner sous nos yeux.*"<sup>45</sup>

En optant pour la pluridisciplinarité à travers le choix de ces trois méthodes, nous entendons aborder notre sujet sous plusieurs dimensions tant il se situe au confluent de plusieurs sciences sociales. Et dans cette entreprise, les techniques de recherche et de collecte de données méritent également d'être précisées.

### **B- Les techniques d'analyse et la collecte des données**

Nous nous sommes servis des documents écrits d'origine privée ou officielle composés de traités, des déclarations, des communiqués, des discours, des personnalités, les mémoires, les mémorandums etc. afin de collecter les données.

Nous nous sommes également largement référés aux journaux et à la masse des informations diffusées par les médias dans le cadre de la collecte des données.

La technique d'analyse quant à elle s'est limitée à exploiter tous ces documents écrits. Il s'agit donc de la technique documentaire.

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<sup>44</sup> EASTON, David, *Analyse du système politique*, op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> MERLE, Marcel, *Sociologie des Relations Internationales*, Paris, Dalloz, 1982, 3<sup>ème</sup> éd., p 130.

**C- Les éléments théoriques et paradigmatiques**

Nous précisons les éléments théoriques puis les paradigmes.

**1- les éléments théoriques**

Il s'agit de la théorie des jeux et des théories des conflits

**a- La théorie des jeux.**

Considérée comme une application particulière de la méthode behavioriste, la théorie des jeux "nous permet d'étudier le comportement des acteurs dans leurs rapports mutuels autour d'un enjeu commun."<sup>46</sup>

Dans cette théorie, on distingue les jeux à somme nulle où le gain de l'un représente exactement la perte de l'autre et les jeux à somme variable où pertes et gains se répartissent d'une manière aléatoire entre deux joueurs. On distingue aussi dans cette théorie, les jeux à deux joueurs qui obéissent à des règles simples et les jeux à adversaires multiples qui obligent à prendre en considération les combinaisons résultant des coalitions entre les joueurs.

Cette théorie nous permettra de comprendre le caractère des affrontements entre les acteurs et les raisons de l'échec de certaines tentatives de résolution effectuées avant la chute du mur de Berlin et celles de la réussite de la rencontre de Londres.

**b- Les théories des conflits.**

Trois théories principales existent sur les conflits. La première théorie de base est celle qui considère le conflit comme une simple rivalité entre des parties dont chacune cherche à imposer unilatéralement sa solution.

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<sup>46</sup> MERLE, Marcel, op. cit. p 117.

La deuxième théorie tient le conflit pour un exercice dans lequel les parties font ce qu'elles veulent aussi longtemps que le rapport entre ce qu'elles gagnent et ce qu'elles perdent demeure en dessous d'un certain seuil.

La troisième théorie voit dans le conflit le résultat de changements survenus dans les structures de l'ordre mondial ou de régimes existants. Les conflits et leurs solutions faisant partie d'un processus évolutif, ces différentes théories nous permettront de comprendre les solutions possibles et les mécanismes à mettre en œuvre pour faire cesser les affrontements.

### 2- Les éléments paradigmatiques.

Malgré ses diverses utilisations, notamment par les auteurs américains (BROWN en 1978 et PFEFFER en 1982), pour théoriser le rôle des organisations et formuler des hypothèses quant à la façon dont elles se transforment, la notion de paradigme ne fait pas l'unanimité des auteurs quant à son contenu. Dans le cadre de cette monographie à la définition longue et peut-être plus élaborée de Thomas KHUN<sup>47</sup>, nous préférons celle de Jean LECCA parce qu'elle est plus simple et mieux opérationnalisable. Elle est la suivante.

*"Le paradigme est un ensemble de propositions partagées par un groupe de chercheurs et organisant la façon d'aborder un fait concret."*<sup>48</sup>

Dans le domaine des Relations Internationales, il existe plusieurs types de paradigmes, nous avons choisi de n'utiliser que ceux relevant des théories

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<sup>47</sup> Pour Thomas KHUN, un paradigme est une manière de voir ou de modèle sur lequel l'accord est réalisé dans une discipline. Un paradigme est une conception des choses, une manière de voir le monde et une manière de contrôler les modalités selon lesquelles les observations sont faites et les données collectées et classées. Un paradigme est une croyance portant sur les relations de cause et effet et les normes régissant les pratiques et les comportements des organisations in Revue Internationale des sciences sociales, UNESCO/eres n°135 Février 1993 p 3.

<sup>48</sup> (Cité par) GRAWITZ, Madeleine, op. cit., p 50.

globales : aussi allons-nous nous arrêter aux paradigmes réaliste, transnationaliste et globaliste.

Le paradigme réaliste d'abord parce qu'il perçoit la société internationale comme le lieu des relations entre Etats souverains à travers l'intérêt national, la puissance, la guerre ou l'équilibre des forces bien que le conflit érythréen oppose un Etat souverain à une entité sociale, ce paradigme s'impose par cet objet qui est le conflit.

Le paradigme transnationaliste ensuite, parce qu'il nous permet de saisir la société internationale comme une communauté universelle, un rassemblement d'hommes, un assemblage de relations tant individuelles qu'internationales.

Enfin, nous percevons la société internationale comme un système de domination des puissants sur les faibles, des possédants sur les possédés, des exploitants sur les exploités. C'est le paradigme globaliste.

L'ensemble de tous ces éléments théoriques et paradigmatiques, les technique de recherche, les méthodes proprement dites ainsi que la délimitations de notre sujet, nous ont fourni en dépit de nombreuses difficultés d'ordre pratique (publications sur l'Erythrée sont peu abondantes), et épistémologiques (nous travaillons en sciences sociales)<sup>49</sup> les moyens de procéder à la vérification de notre hypothèse pour lequel notre plan directeur se présente ainsi qu'il suit :

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<sup>49</sup> La principale difficulté, le remarquait le Professeur CHEVALIER, réside dans la qualité de chercheur observateur. Il dit à ce propos que "l'observateur modifie l'objet observé et est lui-même modifié par lui. Prendre

1<sup>ère</sup> PARTIE : UN CONFLIT INSOLUBLE PENDANT LA GUERRE FROIDE.

2<sup>ème</sup> PARTIE : UN CONFLIT RESOLU APRES LA FIN DE LA GUERRE FROIDE.

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHEQUE

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conscience d'une réalité humaine, psychologique et sociale, c'est déjà la transformer : l'homme est ici à la fois sujet et objet."

**PREMIERE PARTIE : UN CONFLIT  
INSOLUBLE PENDANT LA GUERRE FROIDE**

Dans cette première partie, nous nous attelons à présenter le conflit de l'Erythrée à la veille de la chute du Mur de Berlin. Cette partie comprend deux chapitres. Dans le premier, il s'agira de préciser les enjeux et les acteurs du conflit qui peut avant tout s'analyser comme un conflit intégrant les données géopolitiques tant au niveau local qu'au niveau régional. Dans le second, notre préoccupation consistera à donner des précisions sur l'évolution du conflit de l'Erythrée jusqu'à la chute du Mur de Berlin.

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHÈQUE

## **CHAPITRE I**

### **LES ENJEUX ET LES ACTEURS DU CONFLIT**

Le conflit érythréen trouve son origine dans la Résolution 390/A/V de l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies votée en 1950. Lors des débats qui avaient précédé le vote de cette Résolution, le représentant tchécoslovaque avait eu les propos prémonitoires suivants :

*“contrairement aux principes fondamentaux de la charte (des Nations Unies), elle (la Résolution) dénierait au peuple de l'Erythrée, le droit à l'autodétermination et lui imposerait une fédération avec l'Ethiopie que l'immense majorité refuse. Au lieu de maintenir la paix dans cette région, la Résolution engendrerait la guerre civile et le désordre.”<sup>50</sup>*

L'année 1961 marque le début du conflit armé. D'abord limité géographiquement et politiquement aux rapports entre l'Ethiopie et l'Erythrée ce conflit ne tardera pas par le mécanisme des alliances, à épouser les contours de la confrontation Est-Ouest. Ce chapitre se propose de présenter les enjeux et les acteurs du conflit.

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<sup>50</sup> Séance plénière de l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies, 1950



**SECTION I:      LES ENJEUX DU CONFLIT**

Le territoire érythréen, la Mer Rouge et la non-reconnaissance par l’Ethiopie du droit à l’autodétermination du peuple érythréen sont les enjeux du conflit de l’Erythrée.

**PARAGRAPHE I :      L’Erythrée : territoire autonome ou  
prolongement de l’Ethiopie ?**

Le problème du statut de l’Erythrée vis à vis de l’Ethiopie est au centre de ce conflit.

**A- Brève description de l’espace – Erythrée**

Le concept politique appelé Erythrée aujourd’hui désigne un espace situé sur les rives de la Mer Rouge entre le 12<sup>e</sup> degré et le 18<sup>e</sup> degré de latitude Nord, 34<sup>e</sup> degré et 40<sup>e</sup> degré de longitude Est. Il couvre une superficie de 124 320 km<sup>2</sup>. Ouvert sur la Mer Rouge à l’Est avec un millier de kilomètres de côte depuis Ras Kassar jusqu’à Ras Dumeira dans le Détroit de Bab El Mandeb le nom Erythrée a été officialisé dans les limites actuelles par le décret royal du Roi Humbert Ier d’Italie en date du 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1890<sup>51</sup>. Elle est limitée à l’Ouest par le Soudan et au Sud à la fois par L’Ethiopie et Djibouti.

L’espace-Erythrée se caractérise par la diversité de son relief et de son climat puis la variété de sa population.

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<sup>51</sup> Avant ce décret, le nom Erythrée désignait pour les grecs de l’antiquité la Mer rouge et la partie nord-ouest de l’Océan indien qu’ils appelaient alors la Négritie occidentale. En effet l’origine grecque du nom “Aerythrus” ou “Erytheus” semble dû à la prolifération épisodique d’une algue bleue “le thrichodesmium Erythraeus” qui vire au rouge à sa mort. Ce nom a remplacé les multiples autres qui avaient jusque-là étaient utilisés à savoir Médri geez (la terre des hommes libres), Médri bahri (le pays de la mer).

**1- Un relief et un climat diversifiés.**

Le relief érythréen peut être divisé en quatre régions géographiques :

- le Haut plateau
- Les montagnes septentrionales
- Les plaines orientales
- Les plaines occidentales

Le Haut plateau souvent coupé des montagnes abruptes et dont l'altitude moyenne oscille entre 1800 et 2500 mètres donne au pays sa morphologie. Au nord du haut plateau, on trouve des montagnes septentrionales. Celles-ci très accidentées abaissent l'altitude jusqu'à 1200 mètres. Elles constituent le château d'eau de l'Erythrée. A l'Ouest du Haut plateau, on trouve la plaine occidentale qui s'étend jusqu'à la frontière soudanaise. A l'Est, le Haut plateau tombe à pic le long de l'étroit littoral de la Mer Rouge pour donner sur la plaine orientale côtière en partie désertique et volcanique.

Le climat érythréen quant à lui varie en fonction du relief. Alors que le Haut plateau et les montagnes septentrionales jouissent d'un climat tempéré ; la plaine occidentale et la plaine orientale connaissent un climat très chaud pour le premier et très sec pour le second. L'Erythrée reçoit des précipitations irrégulièrement réparties sur deux saisons : l'hiver et l'été. En hiver, il pleut dans les plaines orientales tandis qu'en été, le reste de l'Erythrée est arrosé.<sup>52</sup>

**2- Une population variée.**

En 1988, la population érythréenne était estimée à 3 400 000 habitants dont la grande majorité se retrouvait dans les 3 provinces du Haut plateau que sont l'Akkele-Guzai, le Seraye, et l'Hamassien au Nord où se trouve la capitale Asmara. Comme bien d'espace forgé à travers les siècles, la population

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<sup>52</sup> Les régions de Ghinda et de Fil-fil sur les pentes orientales du Haut plateau font exception en ce sens qu'elles bénéficient de précipitations hivernales et estivales la transformant en un oasis de verdure.

érythréenne est très diversifiée. En nous limitant à en étudier non le détail mais les grands traits de la structure sociale, nous distinguons trois groupes linguistiques : un principal, le groupe sémitique, et deux autres, le groupe hamitique et le groupe nilotique (voir carte n°3).

a- **Le groupe sémitique.**

Le groupe linguistique sémitique comprend deux sous-groupes linguistiques ayant en commun le Guez qui n'a survécu que dans la liturgie copte. Ce sont les Tigriniens d'une part et les Tigrés de l'autre.<sup>53</sup> Les Tigriniens constituent un sous-groupe dans lequel on peut distinguer les Tigriniens proprement dits des Djabarti. Les Tigriniens proprement dits forment un groupe homogène composé de cultivateurs sédentaires coptes parlant le Tigrinia.<sup>54</sup> Ils représentent la moitié de la population et occupent les 3 provinces du Haut-plateau central. Du point de vue sociologique, les Djabartis ne se distinguent en rien des Tigriniens avec qui du reste, ils vivent en bonne intelligence même si dans le passé, une certaine discrimination ait été exercée contre eux. Les Djabartis sont une petite communauté de religion musulmane qui s'adonne à l'artisanat et au commerce. On y trouve aussi une forte proportion d'intellectuels. Les Tigrés seconde composante du groupe sémitique, représentent l'ensemble des membres des communautés des Samhars, des Beni Amer, des Habab, des Maria et des Memsas.

Les Samhars sont des cultivateurs ou sémi-nomade qui vivent dans l'archipel de Dahlak<sup>55</sup> et le long de la région côtière allant de Massawa au Piémont de Ghinda. Les populations Samhars sont formées en majorité par les Adchouma, les Bai-cheikh et les Masshalit tous de confession musulmane et

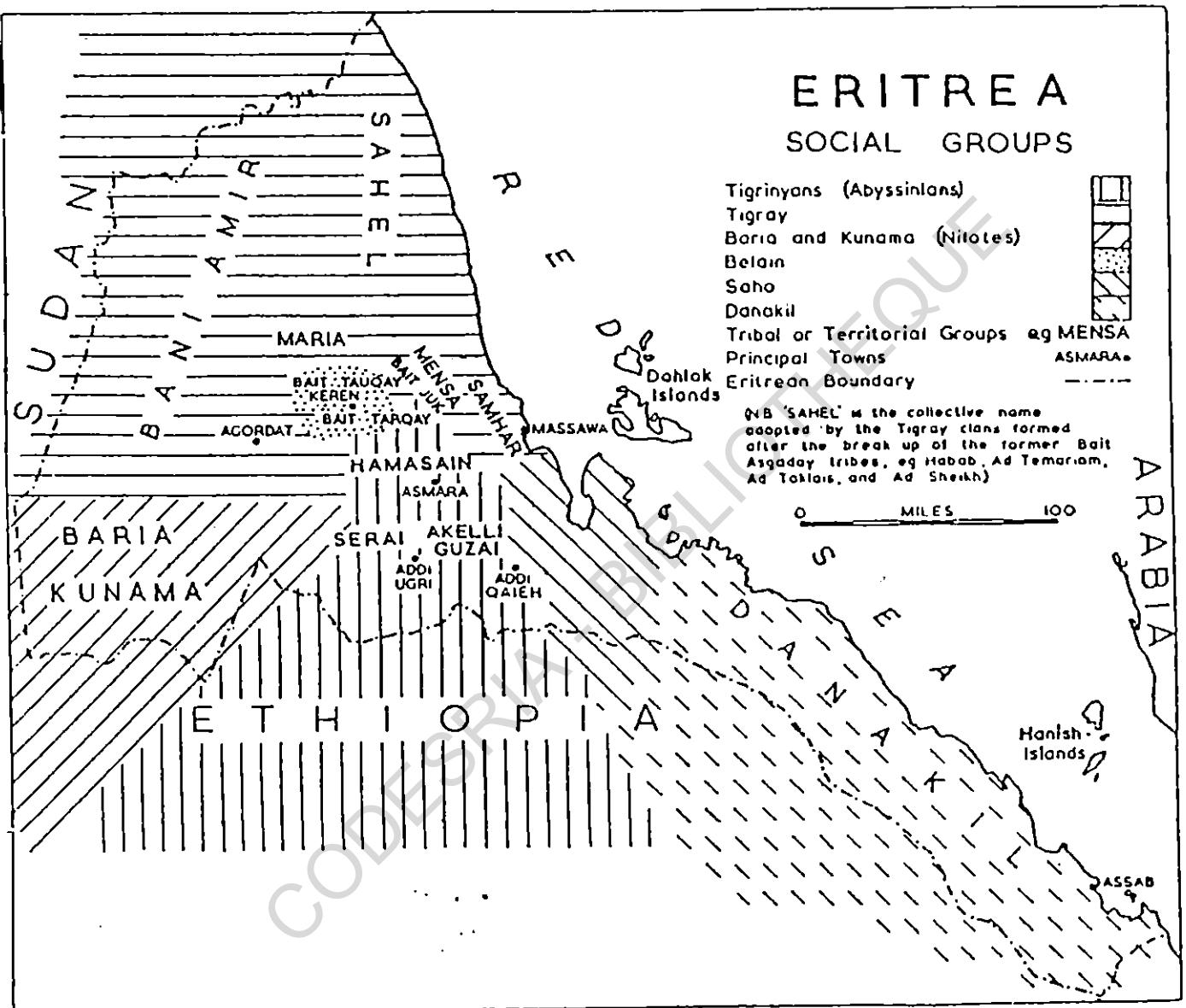
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<sup>53</sup> Les langues Tigrinia et tigré sont parlées par plus de 80% de la population.

<sup>54</sup> Sur les modes d'organisation dans les sociétés Tigriniennes, lire NADEL (S.F.), "Land tenure on the Eritrean plateau", in *Africa*, Vol. XVI, January, 1946.

<sup>55</sup> L'archipel de Dahlak comprend 127 îles. Il tient son nom de l'île principale Dahlak Al-Kahi (900 Km<sup>2</sup>).

Carte n°3 : Localisation des groupes et ethno-linguistiques



source : CAHSAI (B) et WILLIAMSON (E) op. cit. P. 15

parlant le tigré et l'arabe. Les Beni Amer sont des pasteurs nomades ou sédentaires installés dans l'Ouest et le Sud-Ouest de l'Erythrée. Cette grande communauté qui peuple les environs d'Agordat et s'étend de l'Est de la ville de Keren jusqu'aux frontières soudanaises, comprend 21 tribus. De ce fait, les Beni-Amer constituent la plus importante des communautés composant les Tigrés.

Les Habab comprennent les tribus du Nord (Baït-Habies, Baït-takles et les Baït-tamarian) bien que constituant un ensemble homogène, les Habab vivent dispersés. Les Memsah sont cantonnés aux environs de Keren dans le Nord-Est. Communauté formée de deux branches : les Baït-Abache et les Baït-Echahkin), les Memsah, musulmans ou chrétiens sont réputés tolérants. Partagés en deux branches, les Maria Sallan et les Maria Caiah, les Maria qui parlent tigré sont des musulmans vivant au Nord-Ouest. Ils pratiquent l'agriculture et l'élevage.

## **2 - Le groupe hamitique.**

Moins important que le groupe sémitique, les hamitiques constituent une population de quatre ethnies : les Afars ou Danakil, les Beja, les Bilen et les Saho. Les Afars sont en général pasteurs et nomades. Toutefois, certains d'entre eux sont cultivateurs, pêcheurs ou même travailleurs dans les marais salants. Installés dans les régions côtières du sud-est de l'Erythrée, les Afars qui se distinguent par leur unité linguistique et leur attachement à l'islam, sont divisés en deux groupes : les Asamara et les Adomara.

Les Beja sont des musulmans parlant la langue Bédaouie. Ils sont organisés sur une base patriarcale. Ils ont la réputation d'être extrêmement particularistes et de "régler" leurs affaires entre eux.<sup>56</sup> Les Bilen ont deux clans : les Baït-Tarké qui sont des musulmans et les Baït-Takwé en majorité des chrétiens. Communauté d'agriculteurs, les Bilen sont des bilingues (ils parlent

le Bilen et le tigré) qui vivent dans la région du Bogos à l'Ouest des Memsa. Les Saho de confession musulmane forment 5 groupes distincts. Les Assaorta, les Dehimela, les Hazon, les Miniferi et les Sanafe. Peuplant le Sud du golfe de Zoula jusqu'au versant oriental du Haut plateau, les Saho qui parlent uniquement leur langue le Saho sont sédentaires, pasteurs ou sémi-nomades.

### **3- Le groupe nilotique.**

Les Baria et les Kounama composent le groupe nilotique. Les Baria parlent le Nara. Ce sont des agriculteurs sédentaires vivant dans les régions du Gash et de Setit. De confession musulmane, la communauté Baria repose sur deux clans : les Mogreb et les Higgir.

Les Kounama parlent la langue Baza. Comme les Baria avec qui ils partagent la région du Gash et de Sétit, les Kounama sont des agriculteurs sédentaires de confession majoritairement musulmane malgré l'existence des minorités issues du Sud de la Somalie.<sup>57</sup> Ainsi donc, l'Erythrée se présente comme une entité politique aux populations en majorité agricoles et pastorales composées pour 2/3 des musulmans et 1/3 des chrétiens.

## **B/ Evolution historique et politique de l'Erythrée**

L'Erythrée tout au long de l'histoire a toujours été présentée comme un carrefour de civilisation et de religion. Trois moments historiques ont marqué son évolution : la colonisation italienne, l'occupation anglaise et l'annexion éthiopienne.

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<sup>56</sup> Ténaille (F.), *Les 56 Afriques*, Guide de politique/1 de A à L. PCM, 1979, p. 156.

<sup>57</sup> Deschamps (H.), *Histoire générale de l'Afrique*, Paris, PUF, 1970.

### **1- La colonisation italienne (1885 – 1941).**

Au lendemain de son unité, l'Italie allait s'engager dans une politique d'industrialisation et de colonisation. L'occupation de l'Erythrée après l'ouverture du Canal de Suez en sera la première étape.<sup>58</sup>

C'est ainsi qu'en 1885, les Italiens sous le prétexte de protéger leur « colonie »<sup>59</sup> après l'incident de Baïlul occupent Massawa ainsi que toute la côte érythréenne sans qu'aucune force organisée puisse s'opposer à eux.<sup>60</sup> Après avoir brisé les soulèvements qui éclatèrent à Baïlul, Arafale, Saati, Hargigo, Keren, Dogali... quelques jours après l'occupation, l'Italie se trouvera totalement maîtresse de l'Erythrée.<sup>61</sup> Par une série d'accords et de traités, la frontière de l'Erythrée et au-delà celle de la sphère d'influence de l'Italie sera délimitée.

Ainsi en 1889, par le traité d'Ucciali signé avec MENELIK II, Roi d'Ethiopie, l'Italie s'engage à reconnaître la ligne Mereb – Mellash (au-delà du Mereb) comme frontière inviolable entre l'Ethiopie et l'Erythrée.<sup>62</sup> En 1891, un accord conclu avec l'Angleterre écarte l'Italie de la Vallée du Nil en même temps qu'il spécifie sa zone de domination.

Au lendemain de la défaite d'Adoua en 1896, est signé le traité d'Addis-Abeba qui mettra fin aux visées italiennes sur l'Ethiopie. Il sera suivi le 10 juillet 1900 par la Convention réaffirmant les frontières au-delà du Mereb entre l'Erythrée et l'Ethiopie. L'Italie qui voulait faire de l'Erythrée sa base

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<sup>58</sup> Le plan italien consistait à occuper la Méditerranée. Ainsi, à travers l'occupation de l'Erythrée, elle était à même en accord avec l'Angleterre d'atteindre par le Soudan et le Darfour, l'Hinterland tripolitain (Libye actuelle). Pour plus d'information lire PONTEIL (F.), La Méditerranée et les puissances depuis l'ouverture jusqu'à la nationalisation du Canal de Suez, Paris, Payot, 1964, pp. 56 – 57.

<sup>59</sup> A propos de colonie, il s'agissait en fait d'une station sur la côte érythréenne faisant face à l'Arabie établie par le Piémontais SAPETO qui a fondé par la suite un comptoir minier avant de le céder à l'Italie en 1882.

<sup>60</sup> En mai 1881, les Afar méfiants vis-à-vis des étrangers avaient décimé la mission italienne dirigée par Gillioti qui tentait de s'implanter dans la région côtière de Baïlul.

<sup>61</sup> BISMARCK, protesta et réclama le retrait des troupes Italiennes. Mais sans résultat.

<sup>62</sup> Sur le traité d'Ucciali, lire MIEGE (J.L.), L'impérialisme colonial italien de 1870 à nos jours, Paris, Sedes, 1968.

d'opération contre l'Éthiopie devait désormais s'engager dans une politique de bon voisinage.

L'Italie permettra à l'Éthiopie de recevoir des produits à partir de l'Érythrée. Elle ouvrira à l'Éthiopie un passage pour accéder au port érythréen d'Assab et autorisera la construction d'une route partant d'Assab pour la frontière éthiopienne. La victoire de l'Italie sur l'Éthiopie en 1935 bouleversera les données géopolitiques de la région. Ainsi l'Érythrée sera intégrée à l'Empire oriental italien proclamé le 9 mai 1936.

La colonisation de l'Érythrée permettra à l'Italie, non seulement d'y prendre en main l'appareil administratif et politique, mais surtout d'y poursuivre une politique de développement économique dont allait largement bénéficier une partie de la population italienne. Les Anglais après la défaite de l'Italie en 1941 trouveront une Érythrée mise en valeur principalement sur le plan économique, disposant de produits de base et jouissant de l'existence d'une industrie légère, notamment de transformation des produits de base et halieutiques. De même, les industries alimentaires, les tanneries, les usines de filature, les fabriques de chaussures et les industries de transport et de construction étaient en plein essor. On y dénombrait 501 entreprises industrielles, 1073 entreprises de transport et 624 entreprises de construction.

Toutefois, cet essor économique ne bénéficia pas directement aux populations érythréennes, le principal souci du Gouvernement italien étant essentiellement de transformer ce territoire en colonie de peuplement. Ainsi dans le domaine agricole par exemple, le colon italien avait promulgué une série de décrets (de 1894 à 1929) par lesquels il confisqua plus de 30 000 ha de terre, les plus fertiles du plateau en les déclarant terres de la Couronne réservées aux Italiens. Les conséquences sociales de cette politique d'appropriation des



meilleures terres furent néfastes : refoulement des paysans ; déclin du nomadisme et sédentarisation forcée se traduisant par une prolétarisation.<sup>63</sup>

Bien plus, subordonnée à des intérêts politiques financiers italiens, l'économie érythréenne était substantiellement déséquilibrée. Aucune harmonie n'existait entre les diverses régions du pays. En effet, le secteur économique impulsé de l'extérieur et sous contrôle colonial ne se diffusa guère dans l'ensemble des pays. On pouvait donc distinguer des régions, d'économie à prédominance capitaliste, des régions traditionnelles dominées par l'économie villageoise. De surcroît, la prédominance des institutions financières coloniales conduisit au développement d'une inféodation systématique de la campagne et constitua une entrave à l'évolution de la population paysanne qui avait du mal à coexister avec une colonisation dotée de tous les moyens modernes de travail. Ainsi, les petits et les moyens paysans privés généralement de leur terre furent contraints à un déplacement progressif de la campagne vers les centres urbains.<sup>64</sup>

La modification de l'organisation économique et sociale dans les zones rurales allant de pair avec la politique d'urbanisation, il s'en suivit, malgré l'entrave du colon italien, à la naissance d'une classe de petits fonctionnaires condamnés à végéter dans des emplois de service et qui développeront des formations ouvrières.<sup>65</sup> L'administration italienne était parvenue à désorganiser le système de propriété de la terre régissant le Haut plateau, système dont les deux formes traditionnelles (*dessa* et *resti*) excluaient le féodalisme proprement dit et assurait une forme de collectivisme, en se jouant sur l'ambiguïté de leurs obligations de telle sorte que les notables du village se sont trouvés privés des

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<sup>63</sup> Lire NAFI Kurdi (H), *L'Erythrée, une identité retrouvée*, Paris, Karthala, 1994, pp. 75 – 78.

<sup>64</sup> Ce qui au fond était l'objectif recherché par l'administration italienne pour développer ses entreprises agricoles et industrielles en quête de main-d'œuvre.

<sup>65</sup> Durant la période coloniale, l'enseignement en Erythrée ne dépassa pas le cours élémentaire. Au surplus, il était rétrograde et réactionnaire dans les programmes d'étude comme dans l'organisation scolaire et les méthodes pédagogiques. De façon générale, hormis la formation des cadres parmi le clergé et les notables, l'éducation dispensée par la colonisation se bornait à donner les rudiments nécessaires à la formation d'un personnel administratif subalterne.

avantages fondés sur leur autorité au sein de la collectivité. Et par des mesures qui ont suivi ils ont transformé les obligations réciproques au sein des collectivités en un système politique sémi-féodal.

En somme, la politique coloniale italienne bouleversa toute l'organisation économique, politique et sociale de la campagne et des villages tout en renforçant les différences de classes sociales en mutation. Cette situation ne sera pas remise en cause par l'occupant britannique.

## 2- L'occupation anglaise (1941 – 1952).

En 1941, l'Italie membre des puissances de l'Axe entre en guerre aux côtés de l'Allemagne contre la France et l'Angleterre. A la fin de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale elle perdra l'Erythrée au profit de l'Angleterre.

Premier territoire libéré en 1941, la conquête de l'Erythrée allait également permettre aux alliés de reprendre le contrôle de la Méditerranée. Ce territoire allait devenir à la fois la base arrière des alliés et la plaque tournante d'approvisionnement pour le Moyen-Orient isolé par la guerre.

Ainsi l'économie érythréenne dans ce nouveau contexte allait reposer pour l'essentiel sur les projets militaires. A titre d'exemple l'on peut citer le centre de réparation et d'entretien d'avions à Asmara, l'usine d'assemblage aéronautique à Goura, la réparation de bateaux dans le port de Massawa qui deviendra une importante base navale. Parallèlement à ces domaines d'activités intenses mais conçu à court terme<sup>66</sup>, les Anglais donnent à l'agriculture une orientation sélective.

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<sup>66</sup> L'arrivée des Anglais allait modifier la physionomie économique du pays et ce d'autant plus que la plupart des entreprises qui n'avaient pas survécu à la défaite italienne. Ainsi l'Erythrée italienne alors exportatrice de produit agricoles et d'élevage se trouvera réduite à la satisfaction de la consommation locale, mesure justifiée pour les Anglais par la fermeture du Canal de Suez.

Dans le domaine de l'éducation les Anglais avaient divisé l'Erythrée sur une base confessionnelle avec d'une part une Erythrée chrétienne recevant une éducation en anglais et une Erythrée musulmane recevant un enseignement en arabe. Dans l'ensemble, l'administration britannique apporta des modifications préjudiciables à la cohésion du peuple érythréen, comme le constate Nafi KURDI :

*“En somme, l'occupation anglaise s'est efforcée de briser les relations de complémentarité qui existent entre les diverses régions et de désarticuler le pays par zones géographiques avec des secteurs à économie archaïque fondés sur l'autoconsommation juxtaposés à des secteurs modernes. Durant des années, le système anglais impose des structures sources d'imbroglios sans fin et entretiendra des rivalités religieuses plus ou moins prononcées et préjudiciables aux aspirations du peuple érythréen.”<sup>67</sup>*

Les problèmes que connaîtra l'Erythrée tirent en grande partie leur origine de la situation ainsi créée.

Bien plus, croyant pouvoir recouvrer son indépendance<sup>68</sup>, les Erythréens ne verront désormais les Anglais qu'à travers la politique de division confessionnelle qui a permis l'intervention de L'Ethiopie en Erythrée par le biais de l'Eglise érythréenne. Cette intervention éthiopienne en Erythrée se fondait sur le traité de coopération anglo-italien de 1943 et de la Convention politique et militaire signée en 1947 par ces deux Etats. L'antagonisme prévaudra ainsi dans le différend entre l'Ethiopie et l'Erythrée. Une telle conjoncture fut à n'en pas douter favorable aux puissances attirées par la position stratégique de

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<sup>67</sup> KURDI Nafi, *L'Erythrée, une identité retrouvée*, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>68</sup> Dès l'ouverture des hostilités de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, les Anglais avaient eu l'idée d'inviter les érythréens servant dans l'armée italienne à désertre et de demander à la population de coopérer pour le bien-être de l'Erythrée. Le contenu des documents largués dans le pays (qui encourageait les érythréens dans leur hostilité à l'occupant italien) était le suivant : “à vous peuple qui désirez avoir votre propre drapeau nous donnons notre parole qu'il vous sera permis de choisir le gouvernement que vous désirez”.

l'Erythrée. En attendant, l'ONU se saisit de la question érythréenne dans le cadre de la résolution du problème des anciennes colonies italiennes dès 1948.<sup>69</sup>

### **3- Les rapports avec l'Ethiopie : de la fédération à l'annexion**

Après trois sessions (1948, 1949, 1950) consécutives de débats qui dévoilaient la nature impérialiste des tractations entre les grandes puissances<sup>70</sup>, l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies allait entériner à la quatrième, la proposition de la sous-commission sur l'Erythrée sous le titre de Résolution 289.A. (VV) et décidait le 21 novembre 1949 de la création d'une commission d'enquête composée de cinq membres (Birmanie, Guatemala, Norvège, Pakistan, Afrique du Sud). Cette commission était chargée de prendre en considération deux éléments :

- 1- Les aspirations du peuple érythréen, en s'informant sur ses conditions économiques, sociales et politiques et en recueillant le point de vue de divers groupes et organisations représentatifs du pays.
- 2- Les éléments d'information nécessaires auprès des autorités britanniques administrant le pays.

Au terme de son enquête en Erythrée, la Commission constatera son incapacité à dégager une synthèse par suite des divergences fondamentales entre ses membres. Le 15 juin 1950, elle déposera au Secrétariat Général pour le soumettre au débat de la cinquième session, deux rapports aux solutions diamétralement opposées. L'un du Guatemala et du Pakistan favorable à l'indépendance<sup>71</sup> ; l'autre de l'Afrique du Sud, de la Birmanie et la Norvège se prononçant pour le rattachement fédéral à L'Ethiopie. Toutefois, les membres se

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<sup>69</sup> Il convient de signaler toutefois que la question avait déjà été abordée en juillet – août 1945 à Postdam par le conseil de ministre des affaires étrangères des Etats-Unis, de la Grande Bretagne, de la France et de l'URSS.

<sup>70</sup> Lire CAO-HUY THUAN, "Les Etats-Unis et la question érythréenne" in *La question de l'Erythrée*, Droit international et politique des deux grands, Paris, PUF, 1979, p. 53.

<sup>71</sup> Telle avait été la position de l'ONU déjà pour la Libye et la Somalie.

sont tous accordés pour souligner l'opposition au partage du pays exprimé par la majorité des Erythréens.<sup>72</sup>

Appelé à se prononcer sur ces rapports contradictoires lors de sa cinquième session, l'Assemblée Générale se trouva submergée par plusieurs projets et résolutions soviétique, polonais, pakistanais, uruguayen, irakien qui préconisaient l'indépendance immédiate ou à terme de l'Erythrée d'une part ; et d'autre part d'une contre-proposition américaine appuyée par le groupe dit des "14 puissances" patronné par les Etats-Unis qui prévoient la fédération de l'Erythrée à l'Ethiopie. Cette contre-proposition faite à la treizième séance sera adoptée le 2 décembre 1950 par 46 voix contre 10 et 4 abstentions. Ce projet devient ainsi la Résolution 390.A (V) qui stipule l'union fédérale entre l'Erythrée et l'Ethiopie dans laquelle l'Erythrée constituerait une entité autonome.

Ainsi appelée à exercer son autodétermination sur la base des critères onusiens, l'Erythrée "entité autonome" fédérée à L'Ethiopie, saisisait à travers l'autonomie une condition préalable à l'acte fédéral. En effet, l'acte fédéral impliquait l'existence de collectivités politiques individualisées et distinctes ayant chacune son législateur et ses systèmes administratif et juridique. Etant entendu que son lien fédéral avec l'Ethiopie n'entraînait en aucune manière une quelconque fusion avec celle-ci, mais qu'il se fondait sur la complémentarité réciproque, l'entité érythréenne devait se caractériser par sa situation propre découlant de l'autonomie constitutionnelle irréversible dont elle était pourvue. Elle devait posséder alors un édifice constitutionnel établi par ses différents organes constituants et agréé par le commissaire de l'ONU au lendemain de l'acte fédéral. Elle se dota d'un système politique comprenant tous les organes d'un Etat. Son autonomie impliquait au niveau administratif l'exécution des lois

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<sup>72</sup> Lire *Rapport de la commission des Nations Unies pour l'Erythrée*, Supplément n°8 (A 1285), Lake Success ? New York, 1950.

au sens large. Au niveau législatif, le droit d'élaborer les lois et au niveau judiciaire le droit d'appliquer celles-ci par le moyen de tribunaux locaux.

Elle devait posséder à sa tête non des agents tenus en tutelle, mais des vrais gouvernants dont l'exercice de compétence devait être soustrait à toute direction, à tout contrôle, à toute immixtion des organes fédéraux non constituants.

Malgré la terminologie de l'acte fédéral, l'union fédérale progressera vers l'annexion de l'Erythrée par L'Ethiopie. D'abord les systèmes politiques respectifs de l'Ethiopie et de l'Erythrée ne répondait pas à la condition fédérale. Il y avait manifestement incompatibilité, mieux, des difficultés à concilier sous la forme d'une constitution le gouvernement démocratique érythréen d'un côté et de l'autre la monarchie absolutiste et féodale éthiopienne. Ensuite, le jour de la mise sur pied de la fédération, l'armée éthiopienne s'installa à Asmara et dans le même temps, le pouvoir éthiopien vida la constitution érythréenne de tous ces éléments instituant la liberté syndicale, d'association, de publication et d'expression.

Au fil des années, il est apparu clairement aux Erythréens et à l'opinion internationale que la qualification d'entité autonome déguisait en fait l'annexion de l'Erythrée. Ce processus allait connaître son aboutissement le 14 juin 1962 à Asmara. Devant l'Assemblée Nationale érythréenne, le Négus dans un discours déclarera le retour à la mère patrie de l'Erythrée en ces termes :

*“A partir de maintenant, il n'y aura qu'une nation : l'Ethiopie. La fédération imposée par les circonstances n'existe plus.”<sup>73</sup>*

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<sup>73</sup> Discours lu à Asmara devant une assemblée nationale entourée par des troupes éthiopiennes composées à 90% d'éléments chrétiens. Pour plus de détails, lire CAHSAÏ (B) et WILLIAMSON (E.), “Une étude politico-juridique de la question érythréenne”, *Le mois en Afrique*, n°217 – 218, février – mars 1984.

L'importance des enjeux du territoire érythréen tels qu'ils étaient perçus par l'Éthiopie expliquent pour une large part la position de l'Empereur HAILE SELASSIE I<sup>er</sup>.

### **C- Les arguments des parties en conflit**

Les arguments des Érythréens et des Éthiopiens se fondent sur l'Histoire, la Sociologie et le Droit International

#### **1- Les arguments historiques.**

Au plan historique, la prétention éthiopienne se fonde sur un long passé vécu en commun avec l'Érythrée. Dans le manifeste publié en 1978 par le Derg qui reprenait les arguments déjà défendus par maints Éthiopiens avant Mengistu, on pouvait lire :

*“L'histoire atteste que la partie nord de l'Éthiopie et notamment la région appelée aujourd'hui Érythrée a été le berceau de la civilisation éthiopienne (...). Lorsque la civilisation axoumite a atteint son apogée du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle au VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle après Jésus-Christ, la région d'Érythrée faisait partie intégrante de l'Éthiopie (...). Elle jouait un rôle prépondérant dans le maintien de l'unité du pays. Depuis lors, et jusqu'à la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, les liens solides qui unissaient l'Érythrée au gouvernement central n'ont jamais été rompus.”<sup>74</sup>*

Les nationalistes érythréens s'opposent à ce « droit historique » éthiopien sur leur territoire. Ils soutiennent que :

*“Toutes les sources disponibles sur le royaume d'Axoum montrent qu'Axoum ne s'étendait pas sur la totalité de l'Érythrée actuelle. Il*

*n'est pas non plus vrai que le royaume d'Abyssinie (Ethiopie) soit une « expansion », une « extension », une « excroissance » ou une évolution du royaume d'Axoum. Les deux royaumes occupaient des territoires distincts à des périodes distinctes.*<sup>75</sup>

Continuant à réfuter l'argumentation éthiopienne d'après laquelle les abyssiniens ont établi leur influence en Erythrée entre les XIII<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles, les nationalistes érythréens affirment :

*“Aucun roi abyssin ne régna sur le plateau érythréen durant cette période.”*<sup>76</sup>

Cependant à l'analyse ces thèses qui soutiennent que l'Erythrée n'a jamais fait partie de l'Ethiopie ancienne sont à relativiser inexacte. En effet, l'histoire de l'Erythrée est celle d'une aire géographique constamment soumise à des conquêtes et à des occupations plus ou moins longues par une variété de royaumes féodaux. L'allégeance y était liée au paiement d'un tribut. Alors que les populations côtières musulmanes étaient depuis le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle sous la suzeraineté ottomane puis égyptienne, l'autre moitié, celle des régions des hauts plateaux chrétiens était liée aux Empires éthiopiens d'Abyssinie. Mais l'on peut relever que ces relations étaient précaires et généralement faisaient de ces régions des fiefs dont les gouverneurs devaient se contenter de payer tribut lorsque les souverains se montraient forts. La dernière trace d'un royaume abyssinien est celle du roi de Tigré Yohanes IV qui occupa le plateau jusqu'en 1879 avant d'y être délogé par la colonisation italienne.<sup>77</sup>

## **2- Les arguments sociologiques, culturels et religieux**

Pour les Ethiopiens, la population des hauts plateaux a toujours été considérée du point de vue religieux et culturel au sens large comme liée au

<sup>74</sup> DERG La révolution en Ethiopie et le problème de l'Erythrée. Manifeste, Addis-Abeba, 1978.

<sup>75</sup> Association d'étudiants érythréens en Amérique du nord in Defense of eritrean revolution

<sup>76</sup> Eritrea information, Vol. 1, n°1, Rome, janvier 1981.



destin de l'Éthiopie. C'est d'ailleurs en se fondant sur ces éléments que les Italiens pendant leur occupation allaient rattacher la province éthiopienne du Tigré à la grande Érythrée dans la mesure où il s'agissait d'une population semblable à celle du haut plateau érythréen. On comprend donc pourquoi en 1950, devant la commission de l'ONU, le ministre éthiopien des affaires étrangères avait tenu les propos suivants :

*“Au cours de vos voyages en Érythrée et en Éthiopie, vous avez pu constater vous-mêmes l'identité complète des territoires et des peuples qui pendant des milliers d'années ont été considérés comme constituant l'Éthiopie. En dépit de l'appartenance de l'Érythrée à l'Italie pendant 50 ans, ce sont les mêmes peuples que vous avez vus (...)”<sup>78</sup>*

De même, la politique de l'Éthiopie en Érythrée s'est appuyée sur l'Église Copte pour justifier l'annexion grâce à l'influence spirituelle, exercée par l'entremise des 3500 prêtres attachés au 550 églises et des 1870 moines vivant dans les 14 monastères érythréens. Ayant vu sa richesse matérielle considérablement diminuer par le colonialisme italien cette église dotée en 1935 d'un évêque “*L'abouna*” se verra promettre par le Négus HAÏLE SELASSIE la restitution des biens confisqués par les italiens et en partie redistribués aux villageois dans le cadre d'une “*union*”. Dès 1943, les églises allaient jouer un rôle d'officine aux activités éthiopiennes. Face à l'indifférence des populations à l'égard d'une éthiopianisation de la religion, le clergé allait menacer d'excommunication les Érythréens partisans de l'indépendance.

Etat chrétien pris en charge par des familles royales tigréennes ou Amhara, l'Éthiopie a une histoire caractérisée par une résistance séculaire à l'islam. Aussi a-t-elle tout au long de son histoire été hantée pour sa sécurité par

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<sup>77</sup> Miegge (J.L.) *L'impérialisme colonial italien de 1870 à nos jours*, Paris, Sedes, 1968, p. 317.

<sup>78</sup> Report of the United Nations Commission : consultations with the government of Ethiopia, Annex 6.

le mythe de la « Grande Ethiopie » s'étendant naturellement de la vallée du Nil à la Mer Rouge et à l'Océan Indien. Cette « Grande Ethiopie » comprendrait la totalité de l'Erythrée, une partie du Soudan et une autre de la Somalie. Caressée par maints empereurs, ce projet irrédentiste allait entrer dans sa phase de réalisation dans le dernier quart du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Utilisant au mieux les rivalités inter-européennes dans la Corne de l'Afrique, MENELIK II allait ainsi étendre l'Ethiopie. Toute sa moitié sud à l'exception de l'Erythrée alors, colonie italienne, fut conquise et intégrée à l'Empire abyssin. C'est à partir du Royaume de Choa que la Roi MENELIK II, personnalité vigoureuse entreprend de réaliser en deux phases le projet millénaire éthiopien consistant à posséder des nouvelles frontières vers la mer et le sud.<sup>79</sup>

La colonisation italienne de l'Erythrée empêcha MENELIK II d'atteindre la Mer Rouge. Après l'expansion rapide de MENELIK II, l'Ethiopie devient un Etat multi-ethnique. Au moment de la colonisation italienne en Erythrée, l'Ethiopie était déjà constituée dans ses limites contemporaines.

### **3- Le principe de l'intangibilité des frontières héritées de la colonisation.**

Le 14 novembre 1962, le chef de l'exécutif érythréen TEKLE BAÏROU dans une déclaration devant l'Assemblée Nationale s'exprimera en ces termes :

*“La déclaration que je vais vous lire met un point final à l'affaire érythréenne. Vous ne pouvez rien faire d'autre que de l'approuver comme telle. Nous déclarons la fédération nulle et non avenue et nous sommes complètement unis avec notre mère patrie.”<sup>80</sup>*

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<sup>79</sup> GALLAIS (J.), Une géographie politique de l'Ethiopie : le poids de l'Etat, Paris, Economica, 1989, pp. 21-24.

<sup>80</sup> Ce discours a été lu alors que l'assemblée nationale érythréenne était entourée par un détachement militaire de l'armée éthiopienne majoritairement composée d'éléments chrétiens.

Pour les Erythréens, ce retour à la mère patrie n'est rien d'autre qu'une annexion pure et simple.<sup>81</sup> La colonisation Italienne de l'Erythrée (1890-1941) est l'argument sur lequel il se fonde pour réclamer la reconnaissance par l'Ethiopie de son droit à l'autodétermination. Car celle-ci a fait d'elle une entité politique distincte de L'Ethiopie, ayant son drapeau, son hymne et ses institutions.

Pour les Erythréens, le traité d'Ucciali en 1889 avait conféré une existence juridique du peuple Erythréen. Ce droit seul doit régler le sort de l'Erythrée dans le cadre du mouvement historique qui de la colonisation conduit à la décolonisation en suivant les règles générales posées à cette occasion par le droit international depuis la déclaration des Nations Unies du 14 décembre 1960.<sup>82</sup>

Eu égard donc à cette Résolution 1514 (XV) les Erythréens affirment que : *"l'essence de l'affaire érythréenne est d'être un cas de décolonisation non encore résolu."*

L'Ethiopie est ainsi accusée d'exercer une domination coloniale sur l'Erythrée après avoir vidé la résolution 390 (AV) de son contenu dans son application.<sup>83</sup> Le conflit de l'Erythrée trouve sa particularité du fait qu'il ne découle pas du principe de respect des frontières coloniales, véritable loi d'airain sur laquelle se sont brisés les séparatistes du Katanga, du Biafra et de l'Ogaden.<sup>84</sup> Au regard des arguments des parties, il nous apparaît que le conflit de l'Erythrée est moins un problème de maintien ou non des frontières existantes. L'exercice du droit à l'autodétermination de l'Erythrée que lui

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<sup>81</sup> CASHAI (B.) et WILLIAMSON (E.), "Une étude politico-juridique de la question érythréenne" in *Le Mois en Afrique*, n° 217-218, février-mars 1983, pp. 75-79.

<sup>82</sup> Déclaration relative à l'octroi de l'indépendance aux peuples et pays coloniaux. Cette résolution 1514 (XV) a été votée par l'Assemblée Générale de l'ONU.

<sup>83</sup> CASHAI (B.) et WILLIAMSON (E.), op. cit., pp. 75-79.

<sup>84</sup> BATHA (M.A.) *La dynamique sécessionniste dans l'Afrique indépendanté*, IRIC, Thèse, 1998.

contestait Addis-Abeba est conforme au principe de l'intangibilité des frontières coloniales cher à l'OUA.<sup>85</sup> La Mer rouge et la non reconnaissance par l'Ethiopie du droit à l'autodétermination du peuple Erythréen en constituent les deux autres.

**PARAGRAPHE II : La Mer rouge et la non reconnaissance par l'Ethiopie du droit du peuple Erythréen à l'autodétermination.**

**A- La Mer Rouge**

Considérée depuis l'antiquité à la fois comme une seconde Méditerranée et un prolongement attractif de l'Océan Indien, la Mer Rouge (dont l'importance a parfois été exagérée<sup>86</sup>) sécréta sur ses deux littoraux opposés arabique et africain, c'est-à-dire de part et d'autre du Déroit de Bab El Mandeb, une civilisation commune reliant et enrichissant les populations riveraines.

Bien que dépourvue de bons ports naturels à l'exception de Djibouti<sup>87</sup>, son intérêt allait croître avec le creusement du Canal de Suez et la découverte du pétrole dans la péninsule arabique. La Mer Rouge allait ainsi permettre de raccourcir les routes pétrolières qui relient le Golfe persique non seulement du Golfe d'Aqaba et au Canal de Suez, mais aussi à l'Europe et aux Etats-Unis autour du Cap. C'est à travers la Mer rouge que le pétrole du Golfe persique arrive en Israël à l'extrémité du Golfe d'Aqaba en passant par les détroits d'Eilath et par le Canal de Suez pour l'Europe.

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<sup>85</sup> Nous reprenons à notre compte les conclusions des journées de solidarité avec le peuple érythréen. Travaux du colloque de Jussieu, Université Paris VII, 9 décembre 1978.

<sup>86</sup> Lire SERVOISE (R.), "Vers un équilibre des forces dans l'Océan indien". Revue des travaux de l'académie des sciences morales et politiques, 131<sup>e</sup> année, 4<sup>e</sup> série, 1978, 1<sup>er</sup> semestre 1978.

<sup>87</sup> Tous les ports qu'on y découvre sont des ports artificiels aux tailles modestes et aux capacités limitées. A Bab El Mandeb, elle devient extrêmement étroite. Une distance de 22 milles-marins seulement sépare la péninsule arabe de la côte africaine. Dans son sein, s'accroupit l'île de Perim qui réduit encore l'espace navigable de 22 à 16 milles-marins.

Le Canal de Suez et la Mer Rouge permettent aux navires se situant dans la Méditerranée ou dans la Mer noire, de réduire de 70% leur distance s'ils veulent se rendre dans l'Océan indien par rapport à la route du Cap de Bonne espérance. L'empire puis le régime marxiste-léniniste éthiopien, tenaient à posséder sur la Mer Rouge un large secteur littoral. Ceci pour plusieurs raisons :

Sur le plan historique d'abord, la Mer Rouge a connu sur ses deux rives l'autorité de la Reine MEKEDA qui était la mère de MENELIK I (le roi Salomon étant son père), qui a ouvert l'Ethiopie sur le monde méditerranéen par le transit d'Israël.<sup>88</sup> La Mer Rouge a contribué à donner une identité culturelle aux Abyssins d'une part et de l'autre la référence salomonide sur le plan politique donnera aux rois abyssins une action religieuse que se révélera être un atout essentiel d'unité et de pérennité.<sup>89</sup>

Entre le V<sup>e</sup> et le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles, l'Ethiopie abyssine connaîtra des phases d'expansion et de replis défensifs sur la côte de la Mer Rouge où en 572 déjà, elle s'était établie aux confins de l'Erythrée et du Tigré pour les facilités de relation avec l'arrière pays que cette côte offrait.

Sur le plan géopolitique, l'intérêt éthiopien pour la Mer Rouge est du au fait qu'elle constitue une ligne de défense éloignée de son centre. Le fait n'est pas nouveau. En effet, tout au long de l'histoire, des théories dont certaines furent lourdes de conséquences, citons entre autres, l'extension du territoire national allemand jusqu'aux frontières naturelles, le "*lebensraum*" et l'espace vital du théoricien du Reich allemand, l'accès aux mers chaudes de Russie, etc... étaient justifiées par des projets géopolitiques. Si l'Ethiopie a pu préserver son indépendance tout au long de l'histoire, particulièrement face au péril islamique, c'est parce que les Bédouins d'Arabie n'ont pas fait des migrations

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<sup>88</sup> L'or ayant servi à la décoration du temple de Jérusalem vient d'Ophir dans l'Afar.

<sup>89</sup> Lire a) PERHAM (A.) *The Government of Ethiopia*, London, Faber and Faber, 1948, 481 p.

b) GASCON (A.), "Etat ancien, Etat contemporain : l'Ethiopie", op. cit., pp. 141-155.

importantes sur les côtes de la Mer Rouge. L'offensive islamique avait alors été menée par des tribus régionales qui allaient contraindre l'Ethiopie à survivre dans la montagne obsidionale.<sup>90</sup>

Ne plus avoir accès sur la Mer rouge pour L'Ethiopie est plus que courir le danger de l'isolement, poser les conditions de la disparition de l'Etat qu'elle a frôlé avec les conquêtes de l'Islam à l'Est et les invasions Oromo dans les temps anciens.<sup>91</sup> L'importance de la Mer Rouge devait également être affirmée par les Israéliens alliés de la première heure de l'Ethiopie impériale. Dès 1956, Ben Gourion s'était prononcé sur l'importance vitale de cet accès :

*"Nous sommes, disait-il, intéressé en tout premier lieu par le Déroit d'Eilath (Tiran et Bab El Mandeb)."*<sup>92</sup>

Aux yeux d'Israël, l'Erythrée et la Mer Rouge sont d'une importance stratégique. JOHN SPENCER en a donné quelques raisons :

*"Ce n'est pas seulement à cause de ses côtes occidentales sur la Mer Rouge s'étendant de Bab El Mandeb à la frontière du Soudan mais aussi en raison de son archipel situé précisément à califourchon des voies des bateaux et des pétroliers de Bab El Mandab au port israélien d'Eilath."*<sup>93</sup>

Et John Spencer ajoute :

*"c'est à travers un canal situé entre deux îles de l'archipel de Dahlak que passent les pétroliers Israéliens toutes les demi-heures."*<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Lire Gallais (J.), op. cit, pp. 17-24.

<sup>91</sup> Babacar Diop, "Six siècles de guerre autour de la Mer rouge". In *Afrique histoire*, n°8, 1983.

<sup>92</sup> Cité par Schwab (P.). *Israel's weakened position in the horn of Africa*, New Look, April 1978.

<sup>93</sup> Cité par Kurdi Nafi in *L'Erythrée*, op. cit., pp. 110.

<sup>94</sup> Id.

C'est en avançant le prétexte d'une immixtion arabe tendant à transformer la Mer Rouge en lac arabe que Tel-Aviv a consolidé ses liens avec l'Ethiopie. Cette intrusion poussera les Etats Arabes modérés à réviser leur position à l'égard de la question érythréenne. Aussi, les MLN érythréen et leurs alliés arabes allaient-ils donner un autre but au conflit. Le FLE affirmera :

*"L'Ethiopie n'a aucun droit sur la Mer rouge. Notre lutte a pour but d'en faire une aire exclusivement arabe."*<sup>95</sup>

Cette assertion est du reste discutable. Il demeure toutefois évident que la création d'un Etat d'Erythrée sur la Mer Rouge écartait d'office l'Ethiopie de celle-ci. Aussi comprend-on l'acharnement avec lequel les dirigeants Ethiopiens ont accusé l'Erythrée de tentative de sécession. En plus de la Mer rouge, l'enjeu du conflit est la non reconnaissance par l'Ethiopie du droit à l'autodétermination du peuple érythréen.

### **B- La non reconnaissance par l'Ethiopie du droit à l'autodétermination du peuple érythréen.**

Le conflit qui a opposé de 1961 à 1991 les éthiopiens aux érythréens s'explique par le désir de ces derniers à amener les premiers à comprendre que leur lutte était moins une guerre de sécession mais plutôt une lutte de libération nationale car il s'agissait dans ce cas d'un conflit de décolonisation inachevée. Ce que refuse d'accepter l'Ethiopie qui considère les Erythréens comme des "bandits", des "séparatistes", des "réactionnaires".

<sup>95</sup> LEYMARIE (Ph.), op. cit., p. 63.

## **SECTION II : LES ACTEURS DU CONFLIT DE L'ERYTHREE**

L'Ethiopie et les MLN Erythréens sont les principaux acteurs du conflit.

### **PARAGRAPHE I L'Etat éthiopien <sup>96</sup>**

Le nom Ethiopie vient du grec Aethiopoulos qui signifie la négritie orientale. Ce pays des "hommes au visage noir" comme le qualifiait Herodote, présente certaines spécificités dont la principale est la cohabitation d'une culture politique moderne à côté d'une traditionnelle.<sup>97</sup> Sa superficie avant l'annexion de l'Erythrée était de 1 103 000 Km<sup>2</sup> pour une population estimée à 36 millions d'habitants.<sup>98</sup>

Héritière du royaume d'Abyssinie, l'Ethiopie se présente et est perçue comme une puissance chrétienne dans la région de la Corne de l'Afrique. Située à la lisière entre le monde arabe et l'Afrique sub-saharienne. Cet « *acteur national principal* » dont l'armée avait triomphé de la puissance impérialiste italienne à la bataille d'Adoua en 1896, et participa à la deuxième Guerre Mondiale, abrite le siège de l'OUA et celui de la Commission Economique pour l'Afrique de l'ONU.

Pays pauvre parmi les plus pauvres du monde<sup>99</sup>, l'Ethiopie a réussi malgré tout à entretenir jusqu'à la veille de la chute du Mur de Berlin, la deuxième armée d'Afrique après l'Afrique du Sud avec un effectif de 300 000 hommes.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Dans la terminologie aronienne l'Etat éthiopien répond aux caractéristiques des acteurs nationaux principaux, Raymond ARON entendant par "acteur national principal" une puissance ou un Etat qui dispose des forces telles qu'il constitue un des éléments essentiels du système de l'équilibre. Lire *Paix et guerre entre nations*, op. cit. , p. 138.

<sup>97</sup> Lire GASCON (A.), "Etat contemporain, Etat ancien : l'Ethiopie" in Terray *L'Etat contemporain en Afrique*. Paris, l'Harmattan, 1987, pp. 141-156.

<sup>98</sup> En 1994, la population était estimée à 53,7 millions d'habitants. Lire *Human development report*, 1994, publié par le PNUD pour Oxford University Press, New York, p. 175.

<sup>99</sup> Le revenu par habitant est estimé à 115 dollars US par an id p. 175

<sup>100</sup> LEYMARIE (Ph.) "De Djibouti au Sud-ouest de l'Océan indien : une aire stratégique dévolue aux français" in *Le Monde diplomatique* Mars 1989, p. 23.



Après avoir été dirigée par l'empereur Haïlé Sélassié, l'Ethiopie a vu s'installer à sa tête après le renversement du Négus, une junte militaire dirigée successivement par TAFARI BANTE, le Général Andom, et surtout Haïlé Maryam Mengistu. C'est ce dernier qui instaurera en 1977, une démocratie populaire après trois années de terreur rouge. En son sein, le Front populaire de libération du Tigré (FPLT) se bat pour obtenir une autonomie plus effective de la province du Tigré tout en souhaitant la maintenir au sein de l'Ethiopie. Dans sa lutte contre les MLN érythréens, L'Ethiopie a reçu le soutien de différents acteurs extérieurs. Ceux-ci ont varié en fonction du mode d'organisation de l'Etat selon qu'il était féodal et impérial ou marxiste-léniniste.

L'Etat impérial éthiopien a reçu l'aide de l'Etat hébreu et celle des Etats Unis et de la Grande Bretagne. L'aide de l'Etat hébreu a consisté en plus de la fourniture du matériel militaire, à la formation d'unités de commandos anti-guérilla par le personnel israélien. Cette coopération militaire interrompue officiellement au lendemain de la guerre du Yom Kippour ( octobre 1973), allait néanmoins se poursuivre discrètement pour prendre fin en 1977.

L'aide de la Grande Bretagne et surtout américaine à l'Ethiopie impériale d'Haïlé Sélassié a débuté en 1950. Par la suite, les Américains par une série d'accords allaient renforcer la sécurité éthiopienne contre des facilités à eux concédées par l'Ethiopie. Ces facilités se résumaient en l'existence d'une base américaine de communication près d'Asmara. Cette base baptisée "Kagnew"<sup>101</sup>, située dans les tropiques loin des tempêtes magnétiques, était considérée comme essentielle au réseau américain de communication dans le monde entier et pas seulement en Afrique. Un des accords signés en 1953 prévoyait l'aide militaire américaine et l'entraînement par les Etats Unis des forces armées éthiopiennes.

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<sup>101</sup> Le nom de la ville où avait combattu lors de la guerre de Corée (1953) un contingent de l'armée éthiopienne aux côtés des troupes américaines.

De 1953 à 1970, L'Ethiopie avait elle seule reçue près de la moitié de l'aide accordée à l'ensemble du continent africain.

Dans le même temps, l'Armée Ethiopienne allait augmenter en effectif, passant de 32 000 à 40 000 hommes avec la création d'une quatrième division entièrement équipée par les Etats-Unis. Et une bonne partie de ces équipements était utilisée par l'Ethiopie en Erythrée. Mais la coopération Américano-éthiopienne allait progressivement se dégrader à partir des années 1970, avec le développement de communications par satellite et avec elle l'émergence de Diego Garcia comme base principale des Etats-Unis dans l'Océan Indien.

Par conséquent les Etats-Unis allaient malgré la visite de l'Empereur venu à Washington plaider la livraison des avions et tanks modernes pour son empire confrontés à l'aggravation de la situation en Erythrée prendre des distances vis-à-vis d'Addis-Abeba. Aussi comprend-on pourquoi dès 1976, le régime marxiste-léniniste de Mengistu installé au pouvoir après la chute du régime impérial nouera des alliances avec d'autres partenaires principalement la Libye et les alliés du bloc communiste.

La Libye révolutionnaire de Khadafi a été l'un des soutiens du régime marxiste-léniniste d'Addis-Abeba. La première, elle a expédié à Addis des équipements militaires pour contrecarrer l'avancée des troupes somaliennes reconnues coupables d'agression contre l'Etat souverain d'Ethiopie dans ce qui était la guerre de l'Ogaden.

C'est par Tripoli qu'a transité une bonne partie du matériel militaire convoyé par cargo depuis Moscou pour Addis-Abeba. Le sud Yémen envoya en Ethiopie des troupes qui furent placées sous le commandement unifié formé également d'officiers Cubains Soviétiques et Ethiopiens. En 1976, l'Ethiopie et l'Union Soviétique signent un accord d'amitié et de coopération (suivi en mai 1977 d'un pacte secret) grâce auquel les soviétiques allaient livrer à l'Etat

abyssin des armes pour l'équivalent de 500 millions de dollars US.<sup>102</sup> Pendant des semaines, le pont aérien Moscou-Tripoli-Addis-Abeba allait déverser en Ethiopie un flot ininterrompu d'orgues de Staline, de mortiers, de missiles, des blindés lourds T-54, des Mig 21.

Des soldats Cubains venus d'Angola et de Cuba allaient encadrer les milices et l'Armée Ethiopienne. Les Soviétiques installeront des bases aux îles Dahlaks tandis que les Cubains s'installaient à Dire-Dawa et Addis-Abeba. La majorité de l'équipement reçu, les instructeurs et les conseillers militaires Soviétiques allaient servir après la guerre de l'Ogaden, sur le front érythréen. L'Ethiopie signa également des accords avec les alliés de l'Union Soviétique que sont la Bulgarie, l'Allemagne de l'Est pour ne citer que ceux-là. Les révolutionnaires Ethiopiens devaient posséder ainsi un armement dépassant de loin leurs besoins défensifs.<sup>103</sup>

## **PARAGRAPHE II : Les MLN érythréens**

L'Erythrée a connu une diversité de mouvements nationalistes. En nous situant dans la perspective réaliste, nous n'en relèverons ici que ceux d'entre eux ayant réussi à bénéficier d'une audience réelle sur le plan international précisément parce qu'ils constituaient une force avec laquelle on devait composer sur le terrain des opérations. Sur la base de ce critère exclusif nous étudierons le FLE et le FPLE.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> SHERMAN (R.) *Eritrea the unfinished revolution*, op. cit., pp. 90-96.

<sup>103</sup> Lire CASTERAN (C.) et LANGELLIER (J.P.), *L'Afrique déboussolée*, Paris, Plon, 1978, p. 51.

<sup>104</sup> LEYMARIE (Ph.), "Le conflit de l'Erythrée : trois fronts, une guerre de libération nationale." in *RFEP* n°148, avril 1978, p. 57 et s.

**A- Le Front de libération de l'Erythrée (FLE) et ses factions**

Le FLE a été créé en 1961 suite à la rencontre au Caire en 1959 des exilés IDRISSE Mohamed Adam, ancien président de l'assemblée nationale, IBRAHIM Sultan Ali, secrétaire général de la ligue musulmane, WOLDEAB WOLDEMARIAM, président de l'union générale des travailleurs érythréens et Osman Saléh Sabbé. Sa naissance était l'une des concrétisations de l'espoir placé dans cette réunion du Caire par le peuple érythréen.<sup>105</sup>

Après avoir souscrit à la déclaration de guerre faite par l'Armée de libération d'Ahmed Idriss Awaté<sup>106</sup> le FLE plaça à sa tête Idriss Mohamed Adam. Le FLE comprenait deux instances dirigeantes. L'une le conseil suprême basée à l'étranger, et l'autre le conseil révolutionnaire installé en Erythrée où elle devait coordonner les opérations militaires. Héritière du Mouvement de Libération de l'Erythrée (MLE)<sup>107</sup>, le FLE recrutait ses militants dans le milieu des travailleurs, des enseignants, des intellectuels, des jeunes et des commerçants. Le FLE allait connaître son essor militaire entre 1964 et 1965. En effet, durant ces années, le front allait dépasser le noyau d'une armée de libération de 250 combattants pour atteindre suite aux ralliement d'un groupe d'érythréen servant dans l'Armée Soudanaise, dans la police érythréenne l'effectif de 2000 hommes armés d'un équipement relativement moderne<sup>108</sup>.

De plus, bénéficiant d'un environnement international favorable<sup>109</sup>, le front allait disposer d'une importante zone frontalière à l'abri de l'armée éthiopienne où il pouvait stocker armes et munitions voire même organiser ses

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<sup>105</sup> Lire MARSHALL (R.) "Production sociale et recomposition politique en exil : le cas érythréen" in Cahier d'études africaines, N° 107-108, 1987.

<sup>106</sup> C'est AHMED Idriss Awaté et ses dix compagnons qui dès le premier septembre 1961 et dans les plaines occidentales, tirèrent les premières salves de cette armée.

<sup>107</sup> Sur les origines du FLE et ses relations avec le MLE né en décembre 1958, lire Nafi H. Kurdi, L'Erythrée, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>108</sup> SHERMAN, (R), op. cit., p 74.

<sup>109</sup> La réceptivité de l'environnement international qui jusque-là avait été hostile au FLE et le renversement au Soudan du Maréchal ABOUB en 1964, qui avait toujours limité son aide au FLE.

bases arrières. Recrutant principalement parmi les musulmans qui en avaient également la direction, le FLE responsable de la transformation de la guerre de libération en une répétition du conflit israélo-arabe subira le contrecoup de la défaite arabe lors de la guerre de six jours. C'est ainsi que l'Armée Ethiopienne décimera ses bases et contraindra ses dirigeants à l'exil. De cette défaite à laquelle s'ajoutera une crise interne en 1970, naîtront deux factions : le FLE-FLP et le FLE-CR.

1- **Le Front de libération de l'Erythrée-Force populaire de libération (FLE-FLP)**

A la fin de 1967, l'armée éthiopienne a repris le contrôle d'une partie de l'Erythrée occidentale. C'est l'année des régressions du FLE. Pour remédier à cette situation critique, il est convoqué un congrès pour septembre 1968. Par la suite, trois groupes se forment dans le maquis. Le premier constitué autour de Mohamed Ramadan Nour dans la province de Dankalie, le second dirigé par ISSAYAS AFEWORKI et retranché dans les montagnes d'Ala et le troisième le groupe Obel constitué autour d'OSMAN AGIB dans la région du Gash. C'est alors que les divisions réapparaissent avec virulence.

Surtout le conseil suprême composé d'IDRISS MOHAMED ADAM et d'OSMAN SALEH SABBE représentant de la révolution à l'extérieur, se sont vus distancer par l'intérieur. Le conseil se trouve incapable de résoudre le problème des relations entre les zones militaires et d'atténuer les courants sectaires et régionalistes qui les agitent. Le FLE est plus que jamais tiraillé entre partisans de l'autonomie ou de l'unité des régions militaires. D'où un blocage aux effets psychologiques néfastes pour les combattants et propice à l'effritement du mouvement.

Un premier congrès, celui d'Adobaha d'août 1969 réunissant les délégués des trois régions unifiées et ceux des deux régions réfractaires dont l'accord final stipulait que le conseil suprême conservait son rôle à partir de l'étranger le FLE fait deux pas en arrière en permettant l'émergence de l'aile opportuniste.

Peu après le congrès, le conseil suprême se scinde ; ses principaux dirigeants IDRIS MOHAMED ADAM et IDRIS GALAÏDOS soutiennent le Commandement général alors que OSMAN SALEH SABBE, rejetant l'arbitraire quitte le conseil suprême pour établir une nouvelle organisation avec un secrétariat général qu'il installe à Beyrouth au Liban.<sup>110</sup>

Trois mois après ADOBAHA, se tient le congrès des bureaux politiques qui permet au Commandement général d'accentuer son autoritarisme au sein des unités combattantes. Le congrès de Sodoha-Ela en Dankalie, tenu à l'initiative des rénovateurs le 24 juin 1970, reconnaîtra les déviations du Commandement général. A l'issue de ce congrès, le FLE prendra le nom de Front de libération de l'Erythrée-Force de libération populaire (FLE-FPL).

## 2- Le Front de libération de l'Erythrée-Conseil révolutionnaire (FLE-CR)

Le clivage persistant au sein des unités combattantes met le commandement général dans une position difficile. Et le FLE convoque un congrès national du 14 octobre au 12 novembre 1971. A cette occasion, le commandement général comme le conseil suprême seront abolis. Pour permettre un dialogue et une ouverture, le commandement général est remplacé par un conseil révolutionnaire, le FLE prend cette fois le nom de Front de libération de l'Erythrée-Conseil révolutionnaire (FLE-CR).

<sup>110</sup> Lire KURDI L'Erythrée, op. cit., p. 128.

Alors que le FLE-FLP affirmait que : *“ses fusils sont portés pour être dirigés contre l’occupant et non pas pour verser le sang des Erythréens”*<sup>111</sup> ; les dirigeants du FLE-CR déclaraient quant à eux que : *“des unités de notre armée sont engagées contre les bases de contre-révolutionnaires (FLE-FLP) dans la région du Cheb afin de mettre fin à leurs activités nuisibles”*.<sup>112</sup>

Ainsi, après être parvenus à s’imposer comme véritable force de guérilla, le FLE a pris le risque de fractionner son organisation et de lui donner un contour régionaliste, bien qu’il défende le processus unitaire. Quelque soit les principes qu’il y énonçait, les faits de ce mouvement à structure autoritaire sont contradictoires. Confinés dans une sorte d’exclusivisme, le FLE dont l’objectif premier était l’obtention de l’indépendance nationale verra se joindre à elle dans la lutte de libération un nouveau mouvement, le FPLE.

#### **B- Le Front populaire de libération de l’Erythrée (FPLE).**

L’appellation du Front Populaire de l’Erythrée a été adoptée après le premier comité organisationnel des Forces Populaires de Libération tenu dans la province du Sahel du 22 au 31 janvier 1977. Ce mouvement est l’aboutissement d’un processus initié en 1972 par les deux factions principales du FLE-FLP dirigé par MOHAMED NOUR et ISSAYAS AFEWORKI qui allaient fusionner sur la base d’un programme commun. En 1974, la faction *“Obel”* après avoir gardée son autonomie jusque-là intégrait la nouvelle faction. Désormais, le mouvement allait prendre le nom de FPLE avec MOHAMED RAMADAN NOUR comme secrétaire général et ISSAYAS AFEWORKI comme adjoint.

Le congrès du Sahel allait renouveler l’attachement du FPLE à la paix et réaffirmer sa détermination dans la lutte jusqu’à l’indépendance de l’Erythrée.

<sup>111</sup> NAFI Kurdi, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>112</sup> Id.

Entre autres mesures prises, le congrès du FPLE mettait en cause la représentation d'OSMAN SALEH SABBE.<sup>113</sup>

La naissance du FPLE marque une date importante dans la lutte du peuple érythréen et désigne un tournant décisif. En effet à partir de 1982, le FPLE après avoir affronté le FLE<sup>114</sup> restera le seul mouvement jouant un rôle décisif dans la lutte contre le peuple éthiopien.<sup>115</sup> Le FPLE faisait prévaloir le rôle du front intérieur sur les initiatives venant de l'extérieur. Son idéologie était basée sur le principe d'un Etat fort et juste intégrant toutes les organisations patriotiques constituant l'ossature d'une Assemblée Nationale Erythréenne.

Si au départ, le FPLE est apparu comme la branche chrétienne du mouvement, le FPLE est néanmoins parvenu au fil des temps à laïciser son orientation en garantissant une liberté de conscience et de religion. Cette ligne a été adoptée par le FPLE lors de l'élaboration de son programme de 1977. Cela dit, le FPLE croit à la séparation de la religion et de l'Etat. C'est un mouvement dont les dirigeants ont accédé aux idées marxistes-léninistes. Aussi le FPLE imagine-t-il difficilement la poursuite de la lutte nationale sans l'émergence d'une classe ouvrière consciente de sa situation d'exploitation par la bourgeoisie comprador dominant les secteurs clés de l'économie nationale acquise au capital étranger et peu soucieuse de l'intérêt national.

Le FLE et le FPLE ont reçu l'aide aussi bien des organisations internationales que celle des acteurs étatiques. Deux organisations internationales ont particulièrement soutenu les MLN Erythréens dans leur lutte. L'une à rayon plus grand que le mouvement des pays non alignés dont l'apport a été indispensable dans l'accession à l'indépendance de plusieurs états du tiers

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<sup>113</sup> Ce dernier et ses partisans réagirent en organisant leur propre congrès à l'issue duquel ils annoncent la formation d'un troisième front conservant le nom de FLE-FLP.

<sup>114</sup> La lutte entre le FPLE et le FLE obligea ce dernier à s'installer dès 1981 au Soudan. Depuis cette éclipse, le FPLE se trouva fractionné en plusieurs factions antagonistes.



monde. Et l'autre étant la Ligue arabe qui regroupe aussi bien les Etats arabes que certains Etats non arabes mais islamiques tels que la Somalie. Leur soutien aura surtout été logistique et financier.<sup>116</sup>

En ce qui concerne les soutiens étatiques, ils provenaient des Etats arabes, des Etats socialistes et de certains Etats capitalistes. Dès 1969, les MLN érythréens (particulièrement le FLE) ont obtenu une aide extérieure qui s'améliorera au fil des temps de nombreux pays arabes. Ceux sont l'Arabie Saoudite, l'Egypte, les Emirats Arabes Unis, la Libye, la Tunisie, l'Irak, le Koweït, la Somalie, le Soudan et la Syrie.

Considérant l'Erythrée comme la Palestine de la Corne de l'Afrique<sup>117</sup> et par conséquent le prolongement de la rivalité israélo-arabe, l'OLP a collaboré aux côtés des Etats arabes pour un soutien très actifs aux nationalistes érythréens.

Les Etats socialistes ont aidé dès le début des années 60<sup>118</sup> les nationalistes érythréens. La Chine et Cuba particulièrement formèrent les cadres du FLE. De même l'URSS devait assister ces mouvements dès lors qu'ils furent dirigés par les communistes à partir des années 1974. Alors qu'une visite de l'empereur à Moscou en 1970 avait poussé les soviétiques sinon à couper toute aide directe et ouverte aux érythréens, les cubains quant à eux allaient continuer largement à former des cadres militaires provenant du FLE et du FPLE. Fidel Castro qui désirait développer passionnément les mouvements révolutionnaires dans le tiers monde devint très attaché à la cause érythréenne au point de ne souffrir d'aucun scrupule vis-à-vis de Moscou à offenser Addis-Abeba. Après avoir aidé modestement et clandestinement le mouvement national érythréen

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<sup>115</sup> Outre le FPLE, il existait une dizaine d'autres organisations qui se disaient être le représentant légitime du peuple érythréen. Lire KURDI NAFI (H.) op. cit., pp. 140-142.

<sup>116</sup> KURDI NAFI (H.), *L'Erythrée*, op. cit., pp. 142-146.

<sup>117</sup> Lire GASCON (A.), "La guerre comme rite géographique: exemple de la corne de l'Afrique", op. cit., p. 80.

dont la lutte est devenue révolutionnaire avec la naissance du FPLE<sup>119</sup>, l'URSS et ses alliés devaient s'engager plutôt aux côtés de l'Etat éthiopien au lendemain de l'adoption de l'idéologie marxiste-léniniste par Mengistu Haïlé Maryam. C'est alors que les nationalistes érythréens, particulièrement le FPLE, devaient se tourner vers les Etats capitalistes. Par l'intermédiaire de l'Arabie Saoudite, les Américains apporteront au milieu de l'année 80, une aide au FPLE qui allait même changer son idéologie marxiste-léniniste pour adopter l'idéologie libérale lors de son congrès tenu en 1987.<sup>120</sup>

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Ce premier chapitre nous a permis de présenter le conflit de l'Erythrée dans sa « longue durée ». Nous avons ainsi délimité les contours de la question érythréenne à nous appesantissant sur les principaux enjeux et acteurs de ce conflit. Conflit local et régional du fait de son espace géographique, ses acteurs et ses enjeux directs, le conflit de l'Erythrée était également un conflit international par la présence des acteurs indirects que sont les superpuissances. Cette internationalisation n'a pas manqué d'avoir une influence déterminante sur ses processus évolutif et résolutif.

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<sup>118</sup> Le bloc socialiste assistait depuis le milieu des années 60 les nationalistes érythréens. Le FLE est resté en contact avec le KGB jusqu'en 1976.

<sup>119</sup> Lire PENINO (J.L.), "Les origines du mouvement national érythréen" in Erythrée, un lutte pour l'indépendance nationale. Colloque de l'Université de Jussieu, Paris VII, p. 25.

<sup>120</sup> GASCON (A.), "La guerre comme rite géographique" op. cit.

**CHAPITRE II :**  
**EVOLUTION DU CONFLIT DE L'ERYTHREE JUSQU'A LA**  
**CHUTE DU MUR DE BERLIN.**

Comme dans beaucoup de conflits, les tentatives de résolution ont été recensées dans le cadre du processus évolutif du conflit érythréen. Et si l'on considère les retombées de ces tentatives par rapport aux enjeux pris ici comme ce que l'on peut gagner ou perdre dans un conflit, nous pouvons affirmer que ces tentatives se sont toutes soldées par des échecs. En effet elles n'auront pas permis de résoudre le conflit de manière satisfaisante et définitive sinon pour les deux parties en conflit du moins pour l'une. de 1961 à 1989, on a pu constater qu'il y a eu de nombreuses tentatives de résolution. Pour la clarté de notre exposé nous avons choisi de les étudier de façon classique en distinguant les tentatives de règlement pacifique du conflit des tentatives de résolution militaire.

**SECTION I :**      **LES TENTATIVES DE REGLEMENT**  
**PACIFIQUE DU CONFLIT**

Les tentatives de résolution pacifique ont été marquées par les évolutions d'une part des rapports de forces entre les parties antagonistes et de l'autre du contexte du système International pour lequel l'avènement en 1985 de MIKHAEL GORBATCHEV à la tête de l'Etat soviétique constitue un tournant important.<sup>121</sup> De ce fait, nous étudierons les tentatives d'avant l'avènement du processus de détente internationale dans la Corne de l'Afrique avant Gorbatchev puis celles d'après car chacune possède des spécificités propres.

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<sup>121</sup> GRESH, Alain, L'Union Soviétique face aux conflits régionaux : une diplomatie à l'épreuve du Tiers-Monde. In Le monde diplomatique Décembre 1988 p. 10.

**PARAGRAPHE 1 : Les tentatives de règlement pacifique anté gorbatchéviennes**

Avant l'arrivée de Gorbatchev<sup>122</sup> des tentatives de résolution pacifique provenant des parties belligérantes, des organisations intergouvernementales, des Etats, etc... avaient été proposées vainement.

**A- Les tentatives de résolution pacifique provenant des parties belligérantes.**

Il y a eu une tentative érythréenne du FLE et une tentative éthiopienne au lendemain de la chute d'HAILE SELASSIE.

**1- La tentative du FLE en 1965**

En août 1965, le FLE saisit le Secrétaire Général de l'OUA, M. Diallo Telli par un mémorandum dans lequel il dénonce "la domination coloniale éthiopienne sur l'Erythrée et lui demande d'intervenir dans le sens de la résolution de ce cas d'occupation d'un territoire africain par un autre Etat africain. Pour ce faire, l'OUA doit préalablement reconnaître au FLE, la qualité de mouvement de libération nationale préalable à toute mise en œuvre du processus résolutif. L'OUA ne le fera pas. Et cette tentative, la première, se soldera par un échec. Elle n'aura même pas eu le temps d'être mise en œuvre, comme celle de la partie éthiopienne en 1974, soit après la chute d'Hailé SELASSIE.

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<sup>122</sup> Il est arrivé en 1985 à la tête de l'Etat soviétique.

**2- La tentative du Général ANDOM, Chef de l'Etat éthiopien en 1974.**

D'origine érythréenne et jouissant d'une grande estime due à son triomphe lors de la guerre de l'OGADEN en 1964, le Général AMAN ANDOM sera au lendemain du coup d'Etat de 1974 en Ethiopie le premier porte-parole du DERG.<sup>123</sup> Favorable à une solution négociée du problème érythréen, il nomme après une tournée triomphale dans cette région un gouverneur érythréen à ASMARA<sup>124</sup>. Cet acte de bonne volonté sera accueilli avec beaucoup de scepticisme par une bonne partie du gouvernement en proie à des luttes intestines concernant l'Erythrée<sup>125</sup>. Il sera déposé puis exécuté en Novembre 1974, pour atteinte à "l'intégrité territoriale" de l'Etat éthiopien par l'aile intransigeante et hostile à tout compromis conduite par le colonel MENGISTU.

Après la mort du Général AMAN ANDOM, le DERG s'embarquera dans une vague d'actes qui tout en dressant toute l'opinion érythréenne contre lui allait dissiper tout espoir d'un règlement négocié.

En plus des tentatives des parties au conflit, il y a eu les tentatives des organisation intergouvernementales.

**B- Les tentatives des organisations intergouvernementales**

Chronologiquement les tentatives du mouvement des non-alignés et celle de l'OUA peuvent être retenues.

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<sup>123</sup> NOUAILLE DEGORCE, Brigitte. L'évolution de l'Ethiopie depuis la chute d'Hailé SELASSIE. *Revue française d'études politiques africaines* n° 148 Avril 1978 pp 20-53.

<sup>124</sup> Le poste avait toujours été occupé par des éthiopiens, les érythréens depuis Haile SELASSIE ayant souvent occupé au plus le poste d'adjoint ou de vice-représentant de l'empereur d'Ethiopie.

**1- Le mouvement des non-alignés à la HAVANE en 1974**

Lors des travaux de la conférence des pays non-alignés de LA HAVANE en Mars 1974 la délégation cubaine<sup>126</sup> proposa que la question érythréenne fut mise à l'ordre du jour. Cependant le lobby éthiopien (soutenu par tous les Etats membres de l'OUA<sup>127</sup> sera assez puissant pour étouffer cette initiative).

Mais quelques temps après c'est l'OUA elle même qui tentera de résoudre le conflit.

**2- L'OUA par le conseil des Ministres des Affaires Etrangères en 1976**

Le 12 février 1975, le Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies adressait un télégramme au Général SIAD BARRE, Président en service de l'OUA, relatif à la situation tragique en Erythrée. Dans le même temps le FLE faisant du chantage sur l'OUA et le président BOURGUIBA de Tunisie se déclarait favorable à l'indépendance de l'Erythrée. Ceci amènera d'ailleurs les autorités éthiopiennes à expulser un diplomate Tunisien en poste à Addis-Abeba. La question érythréenne sera alors inscrite à l'ordre du jour des travaux du Conseil des Ministres des affaires étrangères de l'OUA prévus pour le 14 Février 1975. Mais avant l'ouverture des travaux le DERG dirigé par le Général BANTE, fait diffuser une déclaration très ferme dans laquelle il exclut toute idée de négociation :

*"L'Erythrée a toujours fait partie intégrante de l'Ethiopie, elle le fera à l'avenir comme à l'avant".<sup>128</sup>*

<sup>125</sup> NOUAILLE DEGORCE Brigitte op cit.

<sup>126</sup> FIDEL CASTRO ne cachait pas sa sympathie pour les MLN érythréens.

<sup>127</sup> L'Empereur HAILE SELASSIE était encore à la tête de l'Ethiopie. Il jouissait d'un grand prestige parmi ses pairs africains et surtout il a joué un rôle déterminant dans la création de l'OUA dont son pays abrite encore aujourd'hui le siège. Lire MFOULOU Jean. L'OUA triomphe de l'unité ou des nationalités, Paris, l'Harmattan, 1986, 99p.

<sup>128</sup> Année Africaine 1975. Ethiopie, 2è partie Chronologies, Paris, A. Pedone p 384.

La déclaration continue précisant que :

*"Si certains érythréens ont pris le maquis c'est pour protester contre les injustices de l'ancien régime".<sup>129</sup>*

Et lors des travaux M. KIFLE WADAJO, Ministère des affaires étrangères de l'Ethiopie réaffirmera la position éthiopienne en ces termes :

*"L'Erythrée est une affaire purement intérieure éthiopienne"<sup>130</sup>*

Par ces affirmations l'Ethiopie excluait l'OUA du processus résolutif eut égard à l'article 4 de sa charte portant sur l'intégrité des frontières héritière de la colonisation et du principe de non intervention dans les affaires intérieures des Etats.

En effet en 1964, au Caire, le sommet de l'OUA avait solennellement déclaré que *"tous les Etats membres s'engagent à respecter les frontières existantes au moment où ils ont accédé à l'indépendance"*. Prise sous cet angle la question de l'Erythrée se trouvait complètement inversée. L'acte fédéral décidé par l'ONU était juridiquement significatif, la fédération entre l'Ethiopie et l'Erythrée n'était concevable que si les pays fédérés étaient reconnus autonomes, institutionnellement égaux et territorialement définis. Cette réalité, aurait dû permettre de poser de manière correcte le problème de l'Erythrée et non pas, injustement en termes de maintien ou non des frontières existantes".

Qu'en était-il à cet égard de l'Ethiopie ? on peut considérer soit qu'elle n'a jamais perdu son indépendance, soit qu'elle a recouvré cette indépendance à l'issue de la seconde guerre mondiale. Dans l'une ou l'autre hypothèse, l'Erythrée ne fait pas partie de l'Ethiopie. Pour bien des penseurs et analystes politiques, l'exercice du droit à l'autodétermination de l'Erythrée

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<sup>129</sup> Le régime d'HAILE SELASSIE avait été renversé en juin 1974.

<sup>130</sup> *Année Africaine* 1975 op cit. p 385.

annexée postérieurement à l'indépendance de l'Éthiopie est donc conforme au principe de l'intangibilité des frontières coloniales de l'OUA.<sup>131</sup>

Les revendications du mouvement national érythréen ne recelaient d'ailleurs pas du moindre indice relatif aux problèmes de frontières que l'OUA avait soulevé. Pour NAFI H. KURDI, le "*fait Érythréen, aurait donc dû s'imposer juridiquement de lui-même dans le sens des Résolutions de l'OUA et de sa charte*"<sup>132</sup>

Mais l'OUA l'a ignoré pour en faire, soit par duplicité ou par myopie politique un problème de frontières.

En plus des tentatives des Organisations Internationales notons enfin celles des États.

### **C – Les tentatives des États**

Il y a eu deux principales tentatives des États, l'une proposée par le Soudan et l'autre par les Cubains et les Soviétiques conjointement dans le cadre du bloc soviétique.

#### **1 – La proposition de médiation du Soudan de 1975**

Le 10 Février 1975, le Chef de l'État Soudanais GAAFAR EI NIMEIRY dans un message radiodiffusé proposait aux deux parties la médiation de son pays en vue de résoudre le conflit érythréen. Cette médiation devait se fonder sur trois éléments : le cessez-le-feu immédiat, l'amnistie générale de la part du gouvernement éthiopien, l'ouverture des négociations sans conditions préalables.

<sup>131</sup> Journée de solidarité avec le peuple Érythréen. Travaux du colloque. Université, Paris VII, 9 décembre 1978.

<sup>132</sup> NAFI, H. KURDI op cit., p 12.



Les érythréens réagiront négativement à cette proposition d'abord par le Président de la Mission étrangère du FLE, WOLDEAB WOLDEMARIAM d'après laquelle il ne peut avoir de négociation sans indépendance :

*"Nous n'accepterons le cessez-le-feu que si les troupes éthiopiennes se retirent de l'Erythrée"*<sup>133</sup>

Puis par OSMAN Saleh SABBE qui rejettera dans *"le fond et dans la forme"* les propositions Soudanaises.

## **2- La proposition soviéto-cubaine de 1977 : la fédération de la corne de l'Afrique.**

En 1977, c'est-à-dire au premier temps de leurs relations avec le DERG, Moscou et La Havane se posèrent en médiateurs entre MENGISTU et les Erythréens. Il semblait alors qu'un climat de confiance suffisant s'était établi pour permettre que les négociations secrètes aient lieu avec au moins une fraction du FPLE et du FLE, conformément à *"l'internationalisme prolétarien"*. Le projet conçu par les Soviétiques et présenté par FIDEL CASTRO lors de la conférence d'Aden en Mars 1977 aux présidents MENGISTU HAILE MARIAM et SIAD BARRE consistait en à la création d'une fédération de la corne, comprenant l'Ethiopie, l'Erythrée, la Somalie et le Yémen, auxquels pourraient ensuite se joindre Djibouti qui accédait juste à l'indépendance<sup>134</sup>.

Cette initiative ne sera pas approuvée par les érythréens qui y voient une intention du pouvoir soviétique d'assouvir ses ambitions stratégiques dans la zone ; ambitions qui tournent autour de l'Ethiopie considérée comme un noyau fort et dont les soviétiques se sont progressivement rapprochés. En effet pour les érythréens, la plus grave trahison des soviétiques aura été de ratifier le plan de

<sup>133</sup> Année Africaine 1975, op cit., p. 384.

paix en 9 points du DERG annoncé en 1976, malgré le rejet massif du plan par tous les fronts de libération, ce qui n'était pas étonnant si l'on considère que le plan ne modifiait pas les liens territoriaux entre l'Ethiopie et l'Erythrée.<sup>135</sup>

Cette initiative n'était pas conforme aux désirs de la partie érythréenne, dont l'objet était l'autodétermination. Elle permettait à l'Ethiopie de continuer à avoir une main mise sur l'Erythrée dont le contrôle lui échappait.

Si les Soviétiques ont adhéré aux thèses éthiopiennes, c'est simplement parce qu'ils cherchaient après leur éviction du Moyen-Orient, du fait de leur politique étrangère incohérente et interventionniste un appui dans la région.

Cette politique incohérente lui avait valu son expulsion de l'Egypte laquelle avait rejoint le camp américain, dont le retour au Moyen-Orient couronné par les accords de Camp David avait enlevé toute initiative aux soviétiques dans la région.

De plus, elle avait envahi l'Afghanistan, pays qui outre son amitié historique avec la Russie s'est toujours tenu à l'écart des alliances militaires occidentales contre l'URSS.

Après son expulsion d'Egypte, elle s'est liée à la Somalie d'abord, puis à l'Ethiopie, ensuite car la position érythréenne était déterminante pour le contrôle de BAB EL MANDEB et partant du Canal de Suez. La présence soviétique en Ethiopie revêtait une importance minime voire insignifiante si on excluait l'Erythrée, située sur la route du pétrole vitale pour l'économie mondiale.

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<sup>134</sup> STEFANOS Andreas. La Corne de l'Afrique : les paradoxes de la paix américaine in *Afrique 2000* n° 6 Juillet-Août 1991, p 38.

<sup>135</sup> LEGUM Colin. Le rôle de l'Union Soviétique dans la corne de l'Afrique. In *La corne de l'Afrique* op cit. p 111.

Il est certain que sans l'Erythrée et son importance sur la Mer Rouge, l'URSS ne se serait pas engagée d'une manière démesurée aux côtés du régime éthiopien.

En effet l'Ethiopie n'avait nullement intéressé l'URSS jusqu'au jour où Moscou avait vu ses positions démantelées au Moyen-Orient, au lendemain de la guerre du YOM KIPPOUR en 1973.

En 1950 à l'ONU et en 1962 après l'annexion de l'Ethiopie, l'URSS s'était gardée de s'engager clairement vis-à-vis du problème érythréen.

Sachant que le principal obstacle à la consolidation de la présence de l'URSS allait venir de la conjonction des mouvements de résistance des divers peuples longtemps soumis à l'ancien Empire Ethiopien, notamment les luttes du Front Populaire de Libération du Tigrai, (FPLT) du Parti Révolutionnaire du Peuple Ethiopien (PRPE) du Front de libération Oromo (FLO), du Front islamique de libération Oromo (FILO), du Front de Libération de la Somalie Occidentale (FLSO) et du Front de Libération Afar (FLA) auxquels s'ajoutaient la guerre d'indépendance de l'Erythrée, Moscou a opté pour une fédération de la corne.

#### **D- Les tentatives particulières : le parti socialiste français en 1981.**

En 1981 ce projet soviétique sera mis de côté. Mais des positions de certains partis socialistes occidentaux tendant à la résolution du conflit seront exprimées sans pour autant qu'elles soient mises en œuvre à cause du contexte de rivalité. C'est ainsi qu'en 1981, le parti socialiste français dans un document ronéoté exprimait sa position sur le problème érythréen en ces termes :

*"Le parti socialiste qui reconnaît le fait national érythréen et le droit de ce peuple à l'autodétermination, entretient des rapports*

*amicaux et suivis avec le FPLE, et appuie sa position de référendum d'autodétermination. Il attachera une grande importance à l'évolution de ce pays vers une société plus juste et plus prospère, et il est pleinement conscient de la nécessité de lui garantir une sécurité d'accès à la Mer"<sup>136</sup>*

L'Ethiopie rejettera cette proposition car lui reconnaître la nécessité de garantie d'un accès à la mer implique l'idée d'une Erythrée pleinement indépendante vis-à-vis de L'Ethiopie. En effet une Ethiopie englobant l'Erythrée même sous la forme fédérale n'a pas besoin qu'on lui réserve quelque garantie que ce soit.

Cette initiative sera la dernière de l'époque anté-gorbatchevienne. Car sous Gorbatchev il y aura une tentative majeure : la rencontre d'Atlanta.

**PARAGRAPHE 2 :      La tentative de résolution sous Gorbatchev à Atlanta en 1989.**

La dernière tentative majeure de résolution pacifique du conflit érythréen, les pourparlers d'Atlanta se tiennent dans un contexte international que nous préciserons avant de nous appesantir sur les retombées négatives de cette rencontre.

**A- Le contexte environnemental de la rencontre d'Atlanta.**

La rencontre d'Atlanta intervient dans un contexte environnemental marqué par la collaboration entre les deux superpuissances en ce qui concerne le règlement des conflits internationaux. Cette politique, prônée par Gorbatchev dans le cadre de la pérestroïka s'appuie sur le désir des soviétiques de se retirer

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<sup>136</sup> Le parti socialiste français et l'Afrique sud-saharienne, Document p 22 - 23.

désormais des conflits régionaux.<sup>137</sup> Après avoir été esquissée en 1985, la nouvelle attitude soviétique prendra forme en 1986 lors du 27<sup>ème</sup> congrès du PCUS pour se matérialiser en Afghanistan.<sup>138</sup> De fait, avec GORBATCHEV, l'URSS allait renoncer à la politique interventionniste qu'elle avait jusqu'ici appliquée et favoriser l'avènement des processus de résolution pacifique des conflits. Cette politique consistait comme le précisera LILY MARCOU, à "*substituer à l'activisme brejnevien, une prudence visant avant tout messianisme, à l'efficacité économique et à une collaboration fructueuse.*"<sup>139</sup> De plus,, le 16 février 1987, devant les participants au forum international "*pour un monde sans armes nucléaires pour la survie de l'humanité*" Gorbatchev réaffirmera la détermination de l'URSS à se consacrer plus que jamais à sa politique intérieure. C'est donc sur cette base que Gorbatchev dira à MENGISTU lors d'une visite à Moscou en Juillet 1988, d'en finir avec les conflits "nationaux" internes en accordant une large autonomie à ses provinces les plus rebelles.<sup>140</sup> Mais MENGISTU ne réagira pas promptement à cette exhortation à la solution politique, préférant utiliser des subterfuges pour gagner du temps. Néanmoins, le 5 Juin 1989, le parlement éthiopien approuve la proposition du bureau politique du Parti des Travailleurs Ethiopiens de négocier sans conditions avec le FLE sous la conduite des observateurs internationaux. Le Gouvernement Soviétique verra en ce retournement éthiopien "*un acte de sagesse d'Etat*".<sup>141</sup> Le 29 Juin 1989, le Secrétaire Général du FPLE ISSAIAS AFEWORKI qui déjà en 1988 sollicitait une solution politique<sup>142</sup> dira que son mouvement est également prêt à engager les négociations qui devraient aller dans le sens de l'indépendance au sein de l'Etat fédéral ou d'une région

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<sup>137</sup> GORBATCHEV Mikhael. *Pérestroïka, vues neuves sur notre pays et le monde*, Paris, J'ai lu 1988 pp. 251-279.

<sup>138</sup> GRESH, Alain op cit. p10.

<sup>139</sup> MARCOU Lily, Reconnaissance de l'interdépendance générale. Le grand tournant de la diplomatie soviétique. *Le Monde diplomatique* Mai 1988 p5.

<sup>140</sup> LEYMARE, Philippe. De Djibouti au Sud-Ouest de l'Océan Indien. Op. cit. p23.

<sup>141</sup> *Keesing's record of world events*, p36 729.

<sup>142</sup> Dans une déclaration au *Monde*, le 23 Novembre 1988.

autonome. Le 13 Juillet à Londres, M. Anatoli ADAMACHINE, représentant de haut rang du gouvernement soviétique en service au Ministère des Affaires Etrangères annonce la participation des Américains au processus de paix entre le gouvernement éthiopien et le FPLE alors qu'il avait jusqu'ici souhaité une participation Italienne et Française.<sup>143</sup>

Ce revirement est dû au fait que jusqu'ici les Occidentaux en général et les Américains en particulier avaient toujours eu une attitude prudente vis-à-vis de la nouvelle politique soviétique<sup>144</sup> derrière laquelle ils percevaient "*une stratégie de repli temporaire (...) le fameux pas en arrière de Lenine permettant d'en faire deux en avant*"<sup>145</sup> d'une part et de l'autre, tenir compte des déclarations du leader érythréen ISSAYAS AFEWORKI en 1988 relatives au gouvernement français :

*"Le gouvernement français ne sait pas traiter avec la Corne et paraît obsédé par le risque qu'un de ses diplomates soit expulsé d'Addis-Abeba, d'où une image faussée de l'Ethiopie. Il perçoit les tensions dans la Corne au vu de sa position stratégique à Djibouti."*<sup>146</sup>

Le 13 Juillet à Londres, M. Anatoli ADAMACHINE reçoit officiellement et pour la première fois de la part du Gouvernement Soviétique depuis le début du conflit armé les représentants du FPLE. Le 17 Juillet, il se rend aux Etats-Unis où il est reçu par HERMAN COHEN, Secrétaire d'Etat Adjoint aux Affaires Africaines. Après des entretiens entre les deux autorités, HERMAN COHEN annonce le 23 Juillet que les deux parties belligérantes ont accepté M. Jimmy CARTER, ancien président des Etats-Unis comme médiateur. Le 26 Juillet Jimmy CARTER rencontre le président MENGISTU à Addis-Abeba. Du

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<sup>143</sup> STEFANOS Andreas op cit, p 37.

<sup>144</sup> KLARE Michael et CALLAHAN David. L'univers change, l'Amérique piétine. *Le monde diplomatique* Juin 1989 p 5.

<sup>145</sup> HELLER, Michale *Soixante dix ans qui ébranlèrent le monde*. Paris Calman Lévy, 1988.

<sup>146</sup> Déclarations journal *Le Monde*, 23 Novembre 1988.

4 au 6 Juillet 1989, HERMAN COHEN effectue une visite en Ethiopie où MENGISTU le rassure sur son intention de participer sans conditions aux négociations. Les négociations d'Atlanta allaient donc se tenir dès le 7 Septembre 1989 en Georgie.

**B- La conduite et les retombées des pourparlers d'Atlanta.**

La rencontre d'Atlanta commencera effectivement le 7 Septembre pour s'achever le 19 Septembre.<sup>147</sup> Se tenant au centre présidentiel Carter, et conduite par Jimmy CARTER, la rencontre historique d'Atlanta, connaissait la participation d'une délégation du gouvernement éthiopien de 5 membres conduite par ASGHARE YILETU d'une part et de l'autre celle d'une délégation du FPLE de 5 membres également conduite par ALAMIN, MOHAMMED SAID.

La rencontre d'Atlanta n'a pas permis aux représentants des deux parties de s'attaquer aux questions de fond. Celles-ci se sont limitées à étudier des questions de forme certes importantes mais somme toute secondaire. Autrement dit, leurs travaux ont consisté à chercher à adjoindre un co-médiateur à Jimmy CARTER, à choisir les pays observateurs ainsi que les organisations devant prendre part aux négociations ainsi que les dates et lieux de la prochaine rencontre. Elle n'a pas permis aux parties en conflit de signer un accord de cessez-le-feu ; ce qui du reste était prévisible au lendemain de la rencontre à huis clos du 11 Septembre.

En effet, dès le 10 Septembre à Atlanta le Secrétaire Général du FPLE ISSAYAS AFEWORKI déclare qu'il y a des raisons de croire que les

<sup>147</sup> Coïncidant avec l'ouverture des pourparlers de paix d'Atlanta, le Ministre cubain des forces armées annoncera le 7 Septembre 1989 le retrait de ses troupes (2000 hommes) qui allait commencer le 9 Septembre pour s'achever le 15 Septembre 1989.

négociations vont vers une solution au conflit, toutefois, il précise que les érythréens continueront à se battre en attendant la mise en œuvre des négociations plus substantielles. Le 11 Septembre après la séance à huis clos Jimmy CARTER dit qu'elle fut couronnée de succès. Pourtant le lendemain c'est-à-dire le 12 Septembre, MENGISTU annonce son intention de lancer une offensive contre les positions érythréennes.<sup>148</sup>

Ainsi donc la rencontre d'Atlanta, en dehors du fait qu'elle ait permis aux Erythréens et aux Ethiopiens de s'asseoir sur une même table, s'est elle aussi soldée par un relatif échec, malgré le contexte international légèrement favorable. Et lorsque s'écroule le Mur de Berlin le 9 Novembre 1989<sup>149</sup> le conflit érythréen n'est pas encore résolu politiquement et encore moins militairement malgré les nombreuses tentatives qui ont également été réalisées dans ce domaine là aussi.

## **SECTION II : LES OPERATIONS DE MAINTIEN DE LA PAIX EN ERYTHREE.**

Le conflit d'Erythrée a fait l'objet de plusieurs tentatives de résolution militaires qui n'ont pas permis à l'une des parties d'annihiler totalement les forces de l'autre.<sup>150</sup> Ces initiatives provenaient aussi bien des MLN érythréens parce qu'elles furent les premières et nous terminerons par les tentatives éthiopiennes qui étaient des réactions aux tentatives érythréennes.

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<sup>148</sup> En ce moment, les combats avaient cessé sur le front depuis près de deux semaines. Lire Keessing's record of world event 1989 p 36887.

<sup>149</sup> Bouversements à l'Est. 1989-1990. La documentations française. Notes et études documentaires 1990 p195.

<sup>150</sup> Il s'agit de l'ascension aux extrêmes. Lire à ce propos sur les concepts de guerre absolue et de guerre réelle. CLAUSEWITZ, Carl Von op cit.



**PARAGRAPHE 1 : Les tentatives érythréennes**

A l'origine les tentatives militaires érythréennes avaient moins le but de remporter une victoire totale sur l'armée éthiopienne, mais plus de faire pression sur les instances internationales afin de faciliter l'avènement d'une solution politique. Globalement on recense trois grands moments dans les tentatives érythréennes qui correspondent à un contexte international précis. Il y a une tentative dans le contexte du conflit Israélo-Palestinien, il y a une seconde tentative dans le contexte du soutien du bloc soviétique aux MLN, et enfin une troisième dans le cadre de la "*doctrine Reagan*" et la pérestroïka.

**A- La tentative effectuée sur fond de l'antagonisme Israélo-arabe**

Deux ans après le début de la lutte armée, les dirigeants du FLE, pour la plus grande partie d'entre eux musulmans constatent que la politique éthiopienne prend de plus en plus un tournant pro-israélien. Ils s'attellent donc volontiers à présenter leur lutte comme participant au mouvement nationaliste arabe, luttant contre le régime éthiopien pro-israélien. De ce fait ils se lient au Fath, organisation palestinienne qui lui prête ses camps d'entraînement. Le représentant du FLE à Damas ira jusqu'à affirmer que "*le combat que l'Erythrée mène contre l'impérialisme éthiopien allié au sionisme international se confond complètement avec la lutte du peuple palestinien*". Ainsi, le FLE, recevra de la part des pays arabes particulièrement la Syrie, une aide logistique qui lui permettra de déployer en Erythrée à partir de 1965 ses forces militaires. Il réussit ainsi progressivement à étendre ses activités à presque toutes les zones rurales de l'Erythrée. De ce fait, le FLE commence à s'imposer comme unique organe d'expression du mouvement national pour l'indépendance. Il réussit à rallier les chrétiens du plateau qui une fois dans le maquis, prennent des noms de guerre arabe. Ainsi entre 1966 et 1967, le FLE n'est plus la guérilla nomade et isolée de

ses débuts. Il devient une force menaçante pour le régime de Haile SELASSIE qui jusqu'ici, l'avait présenté comme un groupe de "bandits" (shiftats) et leur avait opposé des éléments de la lutte antiguérilla formées sur place par l'armée israélienne, en solidarité avec l'Ethiopie qu'il percevait comme une autre "île dans la mer musulmane", image que reprenait du reste la presse occidentale.<sup>151</sup>

Cette image arabe du conflit bien qu'elle permit au FLE de remporter quelques succès diplomatiques à l'étranger<sup>152</sup>, en plus de ses quelques victoires militaires sur le terrain allait lui être fatale au lendemain de la défaite des arabes lors de la guerre des six jours marquée par la victoire éclatante d'Israël.

1967 sera l'année de régression pour le FLE. Et par des offensives militaires, l'Ethiopie reprendra le contrôle des centaines de régions qui avaient été prises par le FLE.

La seconde grande tentative érythréenne se fera après l'arrivée au pouvoir des militaires à Addis-Abeba, c'est-à-dire dans un contexte marqué par le soutien du bloc soviétique aux MLN dans le monde.

### **B – La tentative initiée dans le cadre du soutien du bloc soviétique aux MLN en 1974.**

A partir des années 1970, l'Union Soviétique est en mesure de soutenir des guerres locales ou régionales dans les régions lointaines, ce qui offre un contraste saisissant avec l'incapacité à venir en aide à ses clients dont elle avait fait preuve pendant la crise qui frappa le Congo au début des années 1960.<sup>153</sup> Et depuis 1972, le FLE, et peu après le FPLE, sont dirigés par des leaders

<sup>151</sup> POOL, David. Eritrea, Africa's longest war p. 47. CAHSAI Berhane et WILLIAMSON Elisabeth. Op cit. p 32.

<sup>152</sup> Le FLE fut invité à la tricontinentale de LA HAVANE ; la Chine de la révolution culturelle accepta d'entraîner plusieurs de ces cadres ; et les Bassistes au pouvoir en Syrie, s'efforçaient d'attirer le FLE dans leur giron.

<sup>153</sup> VANDERLINDEN, Jacques : La crise congolaise. Bruxelles, édition complexe, 1985, 179 p.

communistes, qui à partir de Juin 1974 élaborent une nouvelle conception de la lutte contre le régime éthiopien. Il s'agit pour le FPLE particulièrement d'une lutte de révolution nationale démocratique. Elle est :

*"Nationale parce qu'elle avait toutes les classes patriotiques et toutes les nationalités en Erythrée contre le fédéralisme, le colonialisme, l'impérialisme et le sionisme et lutte pour ses droits nationaux. Elle est démocratique parce qu'elle représente intérêts et aspiration fondamentaux des masses laborieuses et lutte pour leur libération sociale. Basée sur l'alliance des ouvriers et des paysans, et guidé par l'idéologie prolétarienne, la révolution nationale démocratique jette les fondements de la transformation socialiste de la société érythréenne"*<sup>154</sup>

Malgré l'adhésion du FPLE aux idées émises par Marx et Lénine, et expérimentées surtout par MAO TSE TOUNG dans sa "guerre populaire" les érythréens ne recevront pas une aide ouverte de la part de l'ensemble du bloc soviétique qui portant l'avait soutenu lors des débats aux Nations Unies en 1950.

En effet, lors de ces débats le Délégué soviétique avait déclaré :

*"... on est en train d'imposer une décision au peuple érythréen sans qu'il ait son mot à dire et donc en violation du principe fondamental du droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes. Les Nations-Unies doivent prendre une décision qui répond à la volonté du peuple érythréen à l'indépendance. La délégation de l'U.R.R.S. rejette la proposition d'une fédération de l'Erythrée et d'un autre Etat, sans que les peuples concernés, c'est-à-dire sans que l'Erythrée soient consultés"*<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Association des étudiants érythréens en France op cit. p 16.

<sup>155</sup> Séance plénière de l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies, 1950.

Le Délégué Tchécoslovaque était allé dans le même sens<sup>156</sup>

*"... contrairement aux principes fondamentaux de la charte (des Nations-Unies) elle (la résolution) dénierait au peuple de l'Erythrée le droit à l'autodétermination et lui imposerait une fédération avec l'Ethiopie que l'immense majorité refuse. Au lieu de maintenir la paix dans cette région, la résolution engendrerait la guerre civile et la discorde. Au lieu d'aider un peuple opprimé et exploité à obtenir la liberté et l'indépendance, elle reviendrait à justifier l'annexion d'un petit Etat par un Etat plus grand... la délégation Tchécoslovaque ne prendra jamais part aux intrigues qui se nouent contre la liberté des peuples."<sup>157</sup>*

Seuls les Cubains allaient ouvertement aider les MLN érythréens, les soviétiques ayant renoncé à la force depuis la visite du Négus Haile SELASSIE à Moscou en 1970. Mais en Juin 1974, le Négus est déposé après 50 ans de règne. Le Général ANDOM d'origine érythréenne étant au pouvoir en Ethiopie, les fronts érythréens marquent une pause. Après l'exécution de ce dernier en Novembre 1974, les deux fronts lancent une attaque contre la capitale érythréenne (car progressivement ils avaient gagné du terrain militairement) ASMARA, avec 2500 Hommes provenant d'autres villes telles que MASSAWA, ASSAB, Barentu et Adi Caieh dans lesquelles les soldats éthiopiens sont retranchés.

Néanmoins, en contrôlant les autres villes dont Keren la troisième ville du pays, et toutes les zones rurales, ainsi que l'important réseau routier, les fronts donnaient la preuve d'une grande capacité militaire jusque là sans pareil en

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

Afrique, au point où un spécialiste des mouvements de libération, Gérard CHALIAND écrira :

*"Sur le plan militaire, le FPLE a été le seul mouvement révolutionnaire africain capable de s'emparer des villes"<sup>158</sup>*

L'offensive érythréenne qui atteindra sa vitesse de croisière en 1977 est liée à une série de facteurs. D'abord avec l'arrivée des marxisants à la tête de l'Etat éthiopien en 1976 et particulièrement la signature de l'accord d'amitié et de coopération soviético-éthiopien, les relations soudano-éthiopiennes se détruisirent progressivement au point même d'être rompues en 1977. Le 30 Janvier de 1977, le Président Nimeiry annonce que le Soudan soutiendrait la lutte érythréenne pour l'indépendance, alors qu'en 1972, il y avait renoncé lors de l'accord d'Addis-Abeba.<sup>159</sup> Ainsi donc, les érythréens opérant au Soudan pouvaient circuler plus librement, ce qui devrait faciliter les activités du front sur les plans militaire et politique.

Ensuite le FPLE est mieux organisé depuis son congrès de 1977 qui a permis l'élection d'un musulman Mohammed NUR comme Secrétaire Général et ISSAIAS AFEWORKI, un chrétien comme Secrétaire Général Adjoint. Et le changement de nom du FPLE qui allait passer de Forces Populaires à celui de Front Populaire de Libération de l'Erythrée.

Enfin les questions d'ordre interne aux mouvements érythréens sont résolues. Entre autre, la fraction du FLE-FPL de SABBE est écartée.<sup>160</sup> Le FLE et le FPLE sont reconnus comme étant les seuls représentants légitimes du peuple érythréen.

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<sup>158</sup> CHALIAND Gérard. *L'enjeu africain, stratégies des puissances*, Paris, seuil, 1980 p 135.

<sup>159</sup> RONDOT, Philippe op cit.

## Première partie : Un conflit insoluble pendant la guerre froide

Ce sont donc ces trois facteurs qui permettent au FPLE et au FLE de s'emparer de 80% du pays érythréen. Le processus de récupération du territoire érythréen commence dès Mars 1977 lorsque les forces du FPLE s'emparent de Naqfa, première ville à tomber sous le contrôle érythréen. En Avril, elles libèrent Afaabet, puis Elabered et leurs régions où se trouvent les plus grandes plantations agricoles d'Erythrée, contribuant ainsi à l'effort d'autosuffisance alimentaire du FPLE. En Mai, l'armée du FLE s'empare de Tessenei près de la frontière soudanaise. En Juillet le FPLE, allait capturer Decamare, la plus grande ville d'Akkelé Guzai, la troisième ville de l'Erythrée et capitale de Senhit. En Août les villes de Saganetti et Digsä puis Agordat, capitale de Barka sont libérées par le FLE. En Octobre la route reliant Asmara à Massawa est coupée.

Tableau N° 3 : Les offensives du FPLE et du FLE (De Mars 1977 à Janvier 1978)

Dates	Villes Libérées	Provinces	Routes coupées
23 mars 1977	Nakfa	Sahel	Nakfa-Port-Soudan
6 avril 1977	Garora	Poste Frontière	Ligne d'approvisionnement
10 avril 1977	Tessenei	Gash	Tesseni-Kassala
8 juillet 1977	Keren	Keren	Asmara-Keren
8 août 1977	Saganeiti	Akkelé Guzai	Asmara-Saganeiti
21 août 1977	Agordat	Barka	Keren-Agordat
24 août 1977	Mandefera	Seraye	Madefara-Asmara
25 janvier 1978	May-Habar (Localité)		Asmara-Massaoua
27 janvier 1978	Nefassit (localité)		Asmara-Massaoua

**Source** : NAFI. H. KURDI. In *P'Erythrée, une identité retrouvée* p 158.

<sup>160</sup> En 1975, il a voulu négocier avec le pouvoir éthiopien dans l'optique d'une solution pacifique. Le FPLE avait alors réagit violemment en déclarant que l'unique représentant du peuple érythréen était la force qui menait la lutte armée à l'intérieur du pays.

En Décembre 1977, le FPLE réussit à occuper les trois quarts de la ville de Massawa, mais ne prennent pas le port où les éthiopiens opposent une résistance sérieuse.

Ainsi, les Erythréens ne réussirent pas à remporter une victoire totale sur l'Ethiopie qui contrôlera encore malgré les victoires érythréennes les 20% du territoire dont les principales villes d'Assab et de Massawa, et certaines petites villes du Sud. Et c'est à partir de ces deux villes principales que les Ethiopiens lanceront des offensives qui leur permettront de renverser la situation. Ainsi s'achevait sur un échec la seconde tentative érythréenne de résolution militaire du conflit. Il fallait attendre l'avènement de la pérestroïka pour voir les Erythréens lancer dès 1987 leur troisième tentative.

C) **La tentative effectuée dans le contexte de la politique de désengagement soviétique des conflits régionaux et la doctrine Reagan.**

En Décembre 1987, le FPLE qui était resté cantonné depuis 1978 à la ville de Naqfa au nord de l'Erythrée où il résistait aux attaques éthiopiennes passe à l'offensive dans le cadre de ce qu'on appellera la grande bataille de la 26<sup>ème</sup> année de la guerre. A partir de Mars 1988, de nombreuses autres batailles se soldent par les victoires du FPLE. Aussi en mi-mars affirme-t-il avoir pris la ville stratégique d'Afaabet situé à 100 kilomètres au nord d'Asmara. Le bilan de ces batailles "*cruelles*" comme le reconnaîtra MENGISTU sera très lourd pour l'armée éthiopienne.<sup>161</sup> Malgré ces victoires, le FPLE est encore loin de contrôler entièrement le territoire lorsque s'écroule le Mur de Berlin. Et sur le

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<sup>161</sup> Le FPLE déclarera avoir tué ou capturé 18000 soldats éthiopiens, puis trois conseillers militaires soviétiques comme prisonniers et saisi du matériel militaire de fabrication soviétique.

front, l'armée éthiopienne est en train de préparer une contre-offensive comme elle l'avait jusqu'ici fait.

## **PARAGRAPHE 2 : Les tentatives éthiopiennes**

L'histoire du conflit d'Erythrée est également celle de nombreuses tentatives infructueuses de résolution militaire éthiopienne. Nous les étudierons dans le cadre des deux régimes successifs qu'a connu l'Ethiopie, à savoir le régime impérial et le régime marxiste-léniniste.

### **A- Les tentatives du régime impérial d'HAILE SELASSIE**

Sous l'Empereur HAILE SELASSIE, l'Ethiopie a initié plusieurs tentatives de résolution du conflit. Mais celle qui aura été la plus sérieuse se situe dans l'année 1967, car c'est cette année-là que l'Ethiopie utilisera pour la première fois les troupes de l'armée régulière.<sup>162</sup> Cette armée régulière dès 1967 lancera une grande opération de répression couvrant tout l'ouest de l'Erythrée.<sup>163</sup>

Exploitant les faiblesses des cinq zones militaires divisées du FLE, l'armée éthiopienne en attaqua entre Février et Juin 1967, une à la fois. Aucune de ces régions ne put résister aux assauts surtout que celles-ci ne pouvaient pas communiquer entre elles. Pour couper les maquis de leurs bases arrières au Soudan, l'Armée Ethiopienne incendia les villages le long de la frontière et y installa une série de 23 fortins. A la fin de l'année 1967 l'Armée Ethiopienne avait repris le contrôle d'une bonne partie de l'Erythrée occidentale. Le bilan

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<sup>162</sup> Jusque-là, seules les unités commando formés sur place par les militaires israéliens étaient impliqués.

<sup>163</sup> En 1967 le gouvernement éthiopien avait signé un accord avec le gouvernement soudanais tendant à isoler le FLE de ses bases arrières. Ainsi, par cet accord, le Soudan s'engageait à réduire son assistance aux maquisards érythréens et en contrepartie l'Ethiopie s'engageait à faire de même quant aux rebelles Anyanya du sud Soudan.



était lourd<sup>164</sup> pour les érythréens qui allaient régresser sans perdre totalement l'emprise sur le territoire érythréen.

En effet et malgré la crise dans laquelle la défaite allait plonger le FLE de 1967 à 1970 dont les signes se percevaient à travers le recours des Erythréens à de nouvelles tactiques de terrorisme empruntées au mouvement palestinien auquel le FLE s'était attaché<sup>165</sup>, d'une part et de l'autre par l'opération "*pacifier la province de l'Erythrée*" lancée par le gouvernement éthiopien, en guise de représailles<sup>166</sup> contre l'intensification des embuscades du FLE sur le plateau opération qui allait permettre à l'Éthiopie de faire un usage considérable de sa force aérienne<sup>167</sup> ; trois groupes érythréens seront encore implantés dans des régions en Erythrée. D'abord, la "colonne Ramadan" après avoir pris l'avion jusqu'à Aden, regagnera en bateau la côte de la Dankalie au sud-est de l'Erythrée.

Ensuite dans le haut plateau se trouve un autre groupe celui d'ISSAIAS AFEWORKI qui s'était retranché dans les collines rebaptisées en expression de solidarité avec la lutte cubaine la "*Sierra maestra*."<sup>168</sup> Il y sera rejoint par la "*colonne Ramadan*".

Enfin dans la province de Barka au cœur même de la zone traditionnelle du FLE, naîtra le groupe composé majoritairement de musulmans connu sous le nom de "*groupe d'obel*".

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<sup>164</sup> D'après le FLE 352 villages furent détruits, 946 civils tués, 67 000 têtes de bétail supprimés, 20 à 30 000 érythréens poussés à l'exode massif au Soudan.

<sup>165</sup> Les détournements et les attaques d'avions civils de la compagnie d'aviation éthiopienne soit au total cinq attaques entre Mars 1969 et Décembre 1972. Lire CAHSAI Berhane et WILLIAMSON Elisabeth op cit. p 95-95.

<sup>166</sup> Des attentats avaient coûtés la vie à un gouverneur de district et au commandant de la deuxième division de l'armée éthiopienne.

<sup>167</sup> HERMAN, Richard op cit. p78, considère que dans les années 1970, la force aérienne éthiopienne était la plus puissante de l'Afrique sub-saharienne.

<sup>168</sup> BEREKET, Habte Selassié. *Conflict and intervention in the horn of Africa*. New York. Monthly Review Press 1980 p 65.

Ainsi donc, les initiatives du régime impérial n'auront pas permis d'éradiquer les forces érythréennes. Et lorsque le régime impérial tombé en 1974, les Erythréens sont encore actifs sur le territoire. Et progressivement, ils vont commencer à sortir des zones où ils sont retranchés pour occuper les villes érythréennes alors que le gouvernement éthiopien est confronté à la guerre dans l'Ogaden. Mais le gouvernement marxiste-léniniste conduit par MENGISTU réagira dès 1976.

**B- Les tentatives du régime marxiste-léniniste de MENGISTU HAILE MARIAM**

Sous le régime marxiste-léniniste de MENGISTU HAILE MARIAM, qui sera lui aussi confronté successivement à l'opposition érythréenne, trois tentatives principales peuvent être retenues : "*la marche du paysan*", la tentative soviéto-éthiopienne et enfin l'opération "*étoile rouge*."

**1- "*La marche du paysan*" de Juin 1976.**

L'opération dénommée "*la marche du paysan*" organisée en Juin 1976 par le DERG est la première tentative du régime marxiste-léniniste de MENGISTU.

Effectuée dans un contexte particulier<sup>169</sup>, l'opération a consisté pour le gouvernement éthiopien à lever en masse des milices paysannes contre les rebelles érythréens. Ces paysans éthiopiens avaient été mobilisés par le DERG sous le prétexte de "chasser les sécessionnistes musulmans à la solde des pays arabes" pour leur octroyer des terres en Erythrée. Mais ces hommes mal équipés et entraînés sommairement, n'arriveront jamais en terre érythréenne. Des

<sup>169</sup> Le gouvernement américain demandait au président MENGISTU qui avait commencé à recevoir les premiers signes positifs de l'intérêt que lui portait l'URSS, d'annuler cette opération sinon l'aide américaine allait être suspendue.

guérilleros érythréens les neutraliseront dans le Tigray où ils étaient stationnés avant même qu'ils n'aient traversé la frontière.

C'est donc sur un échec total que se soldera cette première tentative du régime de MENGISTU. Il n'en sera pas de même pour la seconde.

## **2- L'opération soviéto-éthiopienne de Juillet 1978.**

La tentative soviéto-éthiopienne de Juillet 1978 se situe dans un contexte socio-politique qu'il convient de préciser. D'abord, elle se tient au lendemain du refroidissement des relations diplomatiques américano-éthiopiennes provoquées par les diminutions substantielles de l'aide américaine en signe de représailles au gouvernement éthiopien accusé de "violer les droits de l'Homme."<sup>170</sup> En effet, en Février 1977 les Etats-Unis avaient décidé de réduire le montant de l'aide générale à l'Ethiopie qui passa de 17,5 à 12,1 millions de dollars. Les éthiopiens allaient réagir en décidant de la fermeture de quatre établissements américains en territoire éthiopien, dont la base militaire U.S. de KAGNEW à Asmara.<sup>171</sup> A cette époque, les éthiopiens s'étaient déjà rapprochés de l'URSS. Ensuite, la conférence d'Aden de Février 1977 relative à l'organisation de la fédération de la corne avait échoué. Cet échec était dû au fait que cette fédération devait tourner autour d'un leadership éthiopien, ce dont Siad BARRE ne voulait pas entendre parler ; ainsi qu'à la détermination de l'Ethiopie à maintenir en l'état ses frontières. Le F.P.L.E. ne participa pas à cette négociation au motif qu'il ne pouvait le faire si l'Ethiopie ne reconnaissait pas préalablement le droit à l'autodétermination de l'Erythrée ; et de plus cette solution satisfaisait les convoitises de l'URSS dans cette région. Enfin, la tentative soviéto-éthiopienne a lieu après que les soviétiques et les cubains aient aidé L'Ethiopie à vaincre la Somalie dans la guerre de l'Ogadem, déclenchée par la Somalie dès le

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<sup>170</sup> POUHE, Ernest. Les Etats-Unis et le problème des droits de l'Homme en Afrique : du président Kennedy au président Carter : évolution et tendances. Mémoire, IRIC 1978, 197 p.

25 Juillet 1977, guerre qui avait permis à l'URSS de faire la démonstration de sa puissance maritime et navale. Ainsi avec l'appui de trente six cargos qui participèrent également à l'opération, les soviétiques ont pu livrer 60000 tonnes de matériel militaire avant la fin de Juin 1978 à l'Ethiopie.<sup>172</sup>

La solution militaire prônée par le colonel MENGISTU avant la conférence d'Aden et que semblait partager les soviétiques, qui avaient permis aux éthiopiens de mettre fin à l'avancée des érythréens par leurs bombardements navals et aériens alors que les érythréens cherchaient à occuper le port de Massawa et les villes d'Assab et d'Asmara devait être mise en œuvre dès le mois de Juillet 1978, avec l'appui indirect des cubains (qui s'y étaient toujours opposés avant la conférence d'Aden) malgré les appels à la solution politique lancés par des acteurs étatiques ou non, marxistes ou non.<sup>173</sup>

Dès le mois de Juillet donc le DERG lança la première d'une série de cinq offensives avec un soutien massif d'armes soviétiques. Cette offensive commença à partir de l'axe Massawa-Asmara. La puissance de feu de « l'armée éthiopienne devenue largement supérieure à celle des érythréens car le gouvernement marxiste avait dépêché sur le front 120 000 hommes soit presque la moitié de ses effectifs globaux<sup>174</sup>, organisés et conseillés par des officiers soviétiques et soutenus par une noria d'armes lourdes, de missile Sam 7 et d'avions Mig 21 allait obliger le F.P.L.E. à se retirer dans l'arrière-pays. En Novembre 1978, la plupart des villes importantes étaient reprises par les éthiopiens. Keren tomba le 27 Novembre.

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<sup>171</sup> NOUAILLE DEGORCE, Brigitte, op cit. p 52.

<sup>172</sup> *Strategic survey*, International Institute of strategic studies, Londres, 1979.

<sup>173</sup> CASTERAN, Christian et LANGELLIER Jean Pierre. *L'Afrique déboussolée*. Paris, Plon 1978 p 45 et s.

<sup>174</sup> CHALIAND, Gérard op cit. p 135.

Les éthiopiens allaient revenir à la charge au cours de la deuxième moitié de 1979. Cette offensive devait leur permettre de reprendre le contrôle des provinces où étaient implantés les troupes du FLE et celles de Sabbe.

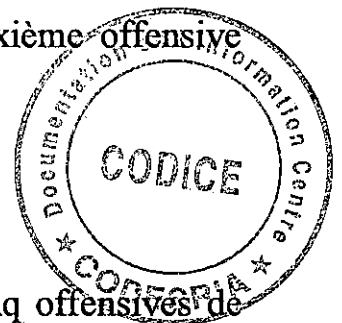
Toutefois les troupes éthiopiennes ne réussirent pas à reprendre le contrôle de l'ensemble du territoire érythréen. Ainsi, ils ne contrôleront pas la province du Sahel où le F.P.L.E. maintiendra ses bases arrières. De plus, l'armée éthiopienne échouera dans ses assauts répétés tant au long de l'année 1979 destinés à prendre Naqfa, capitale provinciale du Sahel où 3000 combattants du F.P.L.E. feront ce que Gérard CHALIAND a appelé "*un siège unique dans l'histoire des mouvements de libération*"<sup>175</sup> parvenant même à lancer une contre-offensive qui délogera l'armée éthiopienne de plusieurs positions stratégiques et l'obligera à refluer vers Afaabet située à une cinquantaine de kilomètres au nord de Naqfa.

Ainsi donc la deuxième tentative militaire de résolution du conflit se solde par un relatif échec elle aussi. Il en sera de même pour la sixième offensive dénommée opération étoile rouge de 1982.

### **3- L'opération "Etoile rouge"**

Resté comme seul combattant sur le terrain après les cinq offensives de l'armée éthiopienne, le F.P.L.E., retranché dans la base arrière montagneuse au nord de Naqfa et contrôlant également la plaine occidentale de la Barka, fera l'objet en 1982 de la sixième offensive de l'armée éthiopienne baptisée "*Etoile Rouge*".

Malgré les conditions de vie difficile auxquelles ils sont confrontés et la maîtrise du ciel par les éthiopiens, les combattants du F.P.L.E. grâce à un formidable réseau de tranchées et de tunnels dans les montagnes du Sahel,



<sup>175</sup> Ibid. p 136.

repousseront cette offensive. Et même en 1984, le F.P.L.E. se permettra de prendre la ville de Tessenei, près de la frontière soudanaise.

Ainsi donc ni le régime impérial d'HAILE SELASSIE ni le régime marxiste-léniniste de MENGISTU n'auront trouvé une solution militaire définitive au problème érythréen.

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Pour conclure ce chapitre disons que les tentatives de résolution du conflit érythréen aussi bien pacifique que militaire, provenant de divers acteurs impliqués directement ou indirectement dans les hostilités n'auront pas manqué. Mais toutes n'ont pas permis non seulement de mettre en présence les parties antagonistes comme ce fut le cas à Atlanta, mais encore à aboutir à une solution acceptable pour les deux parties.

Au sortir de la décennie 80 le système international issu de la deuxième guerre mondiale en évolution continuelle certes comme tout ce qui vit n'en a pas moins conservé sa structure fondamentale bipolaire. Deux pays et seulement deux affirment la volonté et les moyens d'exercer une influence significative et souvent déterminante sur l'ensemble des affaires de la planète. Leurs rapports de force se modifient sans cesse. Les économies, les armements, la valeur opérationnelle des armées tout est en mouvement.

La compétition entre l'Union Soviétique et les Etats-Unis se poursuit autant directement qu'indirectement malgré l'avènement de la pérestroïka. Différent des systèmes d'alliance de 1914 ou de 1939, le système international de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, structuré simplement à cause de la bipolarité reste stable à cause du fait nucléaire, toujours dominant.

C'est lui récemment qui a permis aux soviétiques d'associer les Etats-Unis aux négociations d'Atlanta de 1989 ; c'est lui qui a amené les soviétiques à écarter les Américains du processus résolutif du conflit sous le régime de MENGISTU ; c'est lui également qui avait permis beaucoup plus tôt aux Américains de favoriser l'avènement d'une fédération contre nature par la résolution 390 A/V en 1952 entre un presque Etat, l'Erythrée et un empire médiéval, l'Ethiopie.

C'est enfin lui qui paralyse le processus de résolution du conflit érythréen dont le caractère périphérique ne souffre plus de doute depuis la participation des Soviétiques du côté Ethiopien aux conflits de 1978. Mais en sera-t-il de

même au lendemain de la chute du plus grand symbole de la bipolarité, le Mur de Berlin, traduisant l'avènement d'un système international plus uni ? Quelles en seront donc les conséquences pour le conflit d'Erythrée qui trouvera enfin une solution ?

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHEQUE



**DEUXIEME PARTIE : UN CONFLIT RESOLU  
APRES LA FIN DE LA GUERRE FROIDE**

Au lendemain de la chute du Mur de Berlin, le système international est régi par de nouvelles règles de jeu.

D'abord, la rivalité idéologique entre les Etats-Unis et l'URSS n'est plus de mise. Le socialisme tendant à devenir illégitime au plan international, le système international va progressivement évoluer vers l'uniformisation de ses normes. La référence sera désormais l'économie de marché et au plan politique la démocratie libérale. Ce sont là des normes contraignantes sur lesquelles se fondent les nouvelles conditionalités pour accéder aux ressources financières internationales. En revanche la menace nucléaire qui avait sous-tendu la lutte idéologique se trouve dévalorisée.

Dans les faits, la configuration des rapports de forces dans le nouveau système international notamment depuis la guerre du Golfe est favorable aux Etats-Unis qui apparaissent ainsi comme la seule Superpuissance du monde, même si en réalité du fait de l'hétérogénéité du système, on ne peut réduire sa configuration à l'unipolarité.

En effet, le nouveau système international contrairement au précédent est marqué par la prééminence des considérations économiques sur les considérations politiques et militaires, c'est-à-dire par un déplacement des enjeux du domaine diplomatico-stratégique au domaine économique.<sup>176</sup> La question que l'on est en droit de se poser au regard de l'évolution de ces dernières années, est sans doute de savoir dans quelle mesure ce nouveau contexte a eu une incidence dans l'évolution du conflit entre l'Ethiopie et l'Erythrée. Cette deuxième partie comprend deux chapitres.

Dans le premier (chapitre III) il s'agira de s'interroger sur les conséquences de la fin de la guerre froide sur le conflit de l'Erythrée.

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<sup>176</sup> LAIDI, Zaki, *L'ordre mondial relâché*. Sens et puissance après la guerre froide. op cit.

Le deuxième chapitre (chapitre IV), quant à lui connaîtra de longs développements sur le contexte et le processus d'accession de l'Erythrée à la souveraineté internationale.

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHEQUE

### **CHAPITRE III**

## **LE « REDIMENSIONNEMENT » REGIONAL ET LOCAL DU CONFLIT**

Pour les tenants de l'école globaliste, la fin de l'affrontement Est-Ouest allait faire disparaître mécaniquement les conflits régionaux<sup>177</sup>. D'après eux, les conflits des pays du Sud étaient des conséquences des stratégies indirectes de l'affrontement Est-Ouest.

Incapables de comprendre pourquoi les conflits allaient se prolonger après le retrait des grandes puissances, cette idéologie allait se convertir brutalement en une idéologie de la menace du Sud, reproduisant jusqu'à la caricature, celle de la menace de l'Est en plein période Mac CARTHY.<sup>178</sup>

Il ne serait pas exagéré d'affirmer que cette école de pensée avait sous-estimé les enjeux locaux de ces conflits et leur intégration dans la bipolarité ne les soustrayait pas entièrement de leurs logiques propres, malgré les contraintes que leur imposait la rivalité politique Est-Ouest. Les mutations auront donc pour effet de les ramener à leurs dimensions locale et régionale. Nous analyserons donc dans le présent chapitre quelle incidence le retour aux dimensions locale et régionale a eu sur la résolution de ce conflit.

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<sup>177</sup> D'après FOUCHER (Michel), le terme de conflit régional employé à Moscou et à Washington pour désigner les conflits localisés dans le Tiers-Monde, montre bien que pour les deux grands, les conflits et guerres qui ont fait rage dans cette partie du monde n'avaient qu'une importance seconde, "régionale" par rapport aux enjeux majeurs représentés par le Haut niveau de la menace militaire réciproque.

Lire Les guerres dans le tiers monde et la détente Est-Ouest in *L'Etat du tiers monde*. Paris, La Découverte, 1991 pp 25-28.

<sup>178</sup> Voir BICO (D) et HERMAMT (D) Les métamorphoses des conflits in *Études polémologiques*, n°50, 2/1989.

**SECTION I : DESIDEOLOGISATION DU CONFLIT ET REDIMENSIONNEMENT REGIONAL ET LOCAL**

Le redimensionnement est le fait des facteurs surtout internationaux qui ont concouru à la facilitation de la résolution du conflit érythréen. Il s'agit donc pour nous d'analyser les effets des mutations du système international non seulement sur le conflit mais également sur les acteurs directs. Et dans cette perspective, les facteurs internationaux ont beaucoup plus pesé sur L'Ethiopie dont les atouts du temps de la bipolarité, lui ont permis de faire valoriser son "*intérêt national*" sur l'Erythrée. C'est donc l'Ethiopie particulièrement qui payera les frais des mutations du système international. Elle sera dans un premier temps victime de ce que ZAKI Laidi a appelé la "*décote stratégique*"<sup>179</sup> cette décote stratégique aura pour effet immédiat la désidéologisation<sup>180</sup> du conflit et l'adoption par l'Ethiopie d'une stratégie dite de ressourcement régional.

De manière précise, les facteurs de ce redimensionnement sont le retrait de l'URSS d'Ethiopie et la non-intervention militaire américaine dans le conflit.

**PARAGRAPHE I : Le retrait de l'assistance militaire soviétique et des alliés du bloc de l'Est d'Ethiopie.**

Le 21 Mars 1990, l'ambassadeur soviétique au Soudan affirme après la visite du Ministre éthiopien des affaires étrangères à Moscou le 7 Mars 1990 que tous les conseillers militaires soviétiques ont quitté Addis Abeba depuis le mois de Février. Le départ des Soviétiques de ce pays dont en 1978 déjà du fait de sa position déterminante en Mer Rouge et sur le continent africain, ils avaient

<sup>179</sup> LAIDI Zaki. Les traductions internes de la compétition Est-Ouest. *Politique étrangère* n°1, 1989, pp 67-68.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

voulu faire la plaque tournante révolutionnaire régionale et continentale destinée à rompre l'équilibre planétaire au détriment de l'Occident<sup>181</sup>, tient autant à des raisons d'ordre externes au conflit qu'à des raisons internes au conflit.

### **A- L'évolution de l'environnement économique et politique**

Les raisons externes au conflit et qui ont amené l'interruption de l'assistance militaire soviétique sont d'ordre économique et politique.

#### **1- L'environnement économique.**

La période de la guerre froide était dominée par les considérations stratégiques et politiques. Les mutations du système international entraînent une priorité à l'économie. L'Union Soviétique ne sera pas en reste. Elle consacra désormais ses fonds contrairement à la période antérieure à l'arrivée au pouvoir de Gorbatchev à l'efficacité économique. Il s'agit donc de consacrer les fonds alloués à l'assistance militaire, à des activités économiques.

En effet sous Khrouchtchev le taux de croissance économique de l'URSS était de 6%. Cette croissance économique avait permis à l'URSS de s'engager dans un ambitieux programme d'armes nucléaires sur quinze ans. A la chute de Khrouchtchev en 1964, son successeur Leonid BREJNEV s'attelle surtout à édifier l'arsenal soviétique alors qu'il avait hérité d'une force militaire qui comptait 3,3 millions d'hommes formant 140 divisions dont 26 à l'étranger, BREJNEV légua à ses successeurs 5,5 millions d'hommes et 208 divisions dont 40 cette fois étaient basées à l'étranger (voir tableau 5).

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<sup>181</sup> WINDSOR Philip op cit.

**Tableau 5 : La présence militaire des Soviétiques et leurs alliés au Sud du Sahara et en Ethiopie.**

	URSS	CUBA	RDA
ANGOLA	700	18 000	450
ETHIOPIE	2 400	5 900	550
MOZAMBIQUE	500	1 000	100

**Source : Département d'Etat Washington, D.C 1982**

A cette puissance militaire se joignit une importante force navale, déployée surtout dans l'océan indien.<sup>182</sup>

La conséquence principale de cet essor fut que les Soviétiques et leurs alliés participaient à plusieurs conflits en Afrique et dans d'autres régions du monde, particulièrement en Afghanistan<sup>183</sup> alors que les Américains se repliaient sur eux-mêmes à la suite du "syndrome vietnamien". Cette participation active aux conflits régionaux, allait obliger les Soviétiques à tripler presque les dépenses qu'ils consacraient à leurs alliés d'Europe de l'Est et au soutien de leurs clients du Tiers-Monde.

Cette expansion militaire était soutenue par l'évolution du PNB soviétique. En effet jusqu'à 1970, la part des Soviétiques dans le PNB mondial passa de 11 à 12,3% après 1970, cette expansion se ralentit passant à un taux de 3,7% pour descendre dans la seconde moitié de la décennie. Dans les années 1980, les chiffres officiels attribuent à l'URSS une croissance économique de quelques 2%.<sup>184</sup> Alors que les frais consacrés à l'empire étaient passés dans les

<sup>182</sup> LEGVOLD, Robert. Les intérêts stratégiques de l'Union Soviétique en Afrique, article in SEYMOUR WHITAKER, Jennifer. *Les Etats-Unis et l'Afrique : les intérêts en jeu*. Paris Nouveaux Horizons 1981, pp 138-140.

<sup>183</sup> M. Alexandre de MARENCHES allait qualifier cet acte "avant-dernier acte d'un événement majeur de ce siècle". Lire OCKRENT, Christine, et DE MARENCHES, Alexandre, *Dans le secret des princes*. Paris, Stock, 1987, 1<sup>ère</sup> éd.

<sup>184</sup> Du fait des gonflements artificiels des statistiques au sein du système soviétique, il y a eu une vive polémique sur la signification réelle de ces chiffres *New-York* 2 Novembre 1988, p 19.

années 1970 de 1 à 3% du PNB, dans les années 1980, le montant de l'aide économique et militaire accordée par les soviétiques à leurs alliés tombe à 1,4% de son PNB contre 0,3% pour les Etats-Unis.<sup>185</sup>

Ainsi donc, à partir des années 1980, la croissance commence à tendre de plus en plus vers zéro. De ce fait, l'Union soviétique éprouve de sérieuses difficultés à soutenir son empire car le développement économique n'a pas coïncidé avec l'expansion militaire. Le système économique soviétique à l'aube des années 1980 était encore basé sur le modèle stalinien. Reposant sur la planification centrale, il consistait à faire de la quantité et non de la qualité le principal critère de réussite visé par les gestionnaires. Les planificateurs qui fixaient les prix des produits manquaient de flexibilité nécessaire pour épouser l'allure accélérée des changements technologiques que vit l'économie actuelle dont la base est l'information. Résultat, l'URSS n'a pas maîtrisé la "troisième révolution."<sup>186</sup> Ainsi comme le disait MARSHALL Goldman, "au lieu d'être un catalyseur, le modèle stalinien est devenu une entrave" au développement économique de l'URSS dont globalement en 1988 encore, 7 à 8% seulement de sa production manufacturée était conforme aux standards mondiaux et ne pouvait se tailler qu'à peine 4% des échanges mondiaux. Sa part d'exportation restait similaire à celle d'un pays en développement puisqu'à elle seule une de ses matières premières, le pétrole lui rapportait quelques 60% de ses gains en devises fortes.

La décision de l'interruption de l'assistance militaire se justifie donc par le désir des dirigeants soviétiques de faire face à ces difficultés économiques que

<sup>185</sup> IZIOUMOV, Alexei et KORTOUNOV Andrei. "L'Union Soviétique dans un monde qui change" cité par GRESH, Alain, op cit., p 10.

<sup>186</sup> D'après le sociologue BELL Daniel l'humanité a eu trois révolutions. La première, la révolution technologique a pris place il y a deux cents ans, avec l'avènement des transports à vapeur et la production mécanique en usine. La deuxième révolution s'est produite il y a un siècle grâce à la chimie et à l'électricité qui ont permis la fabrication des fibres synthétiques et des matières plastiques. La troisième révolution qui se déroule en ce moment est la révolution informatique, elle modifie la notion des marchés.



GORBATCHEV avait perçues dès son arrivée au pouvoir en 1985. Il avait déclaré que le pays était en "pré-crise". En 1987, son ministre des Affaires étrangères Edouard CHERVARNADZE, lui emboîtait le pas dans une mise en garde aux membres de son ministère :

*"au-delà des frontières de l'Union Soviétique vous et moi, nous représentons un grand pays qui au cours des quinze dernières années n'a fait que perdre de plus en plus sa position parmi les principales nations industrialisées."*<sup>187</sup>

En plus de ces raisons économiques, il y a les raisons politiques.

## **2- L'environnement politique.**

Le 16 Février 1987 déjà Gorbatchev devant les participants à un séminaire à Moscou s'exprimait ainsi :

*"Devant mon peuple, devant le monde entier, je déclare en toute responsabilité que notre politique internationale est plus que jamais déterminée par notre politique intérieure, par l'intérêt que nous avons à nous concentrer sur notre travail d'édification afin de développer notre pays. C'est précisément pour cette raison que nous avons besoin de paix stable et d'une orientation prévisible et constructive des Relations Internationales."*<sup>188</sup>

De ce propos il se dégage trois grandes lignes de force de la nouvelle politique soviétique tant vis-à-vis des Etats-Unis que des Etats socialistes que le retrait soviétique est venu matérialiser.

D'abord, le retrait après celui d'Afghanistan est la matérialisation d'un nouvel ordre international, marque la fin des grands affrontements idéologiques,

<sup>187</sup> Cité par SESTANOVITCH, Stephen. "Gorbatchev's foreign policy : a diplomacy of decline". Problems of communism, 37, Janvier-Février 1988, pp 2-3.

<sup>188</sup> Cité par MARCOU Lily op cit. p 5.

c'est-à-dire la mort "d'une vision du monde dans laquelle une partie de l'humanité doit liquider l'autre."<sup>189</sup>

Ensuite le retrait est une forme de reconnaissance du fait que le tiers monde est un monde indépendant qui a le droit de ne se lier à personne.<sup>190</sup>

Enfin le retrait est soutenu par la volonté des soviétiques d'être désormais plus sélectifs dans leurs interventions :

*"Le socialisme ne peut et ne doit pas être gérant des régimes qui ne reposent pas sur une large base sociale et sont incapables de se défendre."*<sup>191</sup>

Ainsi donc les raisons externes du conflit d'ordre économiques et politiques ont joué si ce n'est un rôle certain du moins un certain rôle dans le retrait des soviétiques. Mais à côté de celles-ci, les raisons internes semblent être des arguments de poids.

#### **B- Les conséquences sur l'assistance militaire Soviétique à L'Ethiopie et le processus résolutif.**

Elles sont deux principales. La baisse d'intérêt de l'Union Soviétique pour les négociations d'Atlanta et la peur d'une « vietnamisation » du conflit de l'Erythrée.

<sup>189</sup> GRESH, Alain op cit., p 10.

<sup>190</sup> Propos du Professeur MIRSKY, spécialiste soviétique des pays en voie de développement cité par GRESH, Alain op cit.

<sup>191</sup> IZIOUMOV, Alexei et KORTOUNOV Andréi. L'Union Soviétique dans un monde qui change cité par GRESH, Alain op cit., p 10.

1- Baisse d'intérêt de l'Union Soviétique pour la suite des négociations d'Atlanta d'Atlanta.

Commencées à Atlanta en Septembre 1989, les négociation de paix sur le conflit érythréen, présidées par Jimmy CARTER se sont poursuivies au mois de Novembre 1989 à Naïrobi. Les questions laissées en suspens à Atlanta à l'exemple du choix du co-médiateur ainsi que des Etats observateurs sont réglées.<sup>192</sup> Ainsi donc le retrait des soviétiques a lieu alors que des négociations substantielles sont attendues.

2- La peur d'une « vietnamisation » du conflit de l'Erythrée.

Entre la date de signature du traité d'amitié et de coopération entre l'Ethiopie et l'Union Soviétique de 1977 et 1990, l'Ethiopie a obtenu un matériel militaire que seules ses ressources ne lui auraient jamais permis posséder.

Dès 1977, elle a reçu des armes soviétiques particulièrement des chars et des avions pour un montant de 385 millions de dollars. Elle a accueilli sur son territoire des engins et du matériel sophistiqué dont certains ne devaient être utilisés qu'au sein du Pacte de Varsovie.<sup>193</sup> Pour les besoins de sa défense l'Ethiopie s'est ainsi endettée vis-à-vis de l'URSS largement au dessus du seuil acceptable par rapport à ses capacités économiques.

Si ce matériel a permis de récupérer l'OGADEN, il n'en a pas été de même en Erythrée. Malgré la présence militaire des soviétiques, les éthiopiens ont été incapables de pacifier l'Erythrée. Au moment où les soviétiques se retirent d'Ethiopie, celle-ci vient de perdre le contrôle de la ville de Massawa.

<sup>192</sup> Julius NYERERE avait été choisi comme co-médiateur au détriment de Robert MUGABE proposé par l'Ethiopie et HOSNI MOUBARAK proposé par l'Erythrée.

<sup>193</sup> DAILY Telegraph, 23 Février 1978.

Autrement dit, le conflit d'Erythrée, conflit périphérique, a montré aux soviétiques qu'eux aussi pouvaient se trouver paralysés face à des formes dégradées et non conventionnelles de la guerre. Il aurait été une situation où le Gulliver soviétique est resté enchaîné réduit à "l'impuissance par l'excès de sa puissance."

Les raisons d'ordre internes auront elles aussi jouées un rôle dans le retrait des soviétiques d'Ethiopie. Mais contrairement à 1976, où les soviétiques avaient immédiatement remplacé les américains, les américains ne remplaceront pas les soviétiques dans le rôle de fournisseurs d'armes à l'Ethiopie.

**PARAGRAPHE II : Le désintérêt américain malgré les initiatives éthiopiennes.**

Dès son retour de Moscou en Juillet 1988, MENGISTU tente d'attirer l'attention des Américains sur son pays par une série d'initiatives. Les initiatives éthiopiennes sont politiques, diplomatiques, économiques.

**A- Les initiatives politiques et diplomatiques.**

Les initiatives politiques et diplomatiques éthiopiennes, en direction des puissances occidentales en général et les Etats-Unis en particulier commencent avant la chute du Mur de Berlin.

En Novembre 1988, dans une interview à un journal américain, MENGISTU voudrait faire croire aux Etats-Unis qu'il a tiré un trait sur son ancien engagement marxiste.<sup>194</sup> Dès le mois de mars 1989, le gouvernement éthiopien tente de relever ses relations diplomatiques avec les Etats-Unis qui en

<sup>194</sup> New-York TIMES, Novembre 1988.

1980 avaient été réduites au niveau des chargés d'affaires à celui d'Ambassadeurs. Il envoie alors aux Etats-Unis TIBABU BEKELE, dernier Ambassadeur ayant occupé le poste à Washington. Après avoir vainement attendu d'être accrédité, ce dernier est rappelé en Ethiopie le 30 Mai.<sup>195</sup>

Habituellement critiqué par les puissances occidentales comme violant les droits de l'Homme, le gouvernement éthiopien annonce le 2 Septembre 1988<sup>196</sup>, l'élargissement de 87 prisonniers politiques ainsi que 820 détenus de droit commun. Parmi ces prisonniers se trouvaient trois des fils de l'ex-empereur Hailé SELASSIE : le prince WOSSED-SEGED MEKONNEN, le prince MEKELE MEKONNEN et le prince BEDE MARIAM MEKONNEN.

Le 5 Mars 1990, MENGISTU annonce le changement dans le contenu, les éléments et la dénomination de son parti, au pouvoir, le Parti des Travailleurs Ethiopiens créé dix ans après la révolution éthiopienne qui devient le "Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party". Il autorise la création des nouvelles organisations politiques mais toutefois celles-ci doivent militer au sein de son parti. Lorsque survient la guerre du golfe, MENGISTU promet l'accès libre des îles Dahlaks en Mer Rouge qui ont été un temps une base soviétique, aux forces américaines. De même il se propose allié de la coalition occidentale.

### **B- Les initiatives économiques.**

L'Ethiopie a été critiqué pour sa gestion économique par les Soviétiques.<sup>197</sup> Aussi MENGISTU après avoir autorisé les entrepreneurs

<sup>195</sup> Malgré la visite d'HERMAN COHEN en Ethiopie, cette situation sera maintenue.

<sup>196</sup> Cinq jours avant les négociations d'Atlanta.

<sup>197</sup> KRYLOVA. Revolution in Ethiopia. Outstanding questions in Asia and Africa today n°2 1989. Moscou pp 67-70.

éthiopiens à faire des joints-ventures avec les investisseurs étrangers en Mars 1990, confirme-t-il sa tendance à la libéralisation de l'économie.

Les initiatives politiques et économiques de MENGISTU ont pour but de persuader les Américains de coopérer de nouveau avec l'Ethiopie comme ce fut le cas avant la révolution de 1974. Mais les Américains dans le contexte du nouvel ordre international, ne consentiront plus à intervenir militairement en Ethiopie. Ceci contribuera à ramener le conflit de l'Erythrée à sa dimension régionale et locale.

**SECTION II : LE RETOUR A LA DIMENSION REGIONALE  
ET LOCALE DU CONFLIT**

**PARAGRAPHE I : Les manifestations.**

La manifestation du retour à la dimension locale du conflit érythréen a consisté à désidéologiser le conflit. Celui-ci devait alors passer pour le gouvernement éthiopien du stade de lutte contre les impérialistes à celui de la résistance aux arabes.

**A- La désidéologisation du conflit.**

La participation directe des Soviétiques et Cubains au conflit érythréen aux côtés de l'Etat éthiopien avait donné une connotation idéologique au conflit. De ce fait l'Ethiopie avait utilisé une stratégie globale du niveau régional que l'évolution des Relations Internationales allait rendre obsolète.

L'arrivée du bloc soviétique en Ethiopie dès 1976 allait avoir pour conséquence sur le conflit d'Erythrée la mutation de son enjeu. Il s'agissait alors pour les alliés de MENGISTU, de lutter contre les impérialistes érythréens, qui

voulaient étrangler la révolution éthiopienne. En taxant les érythréens d'impérialistes, l'Ethiopie et avec eux les cubains et d'autres alliés du bloc soviétique transformaient le conflit en lutte de classes. Les érythréens symbolisaient la classe bourgeoise et l'Ethiopie la classe prolétarienne.

En juin 1978, Fidel CASTRO qui avait longtemps défendu la cause érythréenne devait déclarer à un journal italien l'"EPOCA" que :

*"Le mouvement de libération de l'Erythrée, né comme mouvement révolutionnaire du temps de Hailé SELASSIE, s'est transformé en un instrument de réaction pour liquider la révolution éthiopienne."*<sup>198</sup>

Cette stratégie a été retenue lorsque les érythréens ont refusé la proposition soviétique à Aden en 1977 de résoudre la question érythréenne conformément à l'internationalisme prolétarien. Par leur refus, les érythréens s'étaient exclus du monde communiste d'anéantir les forces politiques existantes même par de-là les frontières des Etats.<sup>199</sup> Cette stratégie se fonde sur une intransigeance teintée d'agressivité vis-à-vis du monde extérieur. En qualifiant les érythréens de "réactionnaires", d'impérialistes, MENGISTU entendait récupérer à son compte et pour l'intérêt de son pays, l'antagonisme inné entre les forces capitalistes ou impérialistes et les forces socialistes dont l'implication majeure était qu'il ne peut y avoir de communauté de but entre les communistes et les capitalistes.

Cette stratégie a eu deux effets principaux. Le premier a consisté à écarter les Etats-Unis du processus résolutif du conflit de l'Erythrée. Or ceux-ci avaient les moyens de fragiliser soit directement, soit indirectement le processus résolutif du conflit par l'intermédiaire de leurs alliés dans la région de la corne et du golfe persique tels que le Soudan et l'Arabie Saoudite ; ces deux derniers

<sup>198</sup> AFP dépêche du 16 juin 1978.

Etats étant considérés comme des acteurs dont le rôle déterminant ne devait pas être ignoré.

Le deuxième effet est celui de l'option militaire arrêtée par les éthiopiens et le bloc soviétique pour résoudre le conflit. De ce fait même les cubains, qui avaient toujours éprouvé de la sympathie pour les MLN érythréens contribuèrent à leur élimination militaire.<sup>200</sup> En effet, bien qu'ils n'aient pas eu un rôle réel en Erythrée tout montre que le soutien cubain à la campagne anti-érythréenne du DERG fut quoique indirect, très important, de par leur contribution militaire dans la province frontalière du TIGRE. Grâce à eux, la route stratégique reliant Addis-Abeba à Asmara, et traversant la province du Tigré ne fut pas coupée. Ils construisirent en outre un nouveau terrain d'aviation qui fut utilisé par l'armée de l'air éthiopienne comme base pour ses attaques contre les positions érythréennes.

La stratégie de MENGISTU consistant à faire de la guerre d'Erythrée une lutte contre les impérialistes allait connaître ses limites avec l'avènement de la nouvelle base d'une "*autre weltaunschung*"<sup>201</sup> reposant sur la fin d'une vision du monde où une partie de l'humanité doit liquider l'autre. MENGISTU placera alors le conflits d'Erythrée dès 1988 sous le signe de la résistance aux Arabes.

### **B- L'émergence du thème de la résistance aux Arabes.**

La résistance aux arabes est une stratégie de ressourcement régional adopté par MENGISTU, au lendemain de l'avènement de la nouvelle détente internationale. Elle est une manifestation de la désidéologisation du conflit.

En considérant le conflit comme une guerre de résistance aux Arabes, MENGISTU entend par là revenir sur un stratégie utilisée déjà par le Négus

<sup>199</sup> SPANIER, John op cit. p58 et S.

<sup>200</sup> LEGUM, Colin op cit. p112.



Hailé SELASSIE dès le début du conflit armé. Cette stratégie de "ressourcement régional"<sup>202</sup> se fonde sur les relations de défiance historique qui ont eu lieu entre l'Ethiopie Etat chrétien et les peuples arabo-musulmans qui l'entourent. De l'histoire de l'Ethiopie, on retient que son plus grand danger d'isolement et le siège le plus redoutable et durable fut celui qui résulte des conquêtes de l'islam à l'Est. Ce péril d'enclenchement périphérique islamique de l'IMAM GRAN particulièrement fut le plus redoutable car il visait moins l'Etat abyssin que ses bases culturelles et particulièrement religieuses. L'Ethiopie maintint son indépendance grâce à des conditions montagnardes. Ces conditions montagnardes avaient fourni à L'Ethiopie les moyens de se défendre et de réorganiser l'Etat.<sup>203</sup>

Pour que cette stratégie soit opérationnelle, MENGISTU réactive les facteurs identitaires éthiopiens. Cette stratégie aura des effets.

Il y en a deux principaux ; la redynamisation de l'église chrétienne orthodoxe éthiopienne et la reprise des relations diplomatiques avec l'Etat hébreux.

**a- L'implication de l'église chrétienne orthodoxe éthiopienne.**

L'appartenance de l'Ethiopie au monde chrétien depuis trois millénaires ne fait pas de doute. C'est sur ce facteur religieux que dès 1674, le Tsar ALEXIS de Russie s'est appuyé pour suggérer à L'Ethiopie une alliance contre l'Empire Ottoman, idée reprise par Pierre le Grand peu après. Cette alliance avait pour but de renforcer le flanc sud de la Russie dans la région méditerranéenne contre l'Empire Ottoman et de renforcer la nécessité pour

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<sup>201</sup> MARCOU, Lily op cit.

<sup>202</sup> LAIDI Zaji "Berlin-Koweït" Politique étrangère n°2 1991 p476.

<sup>203</sup> La peur de l'encerclement périphérique arabo-musulman qui sera écarté dans la deuxième moitié du Xiè siècle, avait obligé l'Ethiopie à opérer un long glissement du Nord vers le Sud d'Axoum, glissement qui se poursuit dans la succession des capitalistes Ankober, Entoto, etc. correspondant à des stratégies défensives.

celle-ci (la Russie), d'accéder aux ports de haute mer et de défendre ses intérêts au Moyen-Orient. C'est encore grâce à ce facteur que la Conférence de Berlin a exclu l'Ethiopie de toute colonisation.<sup>204</sup> Et jusqu'à 1974, l'Ethiopie se présentait encore comme un Etat chrétien, tant l'histoire de ses structures et de son évolution étaient liées à son appartenance à l'Eglise chrétienne. Dans l'Ethiopie de l'empereur Hailé SELASSIE, l'Eglise restait avant tout une église nationale, indivisible de l'Etat représentée par le Négus NEGAST, le Roi des Rois. Elle appartenait sur le plan liturgique et théologique à l'Eglise Copte d'Alexandrie, l'une des trois églises orientales originales par leur conception monophysite du Christ.<sup>205</sup> Sur l'étendu de l'Etat le réseau ecclésial de tradition "Salomonienne"<sup>206</sup> était une hiérarchie parallèle et complémentaire des structures administratives et politiques. L'ensemble ecclésial fonctionnant comme un support essentiel de l'Etat en fournissait les références historiques ordonnées dans la perspective d'un destin providentiel et d'un avenir exceptionnel qui retraçait les redressements miraculeux des éthiopiens face aux pires catastrophes.<sup>207</sup>

Empire sud de la chrétienté<sup>208</sup>, l'Ethiopie était un peuple élu différent du peuple juif (du fait qu'il n'a pas connu de dispersion) s'exprimant tout au long de son histoire par des crises d'intolérances à l'égard des autres religions monothéistes. Avec l'islam particulièrement en expansion constante dans les régions méridionales et dans les villes du fait de l'exode rural, on avait noté une violente confrontation à l'époque de la Première Guerre Mondiale, due à la tentative d'islamisation du Négus Lijj LYASU.

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<sup>204</sup> GALLAIS, Jean op cit. pp 25-30.

<sup>205</sup> Ici, Jésus n'a qu'une nature alors qu'il participe à la fois à la nature humaine dans les Eglises chrétiennes occidentales.

<sup>206</sup> GASCON, Alain op cit. p 102.

<sup>207</sup> La tradition salomonienne fixe à chacun des acteurs de l'histoire un rôle défini selon des règles immuables.

<sup>208</sup> La chrétienté est divisée en deux empires, au nord celui de Rome (Byzance), au sud celui d'Ethiopie.

Avant la révolution de 1974, l'église, gardienne du trésor et "donneuse de sens" en Ethiopie, nouvelle terre sainte, assurait le mouvement collectif d'une foi populaire vécue au jour le jour par une chaîne cérémonial compliquée, dans laquelle on trouvait 200 à 220 jours, religieux dans l'année parmi lesquels, l'épiphanie était la plus grande puis suivaient les fêtes du temps pascal, et autres saints officiels. Le principal animateur de l'Eglise éthiopienne était l'ABUNA qui était désigné selon une procédure particulière. Mais dès 1976, le régime de MENGISTU remet en cause l'identité chrétienne éthiopienne, en désignant de façon régulière l'ABUNA TECKLE HAIMAMOT comme patriarche de l'Eglise orthodoxe d'Ethiopie. Cette désignation irrégulière avait amené les autres églises à refroidir leurs relations avec celle de l'Ethiopie.

Aussi MENGISTU permet-il la désignation régulière d'un patriarche de l'Eglise orthodoxe le 4 septembre 1988, soit peu après la mort de l'ancien patriarche survenue le 7 juin 1988, afin de renouer avec l'ensemble des Etats appartenant à la communauté orthodoxe parmi lesquels se trouve l'Union Soviétique<sup>209</sup>, en la personne de l'ABUNA MERKORIOS (Mercurarios) par un conclave d'évêques et d'églises officielles. Lors de son investiture comme patriarche de l'église orthodoxe éthiopienne, divers représentants des autres églises dans le monde sont présents.

En redynamisant l'église orthodoxe éthiopienne, MENGISTU entendait par là jeter les bases d'une nouvelle alliance avec les Etats chrétiens contre la menace islamique dont l'Ethiopie était victime comme par le passé en ce moment. Et l'Ethiopie va reprendre ses relations diplomatiques avec l'Etat hébreux au lendemain de la visite de l'ABUNA MERKORIOS en Israël.

**b- La reprise des relations diplomatiques entre l'Etat hébreux et l'Etat abyssin.**

Elle apparaît comme un autre aspect du retour à la dimension régionale du conflit. Interrompues au lendemain de la guerre du Kippour en 1973<sup>210</sup>, les relations diplomatiques entre l'Etat hébreux et l'Etat Abyssin allaient être rétablies le 4 novembre 1989. Dès le lendemain de cette reprise des relations diplomatiques, l'Etat hébreux envoie en Ethiopie, des spécialistes dans la lutte antiguérilla. Dans le même temps, les deux parties engagent des pourparlers relatifs à une éventuelle vente d'armes israéliennes. Peu de temps après les érythréens affirment la participation israélienne dans ce conflit aussi bien par la livraison d'armes militaires à l'Ethiopie que par la présence des conseillers militaires israéliens au front.

Rendu à ce niveau d'analyse, on peut dire que les mutations du système international ont eu deux conséquences principales sur le conflit érythréen. Elles ont d'abord enlevé à l'Ethiopie son intérêt stratégique et partant sa faculté de marchandage sur laquelle était fondée toute sa stratégie pendant de la guerre froide. Ainsi le retrait des soviétiques de l'Ethiopie n'a pas été suivi par l'entrée des Etats-Unis dans les hostilités mais plutôt dans le processus résolutif. Ensuite, le retrait des soviétiques a permis d'amener le conflit à son niveau régional et local, à sa véritable dimension historique et non idéologique comme c'était le cas. Et l'une des plus significatives manifestations de la régionalisation du conflit fut l'attitude du gouvernement éthiopien vis-à-vis des pays arabes au lendemain de la reprise des relations diplomatiques avec l'Etat d'Israël.<sup>211</sup> S'il

<sup>209</sup> ROSSI, Pierre. "Sainte Russie, un pied en orient, un œil sur l'occident", in *Mensuel Arabes* n°93 septembre 1990 p14.

<sup>210</sup> Néanmoins jusqu'en 1977, l'Etat hébreux continuait de fournir du matériel militaire à L'Ethiopie.

<sup>211</sup> Après l'explosion d'une bombe le 30 Mars 1990 à l'Hôtel Hilton situé près de la résidence du nouvel Ambassadeur d'Israël qui avait présenté ses lettres de créances le 23 Mars, l'Ethiopie expulsera le 31 Mars deux diplomates Libyens, ce qui était impensable avant la nouvelle détente internationale.

est difficile de nier l'apport de la détente internationale puis la fin de la guerre froide dans la déstabilisation des équilibres sur lesquels s'appuyait le pouvoir éthiopien<sup>212</sup>, on ne saurait en écarter l'importance dans l'internationalisation du conflit..

**PARAGRAPHE II : Les conséquences du retour à la dimension régionale et locale du conflit**

Les conséquences ont été d'une part la reddition de l'armée éthiopienne, en Erythrée, et de l'autre, l'affirmation du FPLE, comme l'entité la plus forte politiquement et militairement en Erythrée.

**A- La reddition de l'armée éthiopienne**

La reddition<sup>213</sup> de l'armée éthiopienne en Erythrée s'est faite sans conditions. Elle a été le fait des victoires militaires érythréennes. Deux grandes étapes marquent cette reddition. On a d'abord la perte de Massawa, puis celle d'Asmara, d'Assab et du Décamaré.

**1- La perte de Massawa en Février 1990.**

L'importance stratégique de la ville de Massawa et particulièrement son port sur la Mer rouge ont été déterminant dans le renversement des rapports de forces au détriment des forces érythréennes en juillet 1978. En effet, de mars 1977 à décembre 1978 le FPLE et le FLE contrôlaient plus de 9/10 du territoire érythréen. Ils obligeaient ainsi le pouvoir éthiopien à ravitailler les villes principales comme Asmara, Assab, et Massawa par air ou par mer.

<sup>212</sup> HOCHÉ, Christian, Afrique, naufrage d'un continent. L'Express n°2024 du 27 Avril 1990 p 38.

<sup>213</sup> Larousse op cit. p 871.

Cette évolution de la guerre ne manqua pas d'alarmer les alliés de la junte militaire d'Addis-Abeba. Ce d'autant plus que l'URSS et ses alliés du bloc de l'Est ne s'attendaient pas aux difficultés du pouvoir du Colonel Mengistu, mettant en œuvre une armée de plus de 120 000 hommes<sup>214</sup> suréquipée et couvrant l'ensemble du territoire de l'Erythrée. Afin de desserrer l'étau du FLE et du FPLE, l'URSS et ses alliés allaient redoubler d'aide et d'assistance à l'occupant éthiopien. Cette entrée des puissances étrangères allait sauver l'armée éthiopienne de l'effondrement et lui faire reprendre progressivement l'initiative sur les champs de bataille. Cette reprise d'initiative avait été rendue possible du fait que la ville de Massawa n'avait pas pu être prise.

Soutenu massivement par les canons de la flotte soviétique l'armée du Colonel MENGISTU, allait lancer une série de dix grandes opérations menées de pair avec des dizaines de ratissages effectués dans toutes les directions et sur des vastes étendues en vue de disperser les forces du FPLE et du FLE. Face à ces offensives, l'Armée populaire de libération de l'Erythrée devait entreprendre un "*repli stratégique*".

Après avoir résisté de juillet 1978 à octobre 1985 à des offensives de grandes envergures lancées par l'armée éthiopienne, le FPLE reprend l'initiative des opérations militaires le 19 mars 1988. Celles-ci se soldent par l'effondrement du front nord de l'armée abyssine et par la libération de la ville d'Afabet. Suite à cette débâcle qui sera suivie de bien d'autres<sup>215</sup>, le gouvernement éthiopien décide d'évacuer complètement tout l'ouest de l'Erythrée et concentre ses troupes sur les côtes et les régions d'Asmara et de Massawa. Puis il fait venir de nouveaux renforts d'Ethiopie. L'armée du Négus

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<sup>214</sup> La dite "Deuxième armée révolutionnaire"

<sup>215</sup> Dans la bataille, 18000 soldats éthiopiens furent tués et 2500 capturés parmi lesquels 3 officiers soviétiques.

Rouge espère ainsi reprendre l'initiative ou du moins s'assurer le contrôle des voies de communications entre Massawa et Asmara.

Dans le même temps, elle prend une série de mesures allant de la restructuration de son état-major à la mise sous Etat d'urgence de l'Erythrée en passant par l'imposition d'un lourd sacrifice aux populations éthiopiennes dans le cadre de l'opération "*everything to the war*"<sup>216</sup>.

La bataille de Massawa devait se dérouler dans trois secteurs. Elle couvrait une très vaste étendue opérationnelle (1560 km<sup>2</sup>). Chaque secteur occupé par l'armée éthiopienne était défendu par un dispositif de plusieurs kilomètres et disposait de puissants points d'appui ainsi que d'une colonne de chars (plus de 150 tout modèle confondu).

Le 6 février 1990 en mi-journée, l'Armée populaire de libération de l'Erythrée fonce sur le secteur oriental du front, bouscule les lignes éthiopiennes et s'empare du commandement de la 6<sup>e</sup> division après avoir enfoncé plusieurs blochous. Au cours des combats à l'issue desquels le FPLE occupera Gahtelay en mettant hors de combat les 4<sup>e</sup>, 27<sup>e</sup> et 26<sup>e</sup> brigades éthiopiennes. Le parc d'artillerie et le poste de commandement de la 6<sup>e</sup> division seront détruits. Et son commandant, le Colonel Afworki Tekle, fait prisonnier. Après ce succès, la voie pour le contrôle de Massawa était ouverte.

C'est ainsi que le matin du 9 février 1990, le FPLE amorce son mouvement en direction du secteur central et de celui nord où les forces éthiopiennes se trouvent complètement isolées. C'est la guerre des côtes de la Mer Rouge avec pour objectif le démantèlement de la base navale. Contre ces unités navales extrêmement actives et le barrage d'une colonne de plus de 60

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<sup>216</sup> Lire Keesing's Record of world events 1990, p. 37239.

blindés alignée par L'Ethiopie, les érythréens allaient adopter la tactique du "flux successif"<sup>217</sup>.

Cette tactique allait s'avérer payante car le FPLE allait parvenir à faire jonction avec ses autres unités qui contrôlaient le front central et à prendre en tenaille l'armée éthiopienne dans le secteur Nord. L'intervention de l'aviation et les bombardements intensifs d'Agip, Adaga, Gorgosom et notamment de Massawa ne purent contenir les nationalistes érythréens. En effet, après quelques heures de combat, l'armée éthiopienne abandonna les positions stratégiques dominant le centre de Massawa pour se replier jusqu'à May-Atal et Dogali. Peu après, Dogali sera libéré. Le 10 février poursuivant son avancée, le FPLE occupe la forteresse d'Hetomlo dominant Massawa malgré de fortes résistances.

Entre le 11 et le 15 février, le FPLE entreprend par l'intermédiaire du Père Stephanos une démarche tendant à convaincre la garnison éthiopienne à la reddition afin de préserver conformément à la Convention de Genève sur les prisonniers de guerre, la vie des civils et des populations prises en otages par l'armée éthiopienne. A cette démarche qui sera jointe par un appel des officiers éthiopiens faits prisonniers par le FPLE, le Major Tishome Tessema opposera un refus catégorique, bien que la population prise en otage commençait à souffrir du manque de vivres, d'eau et d'hygiène.

Sur ce, le 15 février à 17 heures, le FPLE lance suivant deux axes convergents par la route allant de Segalat Katan et à partir de Ras Meder une attaque surprise contre les positions éthiopiennes. Celle-ci aboutit à la neutralisation de la garnison et à sa reddition constituant par là même l'étape finale de la libération de Massawa et de la région côtière. (Voir Tableau N° 5).

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<sup>217</sup> Cette tactique consiste tantôt à concentrer ses unités pour attaquer d'emblée le cœur du corps de l'armée ennemie ou à se porter sur ses flancs pour la disperser, l'étirer ou la sectionner pour la décimer ensuite ; tantôt à



**Tableau n° 5 :** Pertes éthiopiennes pendant la bataille de MASSAOUA (Février 1990).

PERTES	ARMEMENTS PRIS	AVIONS ABATTUS	VAISSEaux DE GUERRE	
			PRIS	DETRUITS
10 brigades anéanties	80 chars	2 Migs 23	5	12
12 unités navales	7 rampes de lancements de missiles BM21	1 Mig 21		
18.000 soldats tués				
8.000 prisonniers	10 fusées Frog			

**Source :** Bulletin du FPLE, Sogom, n°28, Mars 1990.

Au début de l'année 1991, le port de Massawa qui était resté fermé pendant plusieurs mois causant ainsi un préjudice aux organisations internationales qui l'utilisaient pour stocker et faire transiter l'aide humanitaire destinée à l'Ethiopie ou sévissait une importante épidémie de famine allait être réouvert.<sup>218</sup> Etant ainsi à mesure de recevoir plus facilement les armes en provenance de l'étranger, le FPLE allait entreprendre la conquête des villes d'Asmara et Assab dans la région du Decamaré.

opérer en de fortes concentrations en lançant des attaques surprises pour enfoncer des positions ennemies.  
<sup>218</sup> Keesing's Record of world events, 1991, p. 37945.

**2- La perte d'Asmara, Assab et du Décamaré en mai 1991.**

Avec la prise de Massawa en février 1990 malgré l'appui des forces israéliennes<sup>219</sup> aux troupes éthiopiennes, le conflit de l'Erythrée allait s'installer dans les grandes villes notamment Assab, Asmara et Décamaré.

La bataille du Décamaré s'est déroulée sur 3 fronts<sup>220</sup> délimités par les montagnes Seeb et Harrat jusqu'à Goura et englobant la région de May-Edaga. L'armée éthiopienne concentrée dans cette zone était évaluée à 70 000 hommes. Elle comprenait entre autres la 10<sup>e</sup> division, trois brigades de la 18<sup>e</sup> division, la 29<sup>e</sup> brigade mécanisée et deux brigades de commandos. Elle disposait surtout de 125 canons (50 de 130 mm et 75 de 122 mm), de 70 rampes de lancements de missiles BM 21 et de plus de 330 chars.

L'offensive de l'armée populaire de libération contre le Décamaré commence le 19 mai 1991 à 10 heures. Les combats très meurtriers dans lesquels l'infanterie et l'artillerie sont au premier plan se déroulent pour le contrôle de la montagne d'Harrat verrou stratégique tenu par les éthiopiens et sur les axes routiers reliant Décamaré et Asmara. Le lendemain le FPLE attaque de nouveau les positions éthiopiennes dans la région du Mont Arar coupant les lignes éthiopiennes et les voies de communication puis poursuit son avancée vers la ville de Décamaré. Le 23 mai à 11 heures, la ville de Décamaré est prise aux éthiopiens qui, bien auparavant, s'était retirés des villes de Goura, Adi-Haram et des positions du Mont Arar.

Gardant toujours l'initiative des combats, et prenant pour cibles principales le Quartier Général de l'Etat-major, le commandement de la zone spéciale de la ville, les emplacements d'artillerie, les blindés et les dépôts de

<sup>219</sup> AMIN Samir, *L'ethnie à l'assaut des Nations*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1993.

<sup>220</sup> Bulletin du FPLE, Sagom, N°42, juillet 1991.

munitions, l'armée populaire du FPLE qui obligeait les troupes éthiopiennes à la défensive devait entreprendre après la prise de Décamaré (ce qui avait porté un coup psychologique fatal au moral des troupes éthiopiennes) de contrôler les routes reliant Asmara à Mendefera et de celle de Dabaroa à Tramni.

Ce même jour de mai 1991, des soldats éthiopiens qui tentaient de regagner l'Éthiopie par les frontières naturelles du Mereb à bord de 100 camions et 70 blindés afin de desserrer l'étau de l'armée populaire seront obligés de capituler. Ainsi, la province de Seraye sera libérée. Seront également prises toutes les montagnes de la région d'Adi Waraso, abritant les positions fortifiées de l'armée éthiopienne. Les positions de l'armée de Mengistu au sud de Bizen seront balayées. Et le 24 mai 1991, l'armée populaire de libération de l'Erythrée s'empare d'Asmara. Dès le 25 Mai, Assab, ville portuaire sur la Mer Rouge allait être conquise. Face à cette offensive générale de mai 1991 qui avait bouleversé de fond en comble la situation en Erythrée, le Général commandant les forces éthiopiennes et son Etat-major durent fuir l'Erythrée en hélicoptère, abandonnant à leur sort une armée évaluée à 120 000 hommes.<sup>221</sup> Ce fut là le dernier acte d'une des plus formidables redditions de l'histoire. Cette épopée victorieuse était due à l'armée populaire du FPLE placée sous la direction d'Issayas Afeworki qui s'est affirmé ainsi être non seulement un leader politique de premier plan mais aussi un fin stratège militaire.

### **B- Le triomphe d'une guérilla : le FPLE**

En entrant triomphalement dans Asmara la capitale libérée le 24 mai 1991, le FPLE manifestait par là non seulement sa victoire militaire sur l'armée

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<sup>221</sup> A ceux-ci, il fallait ajouter un certain nombre d'agents de service de sécurité, la "DEHNINET", les fonctionnaires du parti des travailleurs d'Éthiopie, les fonctionnaires de l'Administration "coloniale" proprement dite et un certain nombre de leurs familiers. Ce qui faisait en tout 130 000 personnes. Pour un pays de "réfugiés" où l'on ne vivait que de l'aide internationale consistant en une ration mensuelle moyenne de 10 kg de blé par

éthiopienne mais aussi le triomphe politique sur les autres factions qui toutes ont revendiqué à un moment ou à un autre le rôle de représentant du peuple érythréen.

### 1- Le triomphe militaire sur l'armée éthiopienne.

La lutte militaire entre les fronts de libération érythréen et l'armée éthiopienne avait pour objectif de substituer à la puissance militaire éthiopienne celle des érythréens eux-mêmes. Et pour cela il fallait adopter une stratégie adéquate. C'est ainsi qu'est né après dix années de lutte le FPLE, un mouvement dont la naissance s'insérait sur ce qu'Amilcar Cabral dans son analyse appelle *"la logique de la guerre populaire prolongée."*<sup>222</sup>

Pour Cabral en effet, au cours d'une guerre prolongée contre un régime colonial intransigeant et répressif, le soutien de la paysannerie est essentiel pour mener à bien la guérilla. Soutien sous forme de nourriture, de protection, de renseignements et d'aide armée. La réussite de la lutte de libération impose aux petits bourgeois de la direction, l'obligation de s'identifier aux intérêts de la paysannerie et de s'embarquer dans le processus complexe que Cabral appelle le *"suicide des classes"*<sup>223</sup> ou prolétarianisation afin de se doter d'une conscience prolétarienne.

La stratégie développée par les dirigeants du FPLE visait l'intégration de la paysannerie, de la classe ouvrière et de l'intelligentsia dans la lutte. Après le grave échec la stratégie du FLE en 1967, basée plutôt sur la coercition, il s'agissait de se rallier ces catégories sociales et de s'assurer de leur entière coopération avec le FPLE. C'est donc cette stratégie qui va permettre au FPLE

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tête, le gouvernement provisoire de l'Erythrée fut obligé de les rapatrier en Ethiopie. Lire Interview de Issayas Afeworki in *Le Nouvel Afrique-Asie*, n°25 octobre 1991, pp. 23-25.

<sup>222</sup> Cabral Amilcar, *Unity and struggle*, London, Heineman, 1980, pp. 134-136.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid. p. 136.

de repousser le colon éthiopien en compagnie des autres MLN en 1977, à se retrancher dans les grandes villes d'Assab, Asmara et Massawa ; et c'est encore cette stratégie qui a justifiée l'omniprésence du FPLE sur le territoire érythréen et sa résistance aux forces éthiopiennes supérieures en armes et en hommes. C'est enfin cette stratégie qui mènera les érythréens à la victoire finale sur L'Ethiopie le 25 mai 1991.

## **2- Le triomphe politique et militaire sur les autres MLN érythréens**

Par rapport aux autres Mouvements Nationalistes Africains, le MLN érythréen pour l'autodétermination s'est réveillé de manière précoce.<sup>224</sup> La commission des Nations Unies lors de son passage à Asmara en 1950 dénombra près de 18 partis politiques et associations. Ces différents groupes politiques et associations nés dans les années 40 n'étaient que très partiellement déconnectés d'affirmations religieuses, linguistiques et sociales qui scindaient la population en deux camps opposés.<sup>225</sup>

Cette première expression politique moderne devait être enrichie d'autres expériences qui allaient faire la place à de nouveaux groupes sociaux. Ce furent le FLE puis le FPLE. Au lendemain de la grève générale de 1958 en Erythrée qui, soit dit en passant, entra dans le cadre de la lutte par les voies pacifiques du peuple érythréen contre la puissance éthiopienne ; et de la répression l'ayant suivie, les érythréens devaient fuir progressivement leur pays en direction du Soudan, de l'Egypte et d'Arabie Saoudite. En novembre 1958, ces réfugiés devaient créer à Port Soudan, le Mouvement de Libération de l'Erythrée. Ce mouvement aux objectifs limités à une simple opposition à l'annexion et à la

<sup>224</sup> Voir annexe Document N°4.

<sup>225</sup> Id.

sensibilisation de l'opinion étrangère à la cause érythréenne allait s'éclipser progressivement au profit du FLE.

Né à la suite de la rencontre au Caire en 1959 des exilés érythréens que sont Idriss Mohamed Adam, ancien président de l'assemblée nationale, Ibrahim Sultan Ali, secrétaire général de la Ligue musulmane, Woldeab Woldemaria, président de l'Union générale des travailleurs érythréens et Osman Saleh Sabbe, le FLE se démarque du MLE<sup>226</sup> du fait qu'il envisage la lutte armée contre l'occupant éthiopien. Dirigé par Idriss Mohamed Adam, le FLE qui manque d'une réelle organisation politique entre dans la lutte armée en 1961 dans la région de la Barka où les premières salves du conflit armé seront tirées par Ahmed Idriss Awaté et ses compagnons.<sup>227</sup> A partir de cette partie occidentale de l'Erythrée, peuplée par les Beni Amer, pasteurs semi-nomades de confession musulmane, qui avaient refusé dès la fin des années 50, la perspective de voir leur territoire annexé par les éthiopiens, le FLE appuyé par le soutien des populations locales et les pays arabes voisins allait fortement se développer dans les années 60. Avec le ralliement d'un groupe d'érythréens servant dans la police érythréenne, il allait développer la lutte armée et imposer aux troupes éthiopiennes de nombreux combats héroïques.

A la fin de 1963, continuant sa poussée, le FLE dont les effectifs devaient d'une part s'accroître, et de l'autre se diversifier, allait étendre son contrôle sur les régions rivales de l'ouest et du nord du pays. Du fait de ce recrutement multiple et des difficultés de la lutte armée provenant du manque de structures politiques capables de coordonner les diverses unités opérant dans les zones

<sup>226</sup> Marshall (R) Production sociale et recomposition politique en exil : le cas érythréen in Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, N° 107-108, 1987

<sup>227</sup> Les compagnons de Ahmed Idriss Awate sont :

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| - Omar Izaz               | - Mohamed Ali Idriss           |
| - Mohamed Idriss Hadj     | - Mohamed Ibrahim              |
| - Mohamed Omar Abdallah   | - Abdallah Idriss Adam         |
| - Ibrahim Mahmoud Badorai | - Mohamed El Hassan Abou Baker |
| - Omar Mohamed Ali        | - Adam Ghindifil               |

libérées, le FLE allait connaître une scission au début des années 70<sup>228</sup>, scission qui donnera naissance au FPLE. Cette scission qui se fondait sur les tendances progressistes/conservateurs recoupait schématiquement l'antagonisme chrétiens / Musulmans.

Elle avait commencé à se dessiner dans le maquis où trois groupes durant cette période se sont constitués. Le premier autour de Ramadan Mohamed Nur, opérant dans la provinces de Dankalie, le second dirigé par Issayas Afeworki de l'aile des rénovateurs retranchés dans les montagnes d'Ala ; le troisième groupe Obel constitué autour d'Osman Agib qui se rapproche des rénovateurs. Ces deux dernières branches devaient se réunir pour fonder en 1970 à Damas le FPLE. Constitués par un noyau d'intellectuels principalement de confession chrétienne qui reprochaient au FLE d'être dominé par les musulmans aux pratiques conservatrices, le FPLE à l'opposé se voulait à ses débuts laïc et marxiste, à l'image de ses modèles qu'étaient alors le Front populaire de libération de la Palestine (FPLP) ou le FLN algérien. Ce nouveau mouvement s'organise selon les structures traditionnelles des formations marxistes-léninistes (centralisme démocratique, comité central, comité politique plus réduit et secrétaire général). Il tente aussi de préserver l'équilibre entre chrétiens et musulmans par une répartition de manière aussi équitable que possible des postes de responsabilité. A la pratique, ce vœu s'est révélé être pieux puisque les chrétiens ont presque toujours prédominé au sein des structures administratives et politiques.

Remarquable du fait de l'excellence de son organisation, la qualité de ses forces armées et la valeur de ses chefs, le FPLE qui incarnait une autre tradition de la lutte nationaliste devait livrer au FLE son principal rival une guerre fratricide en deux phases. La première, celle de 1972 à 1974, allait permettre au

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<sup>228</sup> Au lendemain de la guerre de six jours en 1967, l'Ethiopie allait reprendre le contrôle de l'ensemble des zones précédemment occupées par le FLE dont particulièrement l'Erythrée occidentale. Ce fut l'année de régression du FLE.

FPLE de s'implanter au détriment du FLE dans les régions montagneuses. La deuxième de 1979 à 1981 allait prendre fin avec la reddition du FLE en 1981. Alors que la réaction éthiopienne avait frappée durement le FLE-FPL d'Osman Sabbe dont les hommes furent contraints à se disperser au Soudan ou selon l'expression du sociologue suisse Jean Ziegler il allait « végéter » dans les camps de réfugiés<sup>229</sup>, le FLE et le FPLE allaient dès août 1980 s'opposer dans la province du Barka. Progressivement les troupes du FPLE allaient s'imposer au détriment de celles du FLE à qui le mouvement d'Issayas Afeworki reprochait la perte de Karora en 1970<sup>230</sup> lors de l'offensive éthiopienne. Au début de l'année 1957, la représentativité du FLE ne se limitait plus qu'à 750 000 habitants d'origine musulmane.<sup>231</sup> C'est donc ainsi que le FPLE conduira en solitaire l'ensemble des combats qui prendront fin le 25 mai 1991 à Assab.

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Le retour à la dimension régionale et locale du conflit érythréen est une des manifestations principales de l'impact des mutations du système international dans la résolution des conflits périphériques. En effet, la fin de la rivalité Est-Ouest a non seulement privé l'acteur éthiopien de sa capacité à se jouer les alliances internationales dans la protection de ses intérêts en Erythrée, mais surtout elle a été un facteur positif de résolution car elle a permis au FPLE de remporter une victoire militaire. Et, d'après Simmel, la façon la plus simple et la plus efficace pour passer de la guerre à la paix est la victoire militaire.<sup>232</sup> Mais bien que la victoire fut totale, le FPLE a tenu à prouver à la communauté

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<sup>229</sup> *Le Nouvel Observateur* 18 mars 1983, p. 65.

<sup>230</sup> Le FLE avait installé quelques unités à Karora selon le programme d'unification des fronts. Mais ces unités se sont retirées sans prévenir le FPLE laissant une brèche dans la ligne défensive au Nord que les éthiopiens avaient vite fait de combler.

<sup>231</sup> Evincés du territoire érythréen, le FLE devait se scinder en 7 mouvements distincts. Pour plus de détails lire Balencié (JM) et Lagrange (A de), *Mondes rebelles*, Tome I, édition Michalon, Paris, 1996, pp. 448-455.



internationale que la victoire sur l’Ethiopie n’était pas purement militaire mais traduisait une quasi unanimité du peuple érythréen en faveur des thèses nationalistes. D’où l’organisation du référendum d’autodétermination de l’Erythrée en avril 1993.

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**CHAPITRE IV**

**L'AUTODETERMINATION DE L'ERYTHREE**

Du 22 au 24 avril 1993 s'est tenu le référendum d'autodétermination de l'Erythrée. A l'issue de cette consultation populaire arrivant deux ans après la fin de la guerre ayant opposée durant trois décennies les MLN érythréens au pouvoir central éthiopien, l'Erythrée allait accéder à l'indépendance et devenir ainsi le cinquante-deuxième Etat post-colonial d'Afrique. Organisé sous les auspices du gouvernement provisoire de l'Erythrée (GPE), assisté par l'ONU et l'OUA, ce référendum avait pour objectif d'officialiser aux yeux de la communauté internationale, l'indépendance de facto ayant suivi la victoire militaire du FPLE sur l'armée éthiopienne.<sup>233</sup> Le présent chapitre tente de retracer les différentes étapes du processus référendaire érythréen. Après avoir considéré les déterminants du soutien de la communauté internationale pour l'autodétermination de l'Erythrée par la voie des urnes dans une première partie ; il s'appesantit dans une deuxième sur le processus d'accession à l'indépendance.

**SECTION I : LA QUESTION DE L'AUTODETERMINATION DE L'ERYTHREE**

Vers la fin des années 90, Moscou commence à se démarquer de l'intransigeance du pouvoir éthiopien vis-à-vis de la question érythréenne et dans laquelle ils s'enlisent. Confronté à une réalité régionale complexe et

Volume 4 N° 2, 1997 pp. 3-18.

<sup>233</sup> Lire Interview d'Issayas Afeworki in *SWB*, Nov. 28 1992 qui avait déclaré que : "the EPLF did not declare the independence of Eritrea by getting drunk on it military victory."

inextricable au plan politique, économique et social, les soviétiques allaient se retirer d’Ethiopie et de la Corne de l’Afrique laissant la place aux États-Unis et aux acteurs régionaux et locaux qui dorénavant, allaient maîtriser le processus résolutif du conflit. Aussi, la question du référendum de l’Érythrée allait-elle connaître un véritable revirement.

**PARAGRAPHE I : Le revirement des États-Unis, d’Israël et de l’ONU.**

Les États-Unis, l’État d’Israël et l’ONU pendant toute la période de la Guerre froide étaient opposés à l’émergence d’un État d’Érythrée sur les bords de la Mer rouge. Les uns et les autres pour des raisons propres. Dans le contexte d’un “temps mondial” caractérisé par l’uniformisation du “marché idéologique international”.<sup>234</sup> Les positions de ces principaux acteurs sur la question érythréenne allaient être reconsidérées.

**A- Le revirement des États-Unis**

Au regard de la réunification de l’Allemagne, du caractère plus affirmé de la puissance économique nipponne et la fin des affrontements idéologiques, certains observateurs avaient fini par penser que les Relations Economiques allaient devenir l’axe cardinal des relations internationales post-guerre froide. C’est alors qu’est survenue la guerre du Koweït<sup>235</sup> qui allait remiser le facteur diplomatico-stratégique trop rapidement dévalué après le retrait des soviétiques des conflits régionaux.

<sup>234</sup> Lire SKOCPOL, THEDA, Etats et révolutions sociales : la révolution en France, en Russie et en Chine, Paris Fayard, 1985, p. 34.

<sup>235</sup> BELOUCHI (A.) “Le conflit irako-koweïtien : conflit inter-arabe ou conflit mondial” in Revue juridique politique et économique du Maroc, N°25-26, 1991, pp. 77-94.

Caractérisée par le monopole américain dans l'énonciation et le règlement du conflit, la guerre du Golfe a non seulement démontré que la force resterait *in fine* l'instrument ultime de régulation du système international, mais surtout d'affirmer le leadership américain. Au lendemain de la guerre de Koweït, un analyste soviétique pouvait écrire :

*“Les Etats-Unis en sont sortis couronnés comme les vainqueurs incontestés, les leaders d'une coalition anti-irakienne de près de trente Etats, comme une grande puissance à tous égards (puissance militaire, économique, influence politique, stabilité intérieure). En comparaison, les positions de l'Union soviétique se sont détériorées. Il y a quelque temps, nos idées et nos missiles nous autorisaient à parler d'égal à égal. Toutefois, étant donné l'aggravation du chaos interne, les fondements intellectuels de notre statut de grande puissance ne servent à rien et on ne va pas bien loin aujourd'hui avec des missiles.”<sup>236</sup>*

Ainsi consacrés leader du système international, les Etats-Unis lanceront l'idée d'un nouvel ordre international fondé sur la logique des Etats et celle de la société civile internationale qui légitimise le droit d'ingérence.

Déarrassé du rival soviétique, maîtrisant les principaux flux stratégiques<sup>237</sup>, par des moyens autres que militaires, les Etats-Unis allaient cesser toute fourniture d'aide directe ou indirecte d'armes à leurs alliés dans les conflits locaux. En effet, avant la guerre du Koweït, les Etats-Unis ne s'étaient jamais départis du prisme de la guerre froide à travers lequel ils percevaient leurs relations avec l'Union Soviétique. Aussi, le camp occidental en général et

<sup>236</sup> Il s'agit de Bodin (A.) cité par Lomme (R.) “L'échec d'une stratégie soviétique“ in Politique étrangère, n°2, 1991.

<sup>237</sup> Lire Valladao, (A.G.A.) Le XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle sera américain, Paris, La Découverte, 1993, 1<sup>ère</sup> édition.

les Etats-Unis en particulier avaient toujours eu une attitude prudente vis-à-vis de la nouvelle politique gorbatchévienne.<sup>238</sup> Derrière celle-ci ils percevaient « une stratégie de repli temporaire (...) le fameux pas en arrière de Lénine permettant d'en faire deux en avant. »<sup>239</sup>

Plus spécifiquement pour l'Erythrée, la fin de la guerre froide allait permettre une participation officielle des Etats-Unis au processus de négociation entre le gouvernement éthiopien et les groupes d'opposition armée. Ainsi les 21 et 22 février 1991, les Etats-Unis président officiellement la conférence de Washington.<sup>240</sup> Présidés par Herman Cohen, Secrétaire d'Etat adjoint aux affaires africaines, les pourparlers de Washington connaissent la participation d'une délégation du gouvernement éthiopien représenté par Ashagre Yigletu et celle du FPLE conduite par son représentant à Washington Tesfai Ghermazien. Bien que les deux parties belligérantes soient tombées d'accord sur la nécessité d'un règlement pacifique du conflit, elles n'ont pas néanmoins pu s'entendre sur des points importants tel le statut à accorder à l'Erythrée.

Mais avant que la rencontre n'ait eu lieu, le 6 février déjà, la Banque mondiale prévoyait d'augmenter l'aide remboursable à l'Ethiopie qui allait passer de 100 à 125 millions de dollars US. La Communauté européenne quant à elle annonçait qu'elle accordait une aide de 387 millions de dollars US échelonnée sur cinq ans, destinée au développement rural et aux petites et moyennes industries, à l'agriculture et à la promotion du secteur privé.

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<sup>238</sup> Klare (M.) et Callahan (D.), "L'univers change, l'Amérique piétine" in Le Monde diplomatique, Juin 1989, p. 5.

<sup>239</sup> Heller (M.) Soixante-dix ans qui ébranlèrent le monde, Paris, Calman-Lévy, 1988.

<sup>240</sup> Conduites jusque-là par Jimmy Carter, les négociations érythro-éthiopiennes n'avaient pas encore données de résultats concrets quant à la résolution du conflit malgré les rencontres d'Atlanta et de Nairobi en septembre et novembre 1989. Et depuis lors, rien d'autre n'avait été entrepris pendant toute l'année 1990. Les 21 et 22 février 1991, soit en pleine guerre entre la coalition conduite par les Etats-Unis contre l'Irak relative à la libération du Koweït, les Etats-Unis président à Washington, officiellement pour la première fois, les négociations entre les éthiopiens et les érythréens.

Après la conférence de Washington, les Etats-Unis devaient envoyer dans la région de la Corne, une délégation de haut niveau où figuraient I. Hicks, Assistant du Secrétaire d'Etat adjoint aux affaires africaines, C. Frasure, membre du Conseil de sécurité nationale, et l'ancien sénateur républicain du Minnesota R. Boschwitz, émissaire spécial du Président Bush. Hicks et Frasure devaient rencontrer Mengistu puis allaient s'entretenir avec Issayas Afeworki, leader du FPLE, et Meles Zenawi du Front populaire de libération du Tigré (FPLT) à Khartoum.

Après le départ de Mengistu le 21 Mai 1991, l'implication américaine dans les négociations devait s'accroître. C'est ainsi que les 27 et 28 mai 1991, les différents protagonistes devaient se retrouver à Londres. Reportée plusieurs fois<sup>241</sup>, la rencontre de Londres ne devait commencer que le 27 mai dans la matinée. Présidée une fois de plus par Herman Cohen, elle mettait aux prises quatre délégations : la délégation du gouvernement éthiopien conduite par le Premier ministre Tesfaye Dinka ; la délégation du Front populaire de libération du Tigré conduite par son Secrétaire général Meles Zenawi qui en même temps y représentait une coalition de partis « *l'Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front* », la délégation du FPLE conduite par son Secrétaire général Issayas Afeworki, ainsi que le leader du Front de libération Oromo (FLO) Yohannes Lata Wagayo.

Ces pourparlers devaient s'achever brutalement dans la matinée du 28 mai 1991 suite à la protestation du représentant du gouvernement éthiopien Tesfai Dinka relative aux déclarations faites la veille par le médiateur du Secrétaire d'Etat américain Herman Cohen.<sup>242</sup> Toutefois, les Erythréens avaient au cours des négociations réitéré leur volonté d'accéder à l'indépendance. Avec

<sup>241</sup> Keesing's Record of World events Mai 1991.

l'accession au pouvoir de Meles Zenawi, ils l'avait presque déjà obtenue. Ainsi donc, les américains en 1991 en étaient arrivés à ce que M. Haley Second de l'ambassade des Etats-Unis à Addis-Abeba décrira dans son télex du 28 mai 1991 à son gouvernement comme :

*« la négation d'un engagement américain ancien vis-à-vis de l'intégrité territoriale de l'Ethiopie. »*<sup>243</sup>

Trois facteurs principaux expliquent le choix américain pour l'autodétermination de l'Erythrée d'une part et de l'autre, le recul de la position américaine sur l'intégrité territoriale éthiopienne. Le premier facteur est lié à la baisse puis à la fin de la rivalité Est-Ouest.

Lorsqu'en 1950, la question de l'Erythrée s'était posée aux Nations Unies, l'Ethiopie avait bénéficié du soutien américain. Le Secrétaire d'Etat américain, John F. Dulles s'était exprimé au Conseil de sécurité dans les termes suivants :

*“Du point de vue de la justice exclusive, les opinions du peuple de l'Erythrée doivent être prises en considération. Néanmoins, l'intérêt stratégique américain dans le bassin de la Mer Rouge et les considérations de sécurité et de paix dans le monde font que ce pays doit être rattaché à L'Ethiopie qui est notre amie.”*<sup>244</sup>

Les américains allaient grâce à des séries d'accords, renforcer la sécurité éthiopienne par la suite, contre les facilités à eux concédées par l'Ethiopie. Ces facilités se résumaient à l'existence d'une base américaine de communication près d'Asmara. Seule cette base baptisée “Kagnew” représentait un intérêt vital aux yeux des Etats-Unis. Bien située dans les tropiques, loin des tempêtes

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<sup>242</sup> Herman Cohen dans la soirée du 27 mai au cours d'une conférence de presse avait dit que le gouvernement américain demandait aux forces de M. Meles Zenawi d'entrer dans Addis-Abeba qu'elles avaient encerclées depuis plusieurs jours afin de stabiliser la situation.

<sup>243</sup> United States Information Agency (USIA), Télex US Embassy Addis-Abeba, may 28<sup>th</sup> 1991.

<sup>244</sup> Horn of Africa Vol. III, n° 1, Rome, janvier-mars 1980, p. 20.

magnétiques, cette base était considérée comme essentielle au réseau américain de communication dans le monde entier et pas seulement en Afrique. Jusqu'au début des années 60, les intérêts américains étaient liés à cette base dont la valeur était qualifiée de stratégiquement vitale.

Pour cela, un des accords signés en 1953 prévoyait l'aide américaine et l'entraînement par les Etats-Unis des forces armées éthiopiennes. C'est ainsi que de 1953 à 1970, l'Ethiopie avait elle seule reçue près de la moitié de l'aide accordée par les Etats-Unis à l'ensemble du continent africain. A partir de l'année 1970, l'Ethiopie allait recevoir 12 millions de dollars US annuel soit les 2/3 de l'aide reçue par tous les pays du continent africain.

Dans le même temps, l'armée éthiopienne allait augmenter en effectif, passant de 32 000 à 40 000 hommes avec la création d'une quatrième division entièrement équipée par les Etats-Unis. Et une bonne partie de ces équipements était utilisée par l'Ethiopie en Erythrée. En effet, le renforcement de la sécurité éthiopienne et les facilités à « *Kagnew* » accordées aux Etats-Unis étant étroitement liés, les américains par toute une série d'accords secrets signés en 1960, s'étaient engagés à s'opposer à toute activité menaçant l'intégrité territoriale de l'Ethiopie en échange de l'extension des facilités exploitées à « *Kagnew* ».

Mais la coopération américano-éthiopienne allait progressivement se dégrader à partir des années 1970 avec le développement des communications par satellite et avec elle l'émergence de Diego Garcia comme base principale des Etats-Unis dans l'Océan indien. C'est ainsi qu'avant la chute de l'empereur, les Etats-Unis malgré l'aggravation de la situation économique et sociale de l'Ethiopie et la guerre qu'elle mène en Erythrée commencent à prendre leur distance vis-à-vis de l'Ethiopie. L'Empereur a beau plaidé sa cause à



Washington, les Etats-Unis refusent de lui livrer les avions et les tanks modernes qu'il réclame.

C'est pour cette raison que dès 1976, les révolutionnaires du Derg se retournent vers l'URSS qui depuis 1974 déjà cherchait à se rapprocher de L'Ethiopie. L'URSS allait déverser en Ethiopie devenue marxiste-léniniste des armes dépassants ce dont ce pays du tiers monde avait besoin pour sa défense. De plus, dès 1979, les soviétiques étaient entrés en Afghanistan. Ces deux faits allaient entre autres<sup>245</sup> rehausser l'intérêt stratégique de la corne de l'Afrique aux yeux des américains. Dans son message sur l'état de l'union en janvier 1980, le Président Jimmy Carter tiendra les propos suivants :

*“Que notre position soit absolument claire... toute tentative par une force extérieure de s'approprier le contrôle de la région du Golfe persique, sera considérée comme une attaque contre les intérêts vitaux des Etats-Unis. Elle sera repoussée par tous les moyens nécessaires y compris l'usage de la force militaire.”<sup>246</sup>*

Peu après, le département d'Etat allait reconnaître la valeur stratégique de la Corne de l'Afrique, espace global du conflit de l'Erythrée

*“La Corne de l'Afrique occupe une place stratégique importante dans la Mer rouge et l'Océan indien près de la poudrière du Moyen-Orient.”<sup>247</sup>*

Mais avec la fin de la guerre froide, les raisons que l'administration mettait en avant pour justifier l'intégrité territoriale de l'Ethiopie ne correspondaient plus à grand chose.

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<sup>245</sup> Lire Nseke (G.), op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>246</sup> Deutsch (R.) Carter's africa policy shift in *Africa Report*, May-June 1980, p. 12.

<sup>247</sup> *Sub-saharian Africa and United States* Department of State, March 1980, p. 28.

Le second facteur est lié à l'abandon par les différents protagonistes (Ethiopie et MLN érythréens) de l'idéologie marxiste qui constituait jusque-là une objection de taille. En ce qui concerne particulièrement le FPLE, il avait lors de son second congrès en 1987, abandonné officiellement l'idéologie marxiste.<sup>248</sup> Lors de sa déposition devant le congrès, Herman Cohen allait avoir les explications suivantes :

*“Si cela s'était passé cinq ans plutôt, à cause de la guerre froide, nous ne serions pas intervenus. Il aurait été difficile de travailler avec les marxistes.”*<sup>249</sup>

Cette attitude américaine ne peut se comprendre que si on la situe dans l'évolution globale des Relations Internationales. Traditionnellement, depuis que les Etats-Unis ont choisi d'être impliqués dans les évolutions africaines, le ressort principal de leur politique fut la confrontation Est-Ouest. Le prisme de leur perception des situations fut le danger d'une influence ou d'une présence soviétique accrue. L'optique globale était celle de la guerre froide. Il s'agissait prioritairement de bloquer la pénétration de l'URSS dans le continent, de contenir l'émergence du mouvement nationaliste, de fragiliser les régimes se réclamant du socialisme, voire du marxisme-léninisme. Le repère cardinal que constituait l'affrontement global entre les deux blocs antagonistes guida leur politique. Il leur donna constance, cohérence et légitimité. Il servit d'élément de justification face au congrès ou à l'opinion publique américaine.<sup>250</sup>

Ainsi donc, les Etats-Unis avaient opté pour une solution éthiopienne au problème érythréen durant plusieurs années pour des raisons qui étaient autant liées à l'identité politique et historique de l'Ethiopie qu'à leur intention de

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<sup>248</sup> Lire Balencié (J.M), op. cit., p. 450.

<sup>249</sup> Lire la déposition de Herman Cohen devant le congrès in US House Commutee on Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on Africa. The political crisis in Ethiopia and the role of United States. Séance du 18 juin 1991. Government printing office (GPO), 1992.

<sup>250</sup> Verlet (M.), “Les Etats-Unis et l'Afrique dans le monde” in Aujourd'hui l'Afrique N°45, 1992, pp. 5-9.

limiter la présence soviétique en Afrique et particulièrement dans l'Océan indien sur le plan stratégique.

Sur le plan politico-historique d'abord, l'Ethiopie occupait depuis 1950 une place spéciale dans la politique africaine des Etats-Unis et cela pour plusieurs raisons ; son prestige de premier pays à obtenir l'indépendance et à devenir membre de l'ONU, sa politique anti-communiste, sa fonction de stabilisation au sein de l'OUA, son rôle dans la défense du Moyen-Orient, sa religion chrétienne qui la rapprochait de l'Occident et bien sûr la base américaine de Kagnew près d'Asmara.

Avec la fin de la guerre froide, la lutte idéologique n'a plus droit de cité. Donc les américains auraient eu toutes les difficultés à reprendre avec l'Ethiopie comme par le passé, des relations de coopération.

Sur le plan militaire ensuite, la guerre du Golfe avait confirmé les assertions de différents politistes et chroniqueurs d'après lesquels, le démantèlement du monde bipolaire n'était pas symétrique car les positions de l'Est s'affaiblissaient tandis que celles de l'Ouest se renforçaient.

Pourtant dans les années 1970, on s'acheminait vers une parité stratégique. Et c'est cette tendance qui allait obliger les Etats-Unis à reconsidérer leur présence militaire dans la région de l'Océan indien dont l'Ethiopie allait en payer les frais. La stratégie militaire américaine reposait depuis 1947 sur le "containment".<sup>251</sup> Cette stratégie impliquait pour les américains une vision du monde qui allait devenir une obsession permanente. Seuls les Etats-Unis sont une grande puissance. L'Union Soviétique est et doit rester une puissance continentale. Confiner l'Union Soviétique dans son rôle

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<sup>251</sup> Lire Spanier (J.), *La politique étrangère des Etats-Unis depuis la seconde guerre mondiale*, Paris, Nouveaux Horizons, 1976, 6<sup>e</sup> édition, pp. 53 et s.

régional, lui dénier catégoriquement le statut de puissance mondiale, telle sera la volonté des Américains jusque dans les années 1970.

Au cours de ces années, la politique de containment dont la “*doctrine Truman*” en Grèce et la “*doctrine Eisenhower*” au Moyen-Orient constituèrent les premières manifestations commence à connaître des limites du fait de plusieurs facteurs.

D’abord, la puissance militaire américaine a décliné, elle a montré ses faiblesses militaires au Viêt-nam. La supériorité américaine n’est plus du tout évidente. Les Etats-Unis ne peuvent plus se permettre de jouer le rôle de gendarme international qui était le leur jusque-là. Ensuite, l’Union Soviétique par contre s’est renforcée. Elle est parvenue à une parité stratégique avec les Etats-Unis. Les stratèges diront alors que les Etats-Unis et l’Union Soviétique sont entrés dans une nouvelle ère caractérisée par le renforcement de la parité stratégique et le développement de sa mobilité globale. Ainsi, les flottes soviétiques surveillent les routes maritimes et disposent des facilités sur les bords de la Mer rouge (Berbera, Aden). Enfin, les Etats-Unis n’avaient aucun intérêt vital tendant à risquer un affrontement avec l’URSS en Ethiopie.

Compte tenu de ces trois facteurs, les Etats-Unis allaient élaborer une stratégie nouvelle relative à l’éventualité d’un conflit de grande envergure avec l’Union Soviétique, tournant autour de la sécurité, des voies maritimes commerciales et militaires passant par le Cap de Bonne Espérance où transitent pendant cette période, 12 millions de barils de pétrole par jour en direction des Etats-Unis et des pays occidentaux.

Dans les années 1980, cette tendance commence à décliner au détriment de l’URSS. Elle atteint son paroxysme au lendemain de la guerre du Golfe qui confirmera et accentuera cette asymétrie. Progressivement, les soviétiques

auront abandonnés leurs positions dans l'Océan indien en général et particulièrement en Ethiopie. Avec la disparition de l'URSS dans la hiérarchie des puissances, les américains ne pouvaient s'appuyer sur aucune justification stratégique pour revenir s'installer militairement en Ethiopie. Ils ne pouvaient qu'user de leur influence politique pour résoudre le conflit comme ils l'entendaient. Surtout que, depuis 1976, l'intérêt américain pour l'Ethiopie se limitait malgré la présence militaire soviétique, au domaine économique.<sup>252</sup> La disparition des soviétiques allait permettre aux Etats-Unis, d'accroître leur rôle d'arbitre.

Le troisième facteur est lié au contrôle militaire du territoire érythréen par le FPLE et au-delà de l'ensemble de la région.<sup>253</sup> Autrement dit, les négociations de Londres des 27 et 28 mai 1991, se présentaient comme une ritualisation du nouvel ordre international dans la corne.<sup>254</sup>

### **B- Le revirement de l'Etat hébreux**

Après le retrait des soldats cubains, des conseillers est-allemands et de l'union soviétique en 1990, l'Ethiopie de Mengistu avait cherché à resserrer ses liens avec ses alliés de la région dont principalement l'Etat hébreux. Contrairement aux américains dont l'attitude avait été prudente vis-à-vis de l'Etat abyssin, les israéliens n'avaient pas hésité à voler au secours de Mengistu. Ceci allait provoquer une vive tension entre Washington et Tel-Aviv.<sup>255</sup> Ce d'autant plus que, le régime Mengistu se servait manifestement des Falachas

<sup>252</sup> Cao Huy Thuan, op. cit., pp. 51 et s. dit que en 1982, le volume de commerce entre l'Ethiopie et les Etats-Unis dépassait celui de l'Ethiopie avec tous les pays du COMECON réunis. Les Etats-Unis étaient toujours le premier acheteur de café éthiopien.

<sup>253</sup> Au début de la décennie 90, le FPLE possédait la force militaire la plus efficace de la corne avec plus de 100 000 combattants bien équipés.

<sup>254</sup> Lire Schraeder (P.J.), "La présence américaine dans la corne de l'Afrique après la fin de la guerre froide", in Politique africaine, n°50, juin 1993, pp. 59-73.

comme des "pions" afin d'obliger Israël à lui fournir l'armement que les soviétiques n'étaient plus en mesure de lui accorder.<sup>256</sup>

Comme du temps des Négus, la présence militaire israélienne aux portes de Bab El Mandeb avait pour objectif d'empêcher l'émergence d'un Etat érythréen pro-arabe donc anti-israélien de plus sur la Mer rouge. Pourtant, les leaders érythréens, particulièrement ceux du FPLE se voulant laïcs, ne cachaient pas leur admiration pour Israël non seulement comme une source d'assistance technique et financière, mais surtout comme un modèle de développement. Après de nombreuses visites de l'ambassadeur d'Israël en poste à Addis-Abeba à Asmara, la position israélienne allait connaître un revirement au lendemain de la visite du leader du FPLE Issayas Afeworki en Israël.

En effet, le 6 janvier 1993, le Chef du gouvernement provisoire de l'Erythrée souffrant d'une maladie cérébrale se rend à Tel-Aviv pour y recevoir des soins. Peu après, il y effectue un second voyage pour un check-up au cours de ces différents voyages, Issayas Afeworki aura des entretiens avec les responsables israéliens. C'est ainsi que les relations diplomatiques devaient être nouées et par la suite, un programme extensif de coopération dans les domaines agricole et sanitaire établi avec l'Erythrée.<sup>257</sup>

### **C- Le revirement de l'ONU.**

Au lendemain de la Conférence sur la paix et la démocratie tenue à Addis-Abeba du 1<sup>er</sup> au 5 juillet 1991 à laquelle prit part le FPLE sans pour autant participer au gouvernement de transition éthiopien qui en sortit, Monsieur

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<sup>255</sup> Pour une bonne discussion du rôle d'Israël dans la corne, se reporter à Lefèbvre (J. A.), Arms for the horn : US security policy in Ethiopia and Somalia 1953-1991, Pittsburg, University of Pittsburg, 1991.

<sup>256</sup> Lire Hundley (T.), "These days it's ethiopian jews who feal passed over" in Chicago Tribune, July 10<sup>th</sup> 1990, Section I, p. 17.

<sup>257</sup> Lire Israel , Eritrea and Ethiopia A convulated relationship. Middle East international, London, N°456, August 16<sup>th</sup> 1993 and Mid East Mirror (London), February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1993.

Issayas Afeworki leader du GPE, rédigea à l'attention du Secrétaire général de l'ONU une correspondance.

Dans sa lettre du 25 juillet 1991, le Secrétaire général du FPLE invitait l'organisation planétaire à participer, mieux, à venir superviser l'organisation du référendum d'autodétermination de l'Erythrée. En effet, la conférence sur la paix et la démocratie d'Addis-Abeba avait reconnue formellement le droit du peuple érythréen à déterminer son futur politique par le biais d'un référendum sous la supervision de la communauté internationale.<sup>258</sup>

En décembre 1991, Monsieur Issayas Afeworki devait rencontrer au Caire le nouveau Secrétaire général élu de l'ONU, Boutros Boutros Ghali. Au cours de ce même mois, l'organisation devait recevoir une autre correspondance venant cette fois du gouvernement éthiopien. Cette correspondance après avoir exposé les conclusions de la conférence sur la paix et la démocratie, demandait aux Nations Unies de jouer un rôle actif dans le processus référendaire érythréen.<sup>259</sup>

Constatant le peu d'empressement que l'ONU mettait dans l'organisation du référendum d'autodétermination en Erythrée, le GPE devait faire le 7 avril 1992, une déclaration sur le référendum. Dans cette déclaration qui formait en même temps la commission du référendum de l'Erythrée (ERC), le GPE annonça unilatéralement que le processus allait évoluer avec ou sans la participation de l'ONU.<sup>260</sup>

Trois mois après la formation de la « ERC », et suite à la requête du Secrétaire d'Etat adjoint aux Affaires africaines des Etats-Unis, M. Herman Cohen, réaffirmant à l'ONU la détermination de son gouvernement à soutenir

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<sup>258</sup> Lire a) *Transitional period charter* *Negarit Gazeta* (Addis-Abeba) 22 July 1991.

b) *Africa confidential* London, 25 October 1991.

<sup>259</sup> Voir annexe, Document 13, 14 et 15.

<sup>260</sup> Les érythréens ne regardaient pas toujours d'un bon œil les agissements de l'ONU dont ils se souvenaient le rôle déterminant dans la fédération de l'Erythrée à l'Ethiopie en 1950. Consulter Nafi Kurdi, op. cit. pp. 87-97.

l'autodétermination de l'Erythrée par la voie des urnes l'organisation planétaire expédiait à Asmara, un groupe de techniciens du groupe d'assistance électorale.<sup>261</sup> Du 30 juillet au 8 août 1992, ces techniciens allaient recueillir toutes les informations nécessaires à l'accomplissement de leur mission. Ceci fait, le 16 décembre 1992, l'assemblée générale par sa résolution 47/114 devait autoriser la création d'une mission d'observation des Nations Unies chargée de la vérification du référendum en Erythrée. (United Nations Observers Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea (UNOVER)).

Le 7 janvier 1993, l'UNOVER était officiellement créée. Dirigée par M. Samir Sambar de nationalité libanaise la mission, composée initialement de 21 fonctionnaires recrutés sur le plan international auxquels se sont ajoutés 100 autres en avril 1993, puis 40 fonctionnaires des Nations unies, devait superviser le vote en Ethiopie et au Soudan. Elle comprenait également un personnel d'appui local. Après le référendum en Erythrée, le Chef de mission de l'UNOVER a affirmé que la consultation électorale pouvait être considérée comme ayant été libre et transparente.<sup>262</sup>

### **PARAGRAPHE 2: Le revirement de l'Etat éthiopien.**

Plusieurs facteurs déterminent le revirement de l'Etat éthiopien par rapport à la question érythréenne. Après les avoir recensés, nous déviserons sur les rapports entre l'Erythrée et l'Ethiopie post-Mengistu.

<sup>261</sup> Le groupe de l'assistance électorale a été créé au sein du département des affaires de l'ONU en mai-juin 1992. Les Etats membres qui demandent à l'ONU une assistance électorale se rangent en général dans quatre catégories :

- Les pays en transition démocratique
- Les pays à la recherche d'une solution pacifique au conflit qui les déchire
- Les pays qui viennent d'être décolonisés.
- Les pays organisation les élections dans le cadre du processus d'autodétermination .

<sup>262</sup> Pour plus de détails, lire Styan (D.) Eritrea : the end of the beginning in l'Afrique politique . 1994 ; CEAN-Bordeaux, 1995, pp. 25-44.



**A- Les facteurs de revirement**

La chute du régime de Mengistu et l'avènement au pouvoir de Meles Zenawi sont les principaux facteurs de revirement de l'Etat éthiopien.

**1- La chute du régime de Mengistu.**

Le 21 mai 1991, Mengistu Haïlé Maryam, le Négus rouge s'enfuit d'Éthiopie à destination du Zimbabwe après 15 années passées à la tête de l'Etat abyssin. Ce départ de Mengistu n'est rien d'autre que la résultante des différents échecs politiques, diplomatiques, militaires et économiques qui ont durant des années meurtris son régime, amenuisant sa base de soutien tandis que s'élargissait celle de sa contestation. L'affaiblissement du régime de Mengistu latent depuis longtemps s'accélère particulièrement après la chute du mur de Berlin et débouche sur la prise du pouvoir par Meles Zenawi le 28 mai 1991. Les causes de cet affaiblissement s'insèrent dans trois grands ensembles d'échecs que nous identifierons en les étudiant.

D'abord; il y a les échecs sur le plan socio-politique où le régime de Mengistu n'a pas pu résoudre de manière satisfaisante la question des nationalités qui trouve ses fondements dans les conquêtes périphériques de Ménélik II au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. En effet, l'Éthiopie contemporaine est l'œuvre de Ménélik II, roi du Choa. Symbolisée par le lion de Judas, l'extension territoriale de l'Éthiopie au siècle dernier obéissait du point de vue de la géographie politique à deux faits fondamentaux : la sortie de l'unité culturelle et montagnarde. Au noyau historique, s'ajoute une périphérie conquise à propos de laquelle une politique doit être définie : exploitation, assimilation et de nouvelles

frontières marquant la large réussite du projet millénaire éthiopien vers la mer rouge et le sud.<sup>263</sup>

C'est à partir du royaume abyssin de Choa que Ménélik II entreprend de réaliser ce projet historique qui comprendra deux phases. Dans la première phase, Ménélik II alors qu'il n'est encore que roi, desserre l'étau Oromo, aussi bien celui des Oromo du Wallo entre 1871 et 1878 que celui des royaumes Oromo de la haute vallée de l'Omo et de son affluent le Cibe. Ainsi donc le pays Gurage est soumis en 1874. En 1881, Jima est prise, ce qui permet au roi Ménélik II d'avoir la mainmise sur le plus important marché d'esclaves de la région. L'Arsi de l'autre côté du couloir des lacs est occupé après la prise d'Asela en 1882. En 1885, la ville de Medina, capitale islamique de la corne de l'Afrique, protégée par des remparts et dirigée par les familles religieuses travaillées par le mahdisme est occupée sans difficultés.

En 1886, le bassin supérieur du Wadi Shebele est atteint. Plus à l'ouest, la prise de Nekemte en 1886 et de Goré en 1887 marque l'annexion de la Dega c'est-à-dire les deux provinces actuelles du Wollega et d'Illubabor. L'occupation de Welayita en 1889 marque la fin de la première phase de conquêtes qui consistait à desserrer l'étau Oromo.

La deuxième phase quant à elle consiste pour Ménélik II devenu Empereur, à faire les conquêtes éloignées (voir carte N° 5).

En 1894, le contrôle du bassin de l'Omo est assuré par des expéditions dans le Gamo Gofa. La place commerciale de Lough est atteinte. Certaines enclaves montagneuses irréductibles sont attaquées entre 1895 et 1896. Il en est ainsi du pays Kabata entre le fleuve Omo et le couloir des lacs. Mais la plupart

<sup>263</sup> Gallais (J.) op. cit. pp. 21-24.

des conquêtes de l'époque ont lieu dans la Kola périphérique et le long des grandes routes commerciales. Le contrôle de la vallée de l'Awasa et du désert Afar abouti à l'occupation des riches oasis du Aoussa en 1896. Vers la côte du Benadir, Ménélik II pénètre dans le plateau de l'Ogaden.<sup>264</sup> Mais les tribus Somali groupées sous le nom de Darawish sont entraînées dans une Djihad en 1896-1897. Les tribus Borane vers le sud groupe culturel Oromo, restées nomades sont soumises en 1897.

Le Kafa méridional le sera aussi en 1897-1898. Les peuples du Piémont sud et sud-ouest protégés par les marécages et les forêts sont soumis. Les Maji sur la rive ouest de l'Omo, les Gimira un peu plus au nord, les Changuil de l'ouest du Wolega également. La colonisation italienne sur l'Erythrée empêche Ménélik II d'atteindre la Mer rouge. Néanmoins, l'expansion de l'empire éthiopien, rapide certes, a permis de faire de l'Ethiopie, un Etat multi-ethnique et par là même fragile. Ainsi, il y a toujours eu des révoltes de la part des peuples soumis lorsqu'ils en avaient la possibilité. Et c'est une Ethiopie agitée à l'intérieur que Ménélik II laisse à Lijj Lyasu à sa mort ; et c'est encore une Ethiopie confrontée à la révolte des Oromo Yazzu Gala depuis 1928 que Haïlé Sélassié hérite en 1930. Et c'est enfin une Ethiopie confrontée aux mouvements de libération Oromo et tigréens en plus de la question érythréenne que trouve les révolutionnaires en 1974.<sup>265</sup> Conscients du risque d'éclatement couru par L'Ethiopie, les soviétiques entendent aider le gouvernement éthiopien à régler cette question de nationalité.

Dès le début, l'Union soviétique s'oppose à une quelconque partition de L'Ethiopie et se prononce en faveur d'une solution dans le cadre d'une Ethiopie multi-nationale. C'est donc dans cette optique que les leaders du monde

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<sup>264</sup> Le plateau de l'Ogaden a souvent été décrit par Rembaud comme l'Hinterland commercial de Harar.

<sup>265</sup> A la veille de l'occupation italienne, l'Ethiopie était constituée dans ses limites contemporaines mise à part l'Erythrée.

communiste soutinrent le refus du Derg d'accorder l'indépendance à l'Erythrée. Les théoriciens soviétiques soulignaient la présence pacifique en Erythrée ainsi qu'une certaine autonomie régionale. L'analyse des soviétiques sur la question des nationalités en Ethiopie s'inspirait largement des théories générales soviétiques relatives à l'instauration d'une nation, théories dérivées de l'expérience soviétique en Asie centrale et des analyses soviétiques dans le tiers monde en général.

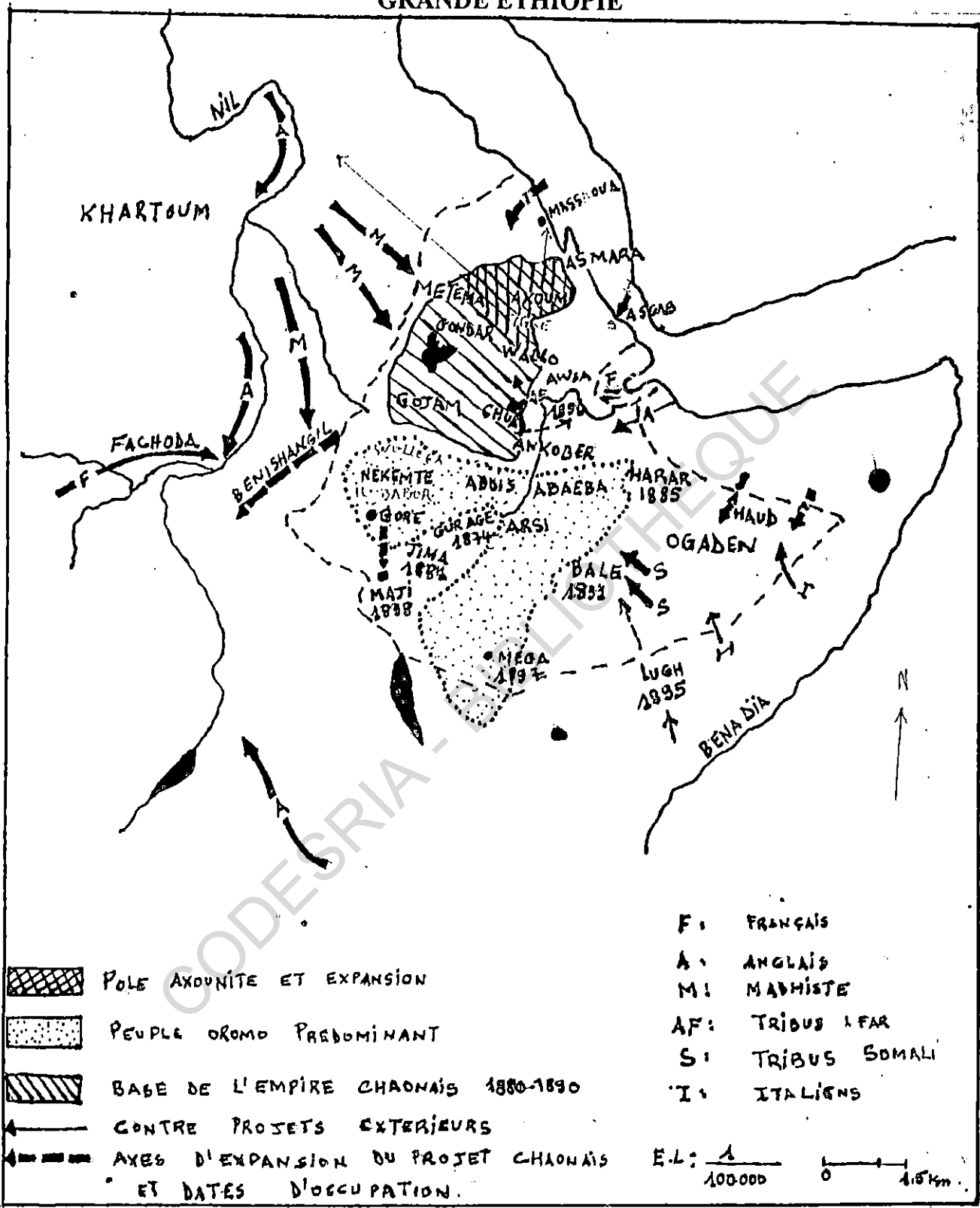
Pour les théoriciens soviétiques en effet, le problème des nationalités peut être résolu de quatre façons : par la confédération, par la fédération, par l'autonomie et par la partition.<sup>266</sup> C'est ainsi qu'ils proposèrent que la division de l'Ethiopie en 14 régions administratives soit remplacée par un autre système dans lequel six ou sept grandes régions représentant les principales nationalités seraient créées.<sup>267</sup>

Malgré la proposition faite dans le programme de la révolution démocratique nationale de 1976 d'une autonomie régionale et la création en 1983 de l'Institut de nationalités qui devait mettre au point un programme d'autonomie, le régime de Mengistu en dénonçant "les contre-révolutionnaires" et les "agents" de l'expansionnisme arabe n'a pas témoigné de la prudence prônée par Lenine pour la mise en œuvre d'une politique de nationalité méticuleuse et rationnelle qui allait prendre en compte les conditions nationales et historiques du pays.

<sup>266</sup> Les théoriciens soviétiques avaient éliminé la partition pour l'Ethiopie parce qu'elle allait affaiblir le mouvement révolutionnaire.

<sup>267</sup> Galperin (G.) Ethiopia, some aspects of the nationalities question. in *Asia and Africa today*, N°6, 1979.

**CARTE N° 4 : PROJETS GEOPOLITQUES ET FORMATION DE LA GRANDE ETHIOPIE**



**SOURCE:** GALLAIS, Jean. Une géographie politique de l'Éthiopie: le poids de l'État, Paris, economica, 1989. P. 19

Au lieu de mettre en œuvre une politique d'«éthiopianisation» dans le processus de formation de la nation, il a plutôt favorisé la survivance d'une politique chauviniste d'Amharification. Les déclarations en faveur d'une autonomie régionale n'ont jamais défini le contenu de cette autonomie régionale et encore moins quelle région territoriale elle couvrirait. L'Institut des nationalités est resté une institution marginale dans la vie politique éthiopienne. Mais confrontée dès 1987 à la reprise des hostilités dans le Tigré, en Erythrée et dans le pays Oromo, Mengistu fait approuver par le parlement éthiopien un projet d'organisation territoriale de l'Ethiopie qui comprenait alors cinq régions autonomes et vingt-quatre régions administratives. Le 28 mai 1989, le parlement éthiopien «Shengo» à l'issue d'une élection ayant un taux de participation de 82% de députés revient sur cette organisation territoriale en créant cette fois-ci trois régions autonomes : Assab, Dire Dawa et l'Ogaden ainsi que onze régions administratives.

Les tentatives de résolution de la question de nationalité ne seront pas accueillies favorablement par les différentes ethnies qui feront partie de ces nouveaux ensembles. Et la lutte contre le pouvoir central s'accentuera sur le plan militaire menée particulièrement par le FPLE en Erythrée et à l'intérieur de l'Ethiopie par le FPLT et le FPLO. De plus, le 10 du mois d'avril 1991, un groupe politique composé de 240 intellectuels soumet au gouvernement de Mengistu, une pétition lui demandant de démissionner au profit d'un gouvernement intérimaire qui une fois installé organiserait des élections multipartistes supervisées par des observateurs internationaux.

De même, Mengistu malgré les pressions du parlement l'obligeant à trouver les moyens de résoudre politiquement et pacifiquement les problèmes

politiques qui minent le pays<sup>268</sup> ne se limitera qu'à la désignation d'un Premier Ministre le 26 avril en la personne de Monsieur Tesfaye Dinka.<sup>269</sup> Pourtant l'initiative du parlement éthiopien qui avait été approuvée aussi bien par les États-Unis que par l'Union Soviétique faisait l'unanimité au sein des opposants au régime de Mengistu installé à l'intérieur comme à l'étranger. Mais au lendemain de la désignation du Premier ministre dont la mission à lui confiée était de former un nouveau gouvernement au sein duquel on ne devait retrouver que des individus attachés à l'intégrité territoriale éthiopienne, le FPLE et le FPLT devait se rétracter. Malgré les démarches effectuées par Rudy Boschwitz envoyé spécial du Président Bush à Khartoum les 27 et 28 avril 1991, les deux mouvements armés que sont le FPLE et le FPLT ne sont jamais revenus sur leur décision de rejeter l'initiative du parlement éthiopien.

Ensuite il y a les échecs diplomatiques et militaires. Sur le plan diplomatique, Mengistu n'a pas réussi, sinon à isoler le FPLE, du moins à amener les pays arabes à ne plus accorder à cette dernière leur soutien et ce malgré ses nombreuses initiatives en direction des pays arabes qui commencent immédiatement après sa visite infructueuse à Moscou de juillet 1988. C'est ainsi que les 10 et 11 octobre 1988, Mengistu effectue une visite en Syrie, ce après avoir repris les relations diplomatiques avec la Tunisie le 26 mai 1988.<sup>270</sup> Durant les trois entretiens en tête-à-tête qu'il a avec Hafez El Assad, Mengistu soulèvera la question érythréenne entre autres problèmes discutés et les moyens de la résoudre. Le 20 décembre il rencontre président Hosni Moubarak au Caire. Le 13 janvier 1989, Mengistu reçoit à Addis-Abeba le ministre soudanais de l'intérieur M. Moubarek Al Fadel Al Mahdi qui propose à l'Ethiopie les bons

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<sup>268</sup> Le parlement éthiopien votera même une résolution relative à l'organisation d'une conférence de paix en Ethiopie.

<sup>269</sup> Le poste était resté vacant depuis novembre 1989.

<sup>270</sup> Ces relations étaient rétablies après dix ans de ruptures due au fait que le gouvernement tunisien avait non seulement reconnu le FPLE mais bien plus lui avait accordé le statut diplomatique à Tunis. Le FPLE fermera d'ailleurs ce bureau en 1987.

offices du Soudan dans la résolution de la question érythréenne. Le 4 février 1989, l'Éthiopie reconnaît même l'État palestinien. Et le 5 avril 1989, Yasser Arafat est reçu à Addis-Abeba par le Chef d'État éthiopien dans le cadre d'une visite officielle.

Toutefois, ces initiatives n'empêchent pas les États arabes notamment la Syrie, la Libye et l'Irak de fournir au FPLE, l'équipement militaire qui lui permet d'infliger des sévères défaites à l'armée éthiopienne en Érythrée. Il en est de même à l'intérieur de l'Éthiopie où les troupes de l'EPRDF continuent à faire reculer l'armée éthiopienne. Au mois d'avril seulement, les rebelles éthiopiens ont occupé successivement NEKEMPTE, la capitale de la province du Wolega dans l'ouest, la centrale hydro-électrique de Finchaa, la ville d'Ambo et se trouvent désormais aux portes d'Addis-Abeba. Au nord, les érythréens contrôlent déjà la presque totalité de leur territoire.<sup>271</sup> L'instauration de l'État d'urgence en Érythrée et dans la région du Tigré puis la loi martiale, les exhortations de la population à travers le slogan "everything to the war", astreinte à supporter un lourd effort de guerre à concurrence du 1/12 de leur revenu pour les salariés et à celle de leur fonctionnement pour les sociétés seront de nul effet.

Enfin, il y a les échecs sur le plan économique. Mengistu n'a pas réussi à faire décoller l'économie éthiopienne et par là même, à arracher son peuple à la famine. En 1984, c'est-à-dire au temps de l'alignement sur l'URSS, André Fontaine affirmait :

*"Le temps n'est plus où les peuples les plus pauvres pouvaient espérer en s'appuyant sur l'Union Soviétique comme une alliée naturelle, s'arracher à une misère imputable au moins pour partie*

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<sup>271</sup> Il convient de préciser qu'en mai 1988, avait échoué en Éthiopie, un coup d'État dont la cause pour certains observateurs, était due en partie aux échecs qu'essayaient les forces éthiopiennes face aux rebelles tigréens et aux indépendantistes érythréens.



à l'exploitation éhontée par l'étranger de leurs ressources. Le communisme est impuissant à arracher l'Ethiopie à la famine.<sup>272</sup>

Et la famine restera une constante en Ethiopie jusqu'à la chute de Mengistu. Ses épidémies frappaient particulièrement le nord de l'Etat abyssin aussi bien l'Erythrée que le Tigré jusqu'en 1991 malgré l'ouverture du port de Massawa.<sup>273</sup>

Ce sont donc tous ces échecs qui pousseront Mengistu à s'enfuir d'Ethiopie un mois après son discours du 19 avril, discours dans lequel il accusait le Soudan et la Libye particulièrement d'aider les Erythréens dans leur lutte. De même qu'il se proposait de démissionner si cette décision à elle seule pouvait permettre de préserver l'unité éthiopienne.<sup>274</sup> Une semaine après la fuite de Mengistu, Meles Zenawi prend le pouvoir.

## 2- La prise du pouvoir par Meles Zenawi de l'opposition armée

Dans les derniers jours du DERG, on distinguait plusieurs groupes politiques ainsi que des mouvements d'opposition armée en Ethiopie. Ces différentes forces politiques pour la plupart reposaient sur des particularités régionales et/ou ethniques.<sup>275</sup> Quatre mouvements principaux sortaient du lot. Le Front de libération du peuple tigréen (FPLT), le Front de libération du peuple érythréen (FPLE), le Front de libération de la Somalie occidentale (FLSO) et le Front de libération Oromo (FLO).

Ces principales forces politiques qui avaient incontestablement des origines diverses avaient des objectifs également divergents. Le FPLE ne

<sup>272</sup> Fontaine (A.), "Un continent à la dérive", *Le Monde*, 14 novembre 1984, p. 7.

<sup>273</sup> Keesing's Record of World Events, 1991, pp. 37945-37946.

<sup>274</sup> Discours radiodiffusé du 19 avril 1991.

<sup>275</sup> Pour plus de détails, lire JOIREMAN (S.F.), *Opposition politics and ethnicity in Ethiopia : we will all go down together.* in *The Journal of Modern Africa Studies*, 35, 3, 1997, pp. 387-407.

souhaitait pas une réforme du DERG ou l'avènement d'un ordre politique ouvert en Ethiopie. Il voulait la sécession et la fin de ce qu'il appelait l'injuste imposition de l'union d'une région à une autre ayant une histoire différente.

Le FPLT quant à lui après avoir milité en faveur d'une souveraineté du Tigré devait opter par la suite pour une représentation à l'intérieur de l'Etat éthiopien. Le FPLT a été formé en février 1975 par les intellectuels marxistes d'origine tigréenne parmi lesquels figurait Meles Zenawi.. Mais en réalité, il s'agissait de la transformation du premier front de libération du Tigré (FLT) formé au Soudan le 23 novembre 1974 par l'ancien Ras du Tigré Mangesha Seyum. Au-delà de l'idéologie marxiste et des sympathies albanaises<sup>276</sup> du FPLT, les revendications tigréennes se fondent sur l'histoire, celle de la querelle de légitimité du pouvoir central entre les fils de la reine de Saba que sont les descendants directs des axoumites, les tigréens et les enfants plus lointain l'Amhara. Après avoir été très vivace durant la période Gondarienne (XVII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles), le particularisme tigréen devait commence à décliner avec Ménélik II, roi du Choa donc Amhara qui avait dépossédé les héritiers de Johannes IV en 1889. Les tigréens reprochèrent à Ménélik II ses relations avec les italiens avant son accession au trône et ses alliances avec les chefs Oromo. Il lui firent grief d'avoir cédé aux italiens vaincus à Adoa des plateaux du Merab Mellash peuplés des Tigréens. Ils lui prêtèrent aussi le dessein d'avoir affaibli volontairement le Tigré.

Le règne d'Hailé Sélassié devait fortifier encore leurs ressentiments. Il se fit couronner à Addis-Abeba et non à Axoum et tint à l'écart les descendants de Johannes. Pendant l'occupation , ceux-ci cherchèrent à s'émanciper et la noblesse tigréenne pactisa avec les italiens qui regroupèrent le Tigré et

<sup>276</sup> Ceci justifiait la crainte de bien d'observateurs qui pensaient qu'une dictature tigréenne marxiste-léniniste allait succéder à la dictature Amhara marxiste-léniniste de Mengistu au lendemain de la prise du pouvoir par Meles Zenawi. Lire Le Nouvel Afrique-Asie N°25, octobre 1994, p. 22.

l'Erythrée dans une grande Erythrée. A la libération, les nobles durent se soumettre à nouveau à la domination Amhara. Et le gouverneur Ras Ababa Araguay, d'origine OROMO y institua un régime de fer. La province se souleva et la révolte Wayyane fut matée avec le concours de l'aviation anglaise. L'empereur ne visita jamais le Tigré et l'obligea à adopter l'Amharique comme langue officielle au détriment du tigrinia.<sup>277</sup> Seule concession, il nomma Ras un descendant de Johannes IV, Mangesha Seyum.<sup>278</sup>

De même des Tigréens s'estimaient lésés dans la représentation politique au sein de l'Etat éthiopien qui avait déplacé le centre de gravité des soutiens du régime vers les plus récents éthiopianisés que sont les Oromo. Les Tigréens trouvèrent chez les Erythréens dont ils sont proches par la géographie, la langue et l'histoire, l'allié le plus précieux.<sup>279</sup>

Entre 1975 et 1984, le FPLT allait rester une petite guérilla estimée à moins de 10 000 soldats. Cette armée se contentait de petites incursions dans le territoire éthiopien sans jamais chercher à s'emparer d'une portion de territoire. Par l'intermédiaire de la Relief Society of Tigray (REST) son arme humanitaire, le FPLT a mis à profit ce temps pour accroître son audience auprès de la paysannerie.

Les effectifs du FPLT allaient s'accroître à partir de 1984 du fait des défections au sein de l'armée éthiopienne et de la famine pour atteindre en avril 1988, plus de 25 000 soldats.<sup>280</sup> Bénéficiant désormais d'une aide extérieure diversifiée et d'une audience internationale provenant de sa capacité à distribuer l'aide humanitaire dans les zones libérées, le FPLT allait faire alliance avec le

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<sup>277</sup> Le tigrinia est une langue écrite avec le même syllabaire que l'amharique et plus proche du Guez la langue d'Axoum.

<sup>278</sup> Celui qui après avoir échappé aux tueries du 23 novembre 1974 en Ethiopie créera au Soudan le FLT.

<sup>279</sup> Lire Young (J.), "The Tigray and Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front : a history of tension and pragmatism" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34,1 March 1996, pp. 105-120.

<sup>280</sup> "Ethiopia : a battle lost and a war in statemate". In *Africa Confidential* 29, 9 29 April 1988.

FPLE afin de coordonner tous les deux leurs opérations militaires contre le régime de Mengistu.

Enfin, il y avait le Front de libération Oromo. Il est né en 1976 du fait de la sous-représentation des Oromo au sein du gouvernement central du DERG qui les traitait entre autres de citoyens de "seconde classe"<sup>281</sup> d'une part ; et de l'autre en réaction à l'intrusion du gouvernement éthiopien dans les questions foncières en territoire Oromo. Percevant son combat comme une lutte de libération nationale contre un régime colonial, le FLO fut très actif dans le sud de l'Ethiopie particulièrement à Hararghe, Bale, Arsi, et Sidamo. Le FLO coopéra militairement avec le FPLT mais cette coopération fut brève et connut beaucoup de difficultés.

En Janvier 1989, le FPLT de Meles Zenawi allait orchestrer la création de l'"*Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front*" (EPRDF). L'objectif des combattants Tigréens était de constituer une coalition de mouvements armés d'origine ethnique diverses comprenant des Amhara, des Oromo, des Afars, etc. Ainsi, la rébellion pouvait élargir ses capacités d'action politique et militaire et constituer une alternative crédible car pluri-ethnique au régime marxiste-léniniste de Mengistu.<sup>282</sup> Outre le FPLT, les principales composantes historique du front sont :

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<sup>281</sup> Lire a) MARKAKIS (J.) *National and class conflicts in the horn of Africa*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p 252.

b) KELLER (J. E.), "The ethnogenesis of the Oromo and its implications for politics in Ethiopia". In *The Journal of modern African studies*, 33,4 december 1995, pp. 621-634.

<sup>282</sup> Au début des années 1990, le FPLT fournissait 75% des combattants de l'EPRDF. Puis en recrutant de nombreux prisonniers éthiopiens d'origine Oromo, il fit baisser ce pourcentage et pu donner ainsi une coloration plus nationale à la coalition. En 1991, sur les 110 à 120 000 membres que comptait le front, 50% seulement étaient d'origine tigréenne.

- l'Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM). Il a été créé en novembre 1980 à l'instigation du FPLT, c'est la branche Amhara de l'EPRDF.<sup>283</sup>
- l'Ethiopian Democratic Officers Revolutionary Mouvement (EDORM). Il a été créé en mai 1990 sous l'égide du FPLT. Il regroupe d'anciens officiers de l'armée éthiopienne capturés par les mouvements tigréen et érythréen.
- L'Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO). Il a été fondé en mai 1990. C'est la principale concurrente du grand mouvement nationaliste Oromo, le FLO.

La principale caractéristique de l'EPRDF était d'être restée dominée par des Tigréens. Deux ans après la création de l'EPRDF dont le principal responsable était Meles Zenawi, Mengistu allait s'enfuir d'Ethiopie. Après la fuite de Mengistu, son ancien vice-président Tesfaye Gebre Kidan forme un nouveau gouvernement qu'il dirige. Il est ainsi appelé à gouverner un pays entièrement contrôlé à l'exception de la capitale Addis-Abeba par l'EPRDF.

De plus, il ne contrôle plus l'armée<sup>284</sup> qui malgré ses nombreuses défaites demeure encore un des piliers du pouvoir en Ethiopie. Du fait de l'insécurité grandissante qui règne dans Addis-Abeba d'une part, et de l'autre afin de prévenir une catastrophe humanitaire de plus dans l'Etat abyssin, les Américains encourageront les forces de Meles Zenawi dès le 27 mai 1991 à occuper au plus tôt la capitale.<sup>285</sup> Ce qui sera fait au matin du 28 mai.

La prise du pouvoir par Meles Zenawi, ancien socialiste, admirateur de l'Albanie, dernier stalinien déclaré, soutenu par le régime islamiste de Khartoum

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<sup>283</sup> A la suite de son 3<sup>ème</sup> congrès en 1994, le mouvement a changé d'appellation pour devenir l'Amhara National Democratic Mouvement (ANDM).

<sup>284</sup> M. Tesfaye Gebre Kidan le dira à la veille des négociations de Londres aussi bien à l'ambassadeur d'Italie à Addis-Abeba, qu'au chargé d'affaires des Etats-Unis.

(qui l'a militairement aidé lors des conquêtes du Gondar et du Gojjam et à l'entrée à Addis-Abeba), venait non seulement résoudre la vieille querelle de légitimité entre les enfants de la reine de Saba sur la question du pouvoir dans l'Etat éthiopien<sup>286</sup> ; mais surtout devait avoir des répercussions sur la résolution de la question érythréenne.

### **B- Le régime de Meles Zenawi et la question Erythréenne.**

Pendant plus de 20 ans, les Erythréens du FPLE et les responsables éthiopiens du Régime de Meles Zenawi ont travaillé et combattu le régime de Mengistu. Le FPLE contribua efficacement à la formation des combattants Tigréens leur livrant même des armes.<sup>287</sup> En contre partie, les Tigréens avaient promis au FPLE de lui accorder son droit à l'autodétermination une fois arrivé au pouvoir à Addis-Abeba. Il s'agissait donc d'une sorte de *joint venture* qui comme il arrive très souvent entre tous les associés a connu des crises.<sup>288</sup> Malgré tout les troupes érythréennes devaient entrer en compagnie de celle de l'EPRDF à Addis-Abeba en mai 1991. Traduisant ainsi l'excellence des relations au plus haut niveau entre ces deux mouvements nationalistes asymétriques.<sup>289</sup>

Au lendemain de sa prise de pouvoir, Meles Zenawi devait confirmer le droit de l'Erythrée à l'indépendance. La frontière entre l'Erythrée et l'Ethiopie allait être reouverte. L'Ethiopie allait utiliser les ports d'Assab et Massawa contre le paiement des droits à l'Erythrée. Par la suite, l'Erythrée devait ouvrir une légation permanente à Addis-Abeba. Le dialogue entre les dirigeants

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<sup>285</sup> Cette attitude du gouvernement américain, représentée par Herman Cohen, médiateur des pourparlers de Londres provoqua le retrait de la délégation éthiopienne de la salle de négociation.

<sup>286</sup> Il faut préciser que en juillet 1991, Meles Zenawi sera élu comme du gouvernement transitoire de L'Ethiopie, par la conférence nationale des organisations politiques et groupes ethniques éthiopiens.

<sup>287</sup> Lire CLAPHAM (CH.) Transformation and continuity in revolutionary Ethiopia, Cambridge, 1988, p. 209.

<sup>288</sup> Voir YOUNG (J.) op. cit.

<sup>289</sup> Lire Interview de Meles Zenawi et Issayas Afeworki in Le Nouvel Afrique-Asie, n°25, octobre 1991, pp. 21-25.

éthiopiens et érythréens allait être ininterrompu. Il se faisait soit par l'intermédiaire du "téléphone rouge" établi entre les bureaux de Meles Zenawi et Issayas Afeworki. La nouvelle option éthiopienne sur le droit de l'Erythrée à l'indépendance devait être confirmée officiellement par la conférence sur la paix et la démocratie tenue à Addis-Abeba en juillet 1991.

**SECTION II : LE PROCESSUS REFERENDAIRE**  
**ERYTHREEN**

Le référendum d'autodétermination de l'Erythrée a pu se tenir après que certaines dispositions préalables aient été prises.

**PARAGRAPHE I : Les dispositions préalables au référendum.**

Trois dispositions principales ont précédé l'organisation du référendum d'autodétermination de l'Erythrée. Ce sont : la formation du gouvernement provisoire de l'Erythrée (Provisionnal government of Eritrea (PGE)) ; la conférence sur la paix et la démocratie d'Addis-Abeba et enfin l'installation du mécanisme international de contrôle du référendum à savoir l'UNOVER.

**A- La formation du Provisionnal Government of Eritrea (PGE)**

Peu après la libération, le FPLE annonça à Londres, la formation du PGE. Ce gouvernement dont la caractéristique principale était d'avoir été constitué initialement et simplement par la hiérarchie du FPLE allait néanmoins connaître par la suite, des aménagements. Notamment la cooptation de certains dissidents politiques du FLE en son sein.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Lire a) MARSHALL (R.) "Erythrée : an 01" in Politique étrangère n°50, juin 1993, pp. 21-31.

Ce gouvernement devait affronter les difficultés d'ordre économique et social pouvant entraver la bonne marche du processus référendaire. La première de ces difficultés était celle de la transition entre une logique administrative liée à la guerre à celle liée à un fonctionnement plus civil. La compartimentation de l'information et des tâches pour des raisons de sécurité, la définition et le partage de nouvelles compétences, la mise en place des rapports horizontaux au sein des différents ministères, la responsabilisation des cadres intermédiaires devait soulever bien des hésitations et provoquer des retards dommageables. Cette situation était d'autant plus délicate que les cadres du FPLE se retrouvaient en concurrence au sein de l'appareil d'Etat avec des responsables administratifs en poste depuis des longues années dotés d'une certaine compétence, mais aussi coupable aux yeux des plus radicaux d'avoir accepté le joug éthiopien sans réellement combattre.

La seconde difficulté tenait au manque de cadres compétents susceptibles d'être des interlocuteurs efficaces des agences multilatérales et des divers organismes de coopération internationale. Le pouvoir éthiopien s'étant appliqué au cours de l'occupation à dessaisir les érythréens de leur administration directe, beaucoup de meilleurs techniciens érythréens avaient soit quitté le pays, soit occupaient des postes en Ethiopie, soit encore avaient émigré pour des raisons économiques ou politiques.

L'Erythrée en outre n'offrait ni facilités, ni grandes possibilités de consommation matérielle ou culturelle. Autrement dit, l'enthousiasme ne devait pas toujours être au rendez-vous. Et ce d'autant plus que, ces dernières années, l'économie rurale avait été affectée par la destruction des infrastructures, la disparition du cadre étatique et des sécheresses récurrentes. Face à ces nombreuses difficultés, le PGE devait chercher à obtenir de la communauté

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b) STYAN (D.) op. cit., p. 35.



internationale, et de l'émigration<sup>291</sup> les financements nécessaires à une politique ambitieuse qui donnait la priorité à l'agriculture.

De plus, le PGE devait être confronté du fait de la jeunesse de sa population<sup>292</sup> à des problèmes de formation et d'emploi puis à celui de la réinstallation des réfugiés en Erythrée. Ce qui devait à terme poser sous une forme aiguë, des questions sur le statut de la terre, du partage des rares ressources entre les différentes régions du pays, de l'utilisation de la religion et du sentiment régional dans le champ politique.

Malgré ces nombreuses difficultés, le PGE dirigé par Issayas Afeworki et d'autres membres du FPLE (qui du temps de la guerre apparaissaient comme une sorte d'organisme proto-étatique, administrant une population importante vivant soit dans les zones libérées à l'intérieur du territoire érythréen, soit dans les camps des réfugiés du Soudan remarquablement transformés en "sanctuaire humanitaire"<sup>293</sup>) allait mettre en marche le processus référendaire.

Cet ainsi que le 6 avril 1991, le PGE rend public le décret n°21/1992 sur la nationalité érythréenne.

### **1- La publication du décret sur la nationalité érythréenne.**

Le décret n°21/1992 du 06 avril 1992, relatif à la nationalité érythréenne a été le point fort du processus référendaire érythréen ; la nationalité étant la

<sup>291</sup> Comme pour le Soudan et la Somalie, l'émigration devait jouer un rôle fondamental dans la vie économique de l'Erythrée ne serait-ce que par l'envoi des devises fortes aux familles. Ces flux financiers expliquent pour une part la capacité de survie des érythréens pendant la guerre. Pour les appels à la communauté internationale, voir

- les documents annexés  
- Indian Ocean Newsletter (I.O.N.) July 17<sup>th</sup> 1993.

<sup>292</sup> 45% de la population érythréenne avait moins de 15 ans à la libération.

<sup>293</sup> Les capacités d'auto-organisation d'autonomie du FPLE lui avait valu une excellente réputation aux yeux de certains analystes occidentaux qui le qualifiait de Rolls Royce des mouvements de libération. En effet, il avait été moins affecté que d'autres fronts, par des dérives idéologiques, le détournement de l'aide humanitaire à des fins privées, la prévarication etc. lire CHALIANG (G.) op. cit. et ZIEGLER (J.) op. cit.

condition première à remplir pour participer au vote. Ce texte au-delà d'autres préoccupations instituait quatre formes d'obtention de la nationalité érythréenne.

On pouvait obtenir la nationalité érythréenne par la naissance. Cette forme concernait toutes les personnes nées de père ou de mère d'origine érythréenne sur le sol érythréen ou dans les régions voisines. Etaient considérés comme des personnes d'origine érythréenne, celles ayant résidé en Erythrée à partir de 1933. Les personnes nées en Erythrée de parents inconnus pouvaient obtenir la nationalité érythréenne de naissance, quitte à elle à le prouver par tous les moyens de droit ou de fait. Toutes les personnes d'origine érythréenne, possédant une nationalité étrangère pouvaient en plus de cette dernière, prendre la nationalité érythréenne.

On pouvait aussi avoir la nationalité érythréenne par le biais de la naturalisation.<sup>294</sup> Cette dernière concernait deux catégories de personnes. La première catégorie était celle des personnes nées entre 1934 et 1951.<sup>295</sup> La nationalité érythréenne pouvait être accordée aux individus n'étant pas d'origine érythréenne mais qui entrèrent et résidèrent en Erythrée entre le début de 1934 et la fin de 1951 à la condition qu'elle n'ait par commis d'acte répréhensible vis-à-vis du peuple érythréen tout au long de la lutte de libération. Par voie de conséquence, les personnes nées des œuvres des érythréens naturalisés étaient des érythréens de naissance.

La deuxième catégorie concernait les personnes nées à partir de 1952 et au-delà.<sup>296</sup> Celles-ci pouvaient obtenir la nationalité érythréenne à la condition de pourvoir aux nombreuses exigences stipulées par le décret. Etaient

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<sup>294</sup> Voir annexe document 16.

<sup>295</sup> Article 3 du décret 21/1992.

<sup>296</sup> Article 4 du décret 21/1992.

particulièrement visés par ces textes les Grecs et les Italiens, amis de longue date de l'Erythrée.

La nationalité érythréenne pouvait également être obtenue par la voie de l'adoption. La nationalité était accordée à des personnes adoptées légalement soit sur la demande de l'adoptant (un Erythréen de naissance ou naturalisé), soit sur celle de l'adopté lui-même.<sup>297</sup>

Enfin, la nationalité érythréenne pouvait être obtenue par la voie du mariage.<sup>298</sup>

Le lendemain de la publication du décret relatif à la nationalité le PGE devait promulguer celui relatif à la tenue du référendum.

## **2- Le décret relatif à l'organisation du référendum d'autodétermination.**

L'intérêt du décret n°22/1992 du 7 avril 1992 a été d'instituer la commission du référendum de l'Erythrée. Désigné ci-après l'"*Eritrean Referendum Commission*" (ERC), elle était chargée d'organiser et de conduire le référendum d'autodétermination.<sup>299</sup> La responsabilité d'organiser et de conduire ce référendum fut confiée comme le prévoyait les textes, à cinq personnes nommées par le Secrétaire Général du FPLE. M. Amare Tekle fut désigné président de cette commission le 23 avril. Il devait être assisté dans sa tâche par quatre autres personnalités.<sup>300</sup> L'ERC passa toute l'année à préparer la tenue du référendum dont la date sera arrêtée en novembre 1992 par le PGE.

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<sup>297</sup> Article 5 du décret 21/1992.

<sup>298</sup> Article 6 du décret 21/1992.

<sup>299</sup> Chapitre 4 du décret n°22/1992.

<sup>300</sup> L'ERC était ainsi composée : M. Amare Tekle (président), Taha Mohamed Nur (secrétaire), Idriss Galawdeos (publicité et information) Asfaha Berhe (identification), Safi Imam Moussa (élection). Source : E.U. April - September 1992.

**3- Le PGE fixe la date du référendum d'autodétermination.**

Dans le décret du 07 avril 1992, il avait été mentionné que le référendum devait avoir lieu vers la fin de l'année du mois d'avril de l'année suivante sans précision de date. Au lendemain de l'enregistrement des électeurs qui avaient commencé en octobre 1992, le PGE devait confirmer en novembre, la date de la tenue du référendum pour le mois d'avril 1993.

**B- La conférence sur la paix et la démocratie d'Addis-Abeba (du 1<sup>er</sup> au 5 juillet 1991).**

La conférence sur la paix et la démocratie tenue à Addis-Abeba au lendemain de la chute du régime de Mengistu a connu la participation de tous les partis politiques, de tous les mouvements et autres organisations sociales en Ethiopie ainsi que le FPLE.

Cette conférence qui institua le Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) auquel ne prit pas part le FPLE a reconnu le droit de tous les groupes ethniques à choisir librement leur propre chef et à s'autogouverner au sein d'un Etat éthiopien unitaire<sup>301</sup> afin que les séparatistes renoncent à leurs revendications exception faite pour l'Erythrée. En effet, la conférence a formellement accordé à l'Erythrée, le droit de déterminer son futur politique par la voie d'un référendum supervisé par la communauté internationale.

**C- L'installation de l'UNOVER en Erythrée.**

En janvier 1993, la Mission d'observation des Nations Unies pour la vérification du référendum d'autodétermination de l'Erythrée (UNOVER) devait

<sup>301</sup> Lire a) Le Nouvel Afrique-Asie n°25, octobre 1991, p. 22.

s'installer dans l'ancienne colonie italienne. Les Erythréens n'allaient manifester aucun enthousiasme à cet état de fait. Ce d'autant plus que l'ONU n'avait montré aucun empressement à le faire lors même qu'elle avait été saisie par les dirigeants éthiopiens et érythréens.

L'UNOVER sera dirigée par un libanais Samir Sambar. Elle a assisté l'ERC dans la difficile tâche d'organisation des élections particulièrement pour l'installation des mille bureaux de vote et la distribution des cartes d'électeurs à une population en majorité illettrée et habitant parfois des zones inaccessibles. Ces dispositions préalables ayant été prises, le processus du référendum d'autodétermination devait se poursuivre par les élections proprement dites.

## **PARAGRAPHE II : Le référendum proprement dit.**

Comme il est de coutume dans la majorité de consultations électorales, celle de l'autodétermination de l'Erythrée a été précédée par une campagne électorale suivie du vote et de la proclamation des résultats.

### **A- La campagne électorale**

Ouverte le 17 février 1993, la campagne électorale précédant le référendum de l'Erythrée devait s'achever le 21 avril de la même année. Cette campagne monopolisée par le FPLE dont le programme politique se résumait à l'obtention de l'indépendance concernait une population qui après les traumatismes toujours vivaces de la guerre, commençait à se réhabituer à l'inverse de l'enfer de la guerre. Aussi pour une bonne part de celle-ci, le sentiment indépendantiste signifiait-il d'abord clore cette période sombre de l'histoire (celle de la guerre de

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b) "Transitional period charter" in Negarit gazeta, 22th July 1991.

libération) et couper court à toute possibilité de retour d'une armée honnie, se retrouver en soi.

Bien qu'il soit toujours omniprésent mais minoritaire, le sentiment unioniste n'avait eu aucun droit à l'expression au cours de cette campagne. La pression sociale orchestrée par la direction du FPLE et relayée par les cadres intermédiaires et les combattants y contribua incontestablement. Précédant le référendum, ces acteurs sociaux avaient obligé le PGE à suspendre plusieurs centaines de cadres administratifs<sup>302</sup> accusés d'avoir collaboré avec le Parti des travailleurs éthiopiens ou, d'avoir servi de supplétifs ou d'indicateurs au service de Mengistu. Dès lors, il était probable que peu d'unionistes expriment leur sentiment de peur à en payer les conséquences après la consultation. Autrement dit, le sentiment indépendantiste nettement majoritaire, n'était aucunement unanime. Après avoir été dominant sur le plateau érythréen<sup>303</sup> l'option unioniste qui s'était largement estompée sous l'effet des politiques répressives menées par le pouvoir central éthiopien, habitait encore certaines zones de l'Akkele-Guzaïe ou de Seraye qui avaient maintenu des contacts étroits avec le Tigré éthiopien dont ils dépendaient économiquement. Les journaux privés d'origine éthiopienne développant les arguments allant à l'encontre de l'indépendance furent interdits de vente en Erythrée.

Cette situation de monopole et de maîtrise du processus référendaire par le FPLE devait être décriée par les partis d'opposition pour la plupart en exil.<sup>304</sup> Néanmoins, le vote devait se tenir les 22, 23 et 24 avril 1993.

<sup>302</sup> Lire *Africa confidential* vol. 34, n°4, 19 février 1993.

<sup>303</sup> Voir l'ouvrage de Trevaskis (G.), *Eritrea a colony in transition*, Oxford, Oxford university press, 1960.

<sup>304</sup> Le représentant du FLE à Rome par exemple protesta à l'ONU. Lire Styan (D.), op. cit.

**B- Le vote et les résultats du référendum**

Pendant trois jours, du 22 au 24 avril, les Erythréens des dix régions de l'intérieur auxquels devaient se joindre 340 000 de leur compatriotes à l'étranger, soit au total 1 100 000 votants se sont rendus aux urnes dans une ambiance de célébration nationale.<sup>305</sup>

Des 340 000 Erythréens qui votèrent à l'étranger, 154 000 étaient au Soudan, 58 000 en Ethiopie et 35 000 en Arabie Saoudite. Le reste vota dans les représentation du FPLE dans le Golfe, en Europe et en Amérique du nord.<sup>306</sup> Du fait des relations tendues entre le FPLE et l'Arabie Saoudite pendant la période de transition, caractérisée par l'expulsion de quatre diplomates érythréens du Royaume saoudien et la création à Djeddah d'une organisation violemment anti-FPLE, le vote des érythréens résidant dans cet Etat du Golfe semblait compromis. Heureusement quelques jours avant le vote, cette situation devait être évitée grâce à l'intervention du représentant de l'UNOVER.<sup>307</sup>

Le vote consista à répondre par oui ou non à la question suivante :  
*“Approuvez-vous l'accession de l'Erythrée à l'indépendance en tant qu'Etat souverain ?”*

Du 27 avril, l'ERC devait proclamer les résultats suivants :

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<sup>305</sup> Lire Press (M.), “Erythrée, naissance d'une nation“ in *Topic* n°202, pp. 6-7.

<sup>306</sup> En ce qui concerne les Etats-Unis, 15 000 Erythréens votèrent dont 3 000 à San Francisco et 2 500 à Washington DC.

**Tableau N° 6 : Les résultats du référendum**

Régions	Total	Oui	Non	Nul	% oui
Asmara	128,620	128,443	144	33	99,86
Barka	44,472	44,425	47	0	99,89
Denkalia	26,027	25,907	91	29	99,54
Gash-Setit	73,506	73,236	270	0	99,63
Hamasien	76,716	76,654	59	3	99,92
Akele Guzai	92,634	92,465	147	22	99,82
Sahel	51,187	51,015	141	31	99,66
Semhar	33,750	33,596	113	41	99,54
Seraye	124,809	124,725	72	12	92,93
Senhit	78,549	78,513	26	1	99,97
Fighters	77,579	77,512	26	46	99,91
Sudan	154,058	153,706	352	0	99,77
Ethiopia	57,706	57,466	204	36	99,58
Other countries	82,506	82,597	135	74	99,75
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.102,41</b>	<b>1.100.260</b>	<b>1,822</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>99,81</b>

**Source** : GOE, May 1993.

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Dans les heures suivants l'annonce officielle des résultats du référendum et d'après lesquels 99,8% d'Erythréens optaient pour l'indépendance, l'Italie, les

<sup>307</sup> Pour plus de détails, lire Styan (D.), op. cit., p. 34.



Etats-Unis et le Soudan allaient reconnaître le nouvel Etat. Celui-ci devait être proclamé le 24 mai à Asmara par Issayas Afeworki. Peu après, le FPLE devait instaurer une période transitoire de quatre ans afin de se donner les moyens de relever les défis politique, économique et social, etc. auxquels l'Erythrée devait faire face.

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHEQUE

Evoluant dans un système international nouveau marqué par le leadership américain, ce qui n'emporte pas que celui-ci soit devenu unipolaire et encore moins multi-polaire, le conflit de l'Erythrée a trouvé une solution. Divers facteurs ont permis d'atteindre cette fin. Ces facteurs d'ordre internationaux, régionaux et locaux ont agi d'une façon ou d'une autre, certains un peu plus que les autres, à atteindre le seuil de ce que William Zartman appelle "la réciprocité conditionnelle"<sup>308</sup> préalable à la résolution de ce conflit qui avait débuté en 1947 entre l'Italie et les Quatre Grands et dont la phase armée a commencé en 1961 pour prendre fin en 1991.

Le gouvernement de l'Erythrée à l'indépendance devait comme beaucoup d'Etat africain en 1960, être confronté aux nombreuses difficultés auxquelles devaient se joindre les nouvelles exigences véhiculées au plan international. Il s'agissait principalement de la libéralisation de la vie politique, de l'efficacité économique. Au lendemain du référendum, la vie politique allait s'accélérer. De nouveaux partis politiques allaient être créés et le FPLE à la suite de son congrès tenu du 10 au 18 février 1994, allait changer de nom pour devenir le Front populaire pour la démocratie et la justice (FPDJ). Bien que le multipartisme soit de mise, le parti libérateur de l'Erythrée devait entériner une politique plus totalitaire que démocratique. Une vraie vie démocratique n'ayant pas vu le jour, certains opposants n'allaient pas hésiter à reprendre les armes contre le régime.

Tel est le cas de certains fronts issus du FLE et des islamistes de l'Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement.<sup>309</sup> Tant que le régime pourra compter sur son armée pour quadriller le pays, les attaques des différents front rebelles ne pourront pas mettre en cause la stabilité du régime. Le gouvernement érythréen devait également faire face à de nombreuses difficultés économiques.

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<sup>308</sup> William Zartman, "Résoudre les conflits régionaux" article in *Topic* n°203 p. 3.

<sup>309</sup> Pour plus de détails sur les mouvements islamistes en Erythrée, lire  
a) Balencie (J.L.) op. cit. pp. 453-456.

Extrêmement pauvre<sup>310</sup> et détruit par une trentaine d'années de guerre<sup>311</sup>, l'Erythrée ne disposait que d'un potentiel industriel très faible, composé exclusivement de petites industries de transformation aux équipements et matériels anciens ou obsolètes. L'aide internationale n'ayant pas été à la hauteur des promesses, l'Erythrée allait accentuer les rapports qu'elle entretenait depuis la période de guerre avec ses partenaires régionaux que sont le Soudan et surtout l'Éthiopie. Pendant la période de transition, des comités *ad hoc* érythro-éthiopiens furent formés afin de résoudre les questions communes et urgentes (l'usage des ports, des postes et télécommunications, la monnaie, etc.). La rencontre au sommet des chefs d'États éthiopien et érythréen à Addis-Abeba le 30 juillet 1993 permit de créer des commissions mixtes (JMC) afin d'harmoniser les politiques dans les domaines économiques et sociaux entre les deux pays. L'intégration économique régionale par le biais de l'IGAAD était envisagée afin de solidifier les relations entre les deux pays auxquels devait se joindre dans un futur proche, la Somalie. Cette intégration économique pouvait, d'après le leader érythréen, déboucher à terme sur une confédération.<sup>312</sup>

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b) Boroda (H.) "Erythrée, le gouffre politique" in *Afrique-Asie* n°72, septembre 1992.

<sup>310</sup> Avec un PNB inférieur à 120 \$ US par an par habitant, le pays se classe parmi les plus pauvres du monde.

<sup>311</sup> Le coût de la reconstruction du pays était estimé en 1994 à 2 milliards de dollars US.

<sup>312</sup> Voice of Ethiopia, *SWB* may 1<sup>st</sup> 1993.

**CONCLUSION**

Au terme de ce travail, nous pouvons tirer un certain nombre de conclusions qui se regroupent en deux principales. La première est que les changements survenus sur la scène internationale ont été incontestablement déterminant dans l'obtention de la résolution du conflit de l'Erythrée. En effet, elles ont décomplexifié le conflit de l'Erythrée aussi bien dans son processus évolutif que résolutif.

Au niveau du processus évolutif d'abord, la fin de la guerre froide a permis d'éliminer les principaux facteurs de freinage que les supergrands apportaient dans la gestion de la crise érythréenne : le facteur idéologique et le facteur diplomatico-stratégique. C'est en instrumentalisant<sup>313</sup> ces facteurs que l'Ethiopie a obtenu et conservé un large secteur littoral sur la Mer Rouge. D'abord grâce aux Américains puis à la faveur d'un retournement diplomatique spectaculaire opéré en 1976 par l'URSS. Cette attitude soviétique, surprenante vis-à-vis des mouvements érythréens derrière lesquels elle s'était alignée en 1950 et du reste percevait dans leur lutte jusqu'en 1976, date de la rupture américano-éthiopienne, une authentique lutte de libération nationale, avait contribué à complexifier le conflit perçu ainsi à travers le prisme de la confrontation Est-Ouest.

L'avènement d'une vision du monde déterminée moins par la confrontation entre les deux blocs antagonistes et plus par la collaboration entre les deux superpuissances aura privé l'Ethiopie de ressources importantes.<sup>314</sup> L'attitude américaine vis-à-vis de l'Ethiopie au lendemain de la chute du mur de Berlin, est une démonstration de l'inopérationalité du facteur idéologique ou diplomatico-stratégique. Ainsi donc, les étiquettes de "réactionnaires", et de

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<sup>313</sup> D'après le professeur Oyono, l'instrumentalisation est l'utilisation à des fins qui ne sont pas nécessairement celles attendues par le marché idéologique international, des modèles extérieurs. Lire "Du parti unique au multipartisme : environnement international et processus de démocratisation en Afrique in *Afrique 2000*, n°6, juillet-août-septembre 1991, p. 45.

“séparatistes” collées aux Erythréens perdaient leur contenu idéologiques pour ne refléter que la volonté manifeste du régime Mengistu de maintenir l’Erythrée sous le contrôle de l’Etat Abyssin. La fin de la guerre froide a privé l’Ethiopie d’une ressource qui lui avait permis de faire valoir son intérêt national sur l’Erythrée.<sup>315</sup>

Au niveau du processus résolutif ensuite, la disparition de l’URSS dans la hiérarchie des puissances a permis aux américains devenus leader<sup>316</sup> du nouveau système international, d’imposer une solution au conflit érythréen en réglant la question du pouvoir central d’Addis-Abeba à Londres. La disparition de l’Union soviétique dans la hiérarchie des puissances militaires, qui, soit dit en passant, “a toujours été la référence fondamentale ainsi qu’une menace constante, une idée première ainsi que la source des orientations politiques des occidentaux”<sup>317</sup>, allait permettre aux Etats-Unis qui, jusqu’à la conférence de Londres, avaient toujours soutenu le principe de l’intangibilité des frontières éthiopiennes vis-à-vis de la question érythréenne, de susciter l’arrivée paradoxale au pouvoir d’un mouvement, le FPLT, qui a toujours voulu la division de l’Ethiopie. Autrement dit, le leadership américain lui aura permis de prendre à son compte, le processus résolutif du conflit face à la carence politique manifeste des autres acteurs à l’exemple de la Communauté européenne (mieux l’Union Européenne) dans la recherche d’une solution négociée au conflit érythréen, carence que cette dernière exprime dans une proposition de résolution après la rencontre de Londres en ces termes :

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<sup>314</sup> Brackman (C.), “Ethiopie ou le socialisme impérial” in *Le Monde diplomatique*, octobre 1982, pp. 18-21.

<sup>315</sup> Copans (J.), “L’URSS, alibi ou instrument des Etats d’Afrique noire” in Zaki Laïdi, *L’URSS vue du Tiers monde*, op. cit., pp. 51-60.

<sup>316</sup> Nye (J. S.), *Le leadership américain : quand les règles du jeu changent* Nancy, Nouveaux Horizons, 1992, 1<sup>ère</sup> éd.

<sup>317</sup> Levgold (R.) “The nature of soviet power” in *Foreign Affairs*, october 1977, p. 49.

*“la communauté a fait preuve d'une grave carence politique lourde de conséquences laissant la place aux seuls Etats-Unis”<sup>318</sup>.*

Ainsi donc, en limitant le nombre d'acteurs participant au conflit à l'Ethiopie et à l'Erythrée, en permettant aux Etats-Unis d'être seul arbitre du conflit, les mutations du système international ont décomplexifié le conflit. Toutefois, la solution américaine reste tributaire des changements intervenus aux niveaux régional et local. Ce qui constitue notre seconde conclusion.

La seconde conclusion que nous avons tiré est que les changements du système international ont été d'un déterminisme relatif et non exclusif dans la résolution du conflit. De fait l'évolution du conflit de l'Erythrée semble vérifier une affirmation d'Enver Hoxha dans son ouvrage Les superpuissances d'après laquelle :

*“la lutte d'un peuple pour sa survie comme nation, ne peut dépendre des combinaisons des autres Etats grands ou petits, pas plus que de leurs intrigues diplomatiques. Elle dépend de la prise de conscience du peuple lui-même qui lui permet de comprendre quelles sont ses vrais droits et intérêts, de la confiance qu'il a en ses propres forces à tout moment, et dans chaque situation, pour défendre ses droits et intérêts avec une volonté d'acier, une logique saine et révolutionnaire. C'est seulement alors que la force du peuple devient invincible, qu'elle centuple et se déchaîne comme un ouragan.”<sup>319</sup>*

En effet, la résolution du conflit repose davantage sur la perception des droits et intérêts des différents peuples en lutte que sur la volonté des Etats-Unis. D'abord la perception des droits du peuple érythréen tout au long de l'histoire a

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<sup>318</sup> Parlement européen, Proposition de résolution commune, 12 juin 1992.

<sup>319</sup> Hoxha Enver, Les superpuissances (1959-1984), extrait du journal politique, Tirana, 1986, p. 620.

fait l'objet d'un programme que le FPLE s'est fait un devoir impérieux d'élaborer et de soumettre à l'opinion internationale à partir de 1985 et qu'il appliquait progressivement dans les différentes régions qu'il contrôlait.<sup>320</sup> C'est donc fort du soutien de la population érythréenne que le FPLE a pu remporter des victoires significatives sur L'Ethiopie qui a priori et au regard des forces en présence, paraissait favori. Ensuite, il y a la perception des droits et intérêts du peuple éthiopien par l'armée éthiopienne qui est précisément chargée de défendre la "mère patrie". Composée majoritairement des ressortissants des classes pauvres, rurales et non amharaphones, engagée dans des guerres sans fin pour la défense d'un pouvoir organisé politiquement autour du noyau Choanais Amhara depuis Ménélik II jusqu'à Mengistu Haïlé Maryam<sup>321</sup> en passant par le Négus Haïlé Sélassié, soumise à une terrible répression contre son Etat-major exercée par le Négus rouge, elle est devenue attentiste. D'où les nombreuses défaites accumulées en l'espace de 3 ans et demi au Tigré et en Erythrée, ce qui a favorisé l'avancée des fronts vers le sud de l'Ethiopie. La fuite de Mengistu jacobin attaché à l'intégrité éthiopienne, traduit à elle seule la perte d'un idéal qu'il aura longtemps cherché à atteindre comme ses prédécesseurs, au mépris du bien-être de ses concitoyens.

Enfin, l'évolution actuelle des relations entre l'Ethiopie et l'Erythrée caractérisée par le conflit frontalier déclenché en Mai 1998 semble ressortir en toile de fond l'antagonisme liée au désir de L'Ethiopie d'avoir une façade sur la Mer Rouge. Mais au-delà, avec l'enlisement du conflit angolais, l'évolution du

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<sup>320</sup> Fenet (A.), "Le programme du Front populaire de libération de l'Erythrée", in *La corne de l'Afrique*, op. cit., pp. 139-248.

<sup>321</sup> Les membres du DERG dans les premières années sont en majorité Amhara. 15 des 16 membres du Comité central, 9 sur 11 des autres membres du DERG, 13 des 14 gouverneurs de provinces, 14 sur 14 des vice-gouverneurs.



## *Conclusion*

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conflit arabe, la métamorphose de la violence au Mozambique, l'évolution de conflit israëlo-arabe, c'est tout le débat sur la problématique des conflits périphériques et de leur résolution qui est relancé.

CODESRIA - BIBLIOTHEQUE

**ANNEXES**

CODESRI BIBLIOTHEQUE

## Document 1

*Letter dated 15 September 1948 from France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America requesting that the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies be added to the agenda of the General Assembly*

A/645, 16 September 1948

### Note from the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to communicate to Members of the General Assembly the following communication received by him from the Governments of the United States of America, France, the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics:

Paris, 15 September 1948

On the instructions of the Governments of the United States of America, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics we have the honour to inform you that in application of Article 23 and Paragraph 3 of Annex XI of the Treaty of Peace with Italy, the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies is referred to the General

Assembly in order that, in conformity with its Rules of Procedure, the General Assembly may examine this question during the Session which is to open on 21 September.

For the Government of the United States of America  
(Signed) L.W. DOUGLAS

For the Government of France  
(Signed) SCHUMAN

For the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland  
(Signed) Hector MCNEIL

For the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics  
(Signed) A. VYSHINSKY

## Document 2

*General Assembly resolution concerning the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies*

A/RES/287 (III), 18 May 1949

### The General Assembly

Decides to postpone further consideration of the item "Question of the disposal of the former Italian

colonies" until the fourth regular session of the General Assembly. 1/

1/ See also resolution 266 (III), page 6.

## Document 3

### *General Assembly resolution concerning the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies*

ARES/289 (IV), 21 November 1949

#### *The General Assembly,*

*In accordance with Annex XI, paragraph 3, of the Treaty of Peace with Italy, 1947, whereby the Powers concerned have agreed to accept the recommendation of the General Assembly on the disposal of the former Italian colonies and to take appropriate measures for giving effect to it,*

*Having taken note of the report 1/ of the Four Power Commission of Investigation, having heard spokesmen of organizations representing substantial sections of opinion in the territories concerned, and having taken into consideration the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants of the territories, the interests of peace and security, the views of the interested Governments and the relevant provisions of the Charter,*

#### *C. With respect to Eritrea, recommends:*

1. That a Commission consisting of representatives of not more than five Member States, as follows, Burma, Guatemala, Norway, Pakistan and the Union of South Africa, shall be established to ascertain more fully the wishes and the best means of promoting the welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea, to examine the question of the disposal of Eritrea and to prepare a report for the General Assembly, together with such proposal or proposals as it may deem appropriate for the solution of the problem of Eritrea;

2. That in carrying out its responsibilities the Commission shall ascertain all the relevant facts, including written or oral information from the present administering Power, from representatives of the population of the territory, including minorities, from Governments and from such organizations and individuals as it may deem necessary. In particular, the Commission shall take into account:

(a) The wishes and welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea, including the views of the various racial, religious and political groups of the provinces of the territory and the capacity of the people for self-government;

(b) The interests of peace and security in East Africa;

(c) The rights and claims of Ethiopia based on geographical, historical, ethnic or economic reasons, including in particular Ethiopia's legitimate need for adequate access to the sea;

3. That in considering its proposals the Commission shall take into account the various suggestions for the disposal of Eritrea submitted during the fourth regular session of the General Assembly;

4. That the Commission shall assemble at the Headquarters of the United Nations as soon as possible. It shall travel to Eritrea and may visit such other places as in its judgment may be necessary in carrying out its responsibilities. The Commission shall adopt its own rules of procedure. Its report and proposal or proposals shall be communicated to the Secretary-General not later than 15 June 1950 for distribution to Member States so as to enable final consideration during the fifth regular session of the General Assembly. The Interim Committee of the General Assembly shall consider the report and proposal or proposals of the Commission and report, with conclusions, to the fifth regular session of the General Assembly;

#### *D. With respect to the above provisions:*

1. *Invites* the Secretary-General to request the necessary facilities from the competent authorities of each of the States in whose territory it may be necessary for the Commission for Eritrea to meet or travel;

2. *Authorizes* the Secretary-General, in accordance with established practices,

(a) To arrange for the payment of an appropriate remuneration to the United Nations Commissioner in Libya;

(b) To reimburse the travelling and subsistence expenses of the members of the Council for Libya, of one representative from each Government represented on the Advisory Council for Somaliland, and of one representative and one alternate from each Government represented on the Commission for Eritrea;

(c) To assign to the United Nations Commissioner in Libya, to the Advisory Council for Somaliland, and to the United Nations Commission for Eritrea such staff and to provide such facilities as the Secretary-General may consider necessary to carry out the terms of the present resolution.

<sup>1/</sup> See *Four Power Commission of Investigation for the former Italian Colonies*, volumes I-III.

## Document 4

### *Report of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea (excerpt)*

AI/285, 8 June 1950

#### Letter of transmittal

Geneva, 8 June 1950

Sir,

The United Nations Commission for Eritrea has the honour to communicate to you herewith its report in accordance with section C, paragraph 4, of resolution 289 A (IV), which provides that the report of the Commission shall be communicated to the Secretary-General not later than 15 June 1950 for distribution to Member States.

We have the honour to be, Sir, Your obedient Servants,

(Signed) Aung KHINE (Burma)

Carlos GARCÍA BAUER (Guatemala)

Erling QVALE (Norway)

Mian ZIAUD-DIN (Pakistan)

F. H. THERON (Union of South Africa)

Petrus J. SCHMIDT (Principal Secretary)

Mr. Trygve Lie  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
Lake Success  
New York, USA

Chapter I  
Historical background, establishment and organization of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea

#### *Section I. Historical Introduction*

(a) Submission of the question of Eritrea to the United Nations

1. Article 10 of the Conditions of Armistice signed by Italy on 3 September 1943 provided that the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces "will establish Allied military government over such parts of Italian territory as he may deem necessary in the military interests of the Allied nations". The administration of Eritrea which had been occupied in 1941 by the Allied armed forces was undertaken by the British Authorities, first through the Occupied Enemy Territories' Administration

and later through the Foreign Office Administration of African Territories.

2. Under the terms of the agreement establishing the Council of Foreign Ministers adopted at the Berlin Conference of 17 July-24 August 1945, it was agreed at the Moscow Conference of 16-27 December 1945 that the terms of the Treaty of Peace with Italy would be drafted by the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the Soviet Union and France.

3. At a meeting in Paris, the Council of Foreign Ministers adopted, on 3 July 1946, a draft article on the former Italian colonies and a draft joint declaration by the Four Powers, which, in conformity with decisions taken at the Paris Conference of 29 July-15 October 1946, became respectively article 23 and annex XI of the Treaty of Peace with Italy.

#### *"Article 23*

"1. Italy renounces all right and title to the Italian territorial possessions in Africa, i.e., Libya, Eritrea and Italian Somaliland.

"2. Pending their final disposal, the said possessions shall continue under their present administration.

"3. The final disposal of these possessions shall be determined jointly by the Governments of the Soviet Union, of the United Kingdom, of the United States of America, and of France within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty, in the manner laid down in the joint declaration of 10 February 1947, issued by the said Governments, which is reproduced in annex XI.

#### *"Annex XI*

"1. The Governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the United States of America, and of France agree that they will, within one year from the coming into force of the Treaty of Peace with Italy bearing the date of 10 February 1947, jointly determine the final disposal of Italy's territorial possessions in Africa, to which, in accordance with article 23 of the Treaty, Italy renounces all right and title.

2. The final disposal of the territories concerned and the appropriate adjustment of their boundaries shall be made by the Four Powers in the light of the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants and the interests of peace and security, taking into consideration the views of other interested Governments.

3. If with respect to any of these territories the Four Powers are unable to agree upon their disposal within one year from the coming into force of the Treaty of Peace with Italy, the matter shall be referred to the General Assembly of the United Nations for a recommendation, and the Four Powers agree to accept the recommendation and to take appropriate measures for giving effect to it.

4. The Deputies of the Foreign Ministers shall continue the consideration of the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies with a view to submitting to the Council of Foreign Ministers their recommendations on this matter. They shall also send out commissions of investigation to any of the former Italian colonies in order to supply the Deputies with the necessary data on this question and to ascertain the views of the local population.

4. The period of one year, referred to in paragraph 3 of the above joint declaration, began to run from 15 September 1947, in accordance with article 90 of the Treaty of Peace.

5. On 3 October 1947, the Deputies of the Foreign Ministers took up the question of the disposal of the former colonies in accordance with paragraph 4 of annex XI of the Treaty of Peace. It was decided that an investigation on the spot by representatives of the Four Powers would be carried out in the three former Italian colonies. The Four-Power Commission of Investigation for the former Italian colonies stayed in Eritrea from 12 November 1947 to 3 January 1948 and its report is dated 31 August 1948. It was also agreed to recognize as "interested Governments", for the purposes of paragraph 2 of annex XI of the Treaty of Peace, the Governments of the other Allied and Associated Powers having signed the Treaty of Peace with Italy, including both India and Pakistan, and also the Governments of Italy and Egypt. It was further decided that interested Governments should submit their views to the Deputies to be studied between the time the Commission left and the receipt of its report. Nineteen Governments were thus invited in the capacity of "interested Governments".

6. In the report of the Deputies of the four Foreign Ministers to the Council dated 1 September 1948, 1/ and in accordance with the views held by the four Governments at that time, which have been modified since, France proposed that "with the exception of the territo-

ries situated between the Gulf of Zula and French Somaliland, Eritrea should be placed under the trusteeship of Italy" and that "the territories situated between the Gulf of Zula and French Somaliland should be assigned to Ethiopia in full sovereignty". The Soviet Union recommended placing the former Italian colony of Eritrea "under the trusteeship of Italy for a definite acceptable term". The United Kingdom proposed that "Ethiopia should be appointed to be Administering Authority in Eritrea for a period of ten years"—after which "the General Assembly of the United Nations would decide whether, and if so under what conditions, Ethiopian administration should continue indefinitely". There should be set up an advisory council with the right to suspend any legislation on certain reserved subjects introduced by the Ethiopian Administration and a special Eritrean commission of the United Nations to which the advisory council and the Ethiopian Administration would report from time to time; this commission would be quite distinct either from the Trusteeship Council or the Trusteeship Committee of the General Assembly. The United States of America proposed that "the southern section of Eritrea (including the Danakil coast, and the districts of Akkele Guzai and Serae...)" be ceded to Ethiopia, and that the Foreign Ministers recommend to the General Assembly of the United Nations that the question of the disposition of "the remainder of Eritrea, that is, the northern and predominantly Moslem portion including Asmara and Massawa, be postponed for one year".

7. While the Soviet Union recommended that, in the case of all three former Italian colonies, the "frontiers which existed on 1 January 1934, fixed in accordance with treaties and agreements in force at that time concluded between the interested Governments concerned" should be maintained, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and France recommended that "the frontier between the territories assigned to Ethiopia and French Somaliland should follow the course of the Wadi Weima".

8. Upon the expiry of the period set in annex XI of the Treaty of Peace with Italy, the Council of Foreign Ministers had not reached any agreement.

(b) The question of Eritrea at the third and fourth regular sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations

9. On 15 September 1948, the Governments of France, the United Kingdom, the United States of Amer-

1/ Document C.F.M./D/L/48/IC/203 of the Council of Foreign Ministers (Deputies).

ica and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics addressed the following communication to the Secretary-General of the United Nations: 2/

"Paris, 15 September 1948

"On the instructions of the Governments of the United States of America, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics we have the honour to inform you that in application of article 23 and paragraph 3 of annex XI of the Treaty of Peace with Italy, the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies is referred to the General Assembly in order that, in conformity with its rules of procedure, the General Assembly may examine this question during the session which is to open on 21 September".

10. The question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies was considered at the second part of the third regular session by the First Committee which, on 13 May 1949, by 34 votes to 16, with 7 abstentions, 3/ decided to recommend the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution providing *inter alia* that Eritrea, except for the Western Province, be incorporated into Ethiopia. 4/ However, the General Assembly, by 37 votes to 14, with 7 abstentions, rejected the draft resolution 5/ and decided to postpone further consideration of the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies until its fourth regular session. 6/

11. At the fourth regular session, the First Committee appointed Sub-Committee 17 for the purpose of studying all drafts and suggestions and to propose a draft resolution or draft resolutions to settle the question of the former Italian colonies. 7/ Due to the fact that the available information on Eritrea was considered insufficient by several delegations, Sub-Committee 17 recommended the establishment of a United Nations Commission for Eritrea. 8/ On the report of this Sub-Committee, the First Committee recommended the adoption by the General Assembly of three resolutions, of which resolution A, section C, approved by the First Committee by 47 votes to 5, with 6 abstentions, 9/ provided for the establishment of this Commission. Resolution A as a whole which dealt with all three former Italian colonies was adopted by 49 votes to 1, with 8 abstentions. 10/

12. Section C of this resolution, concerning Eritrea, was adopted by the General Assembly on 21 November 1949 by 47 votes to 5, with 6 abstentions, 11/ and resolution A as a whole was adopted by 48 votes to 1, with 9 abstentions. 12/ This resolution was given the number 289 A (IV).

(c) Terms of Reference of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea

13. Section C of resolution 289(IV) reads as follows:

"With respect to Eritrea, [the General Assembly] recommends:

"1. That a Commission consisting of representatives of not more than five Member States, as follows: Burma, Guatemala, Norway, Pakistan and the Union of South Africa, shall be established to ascertain more fully the wishes and the best means of promoting the welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea, to examine the question of the disposal of Eritrea and to prepare a report for the General Assembly, together with such proposal or proposals as it may deem appropriate for the solution of the problem of Eritrea;

"2. That in carrying out its responsibilities the Commission shall ascertain all the relevant facts, including written or oral information from the present administering Power, from representatives of the population of the territory, including minorities, from Governments and from such organizations and individuals as it may deem necessary. In particular, the Commission shall take into account:

(a) The wishes and welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea, including the views of the various racial,

2/ A/645 (Official Records of the third session of the General Assembly, Part I, Plenary Meetings, Annexes to the summary records of meetings, pages 149-150).

3/ Official Records of the third session of the General Assembly, Part II, First Committee, summary records of meetings, page 394.

4/ Concerning the votes on the various paragraphs, paragraph 3 dealing with Eritrea was voted upon in two parts. The part referring to the disposal of Eritrea except for the Western Province was adopted by roll-call, by 36 votes to 6, with 15 abstentions. The part of paragraph 3 dealing with the disposal of the Western Province was rejected by roll-call, by 19 votes to 16, with 21 abstentions (Official Records of the third session of the General Assembly, Part II, First Committee, summary records of meetings, pages 393-394).

5/ Paragraph 3 dealing with Eritrea had been adopted by 37 votes to 11, with 10 abstentions (Official Records of the third session of the General Assembly, Part II, Plenary Meetings, summary records of meetings, pages 593-596).

6/ Official Records of the third session of the General Assembly Part II, Plenary Meetings, summary records of meetings, page 608.

7/ A/C.1/498 (Official Records of the fourth session of the General Assembly, First Committee, annexes to the summary records of meetings, page 24).

8/ A/C.1/522 (Official Records of the fourth session of the General Assembly, First Committee, Annexes to the summary records of meetings, page 25).

9/ A/1089 (Official Records of the fourth session of the General Assembly, Plenary Meetings, Annexes to the summary records of meetings, page 58).

10/ *Ibid.*

11/ Official Records of the fourth session of the General Assembly, Plenary Meetings, summary records of meetings, page 302.

12/ *Ibid.*

religious and political groups of the provinces or the territory and the capacity of the people for self-government;

(b) The interests of peace and security in East Africa;

(c) The rights and claims of Ethiopia based on geographical, historical, ethnic or economic reasons, including in particular Ethiopia's legitimate need for adequate access to the sea:

"3. That in considering its proposals the Commission shall take into account the various suggestions for the disposal of Eritrea submitted during the fourth regular session of the General Assembly;

"4. That the Commission shall assemble at the Headquarters of the United Nations as soon as possible. It shall travel to Eritrea and may visit such other places as in its judgment may be necessary in carrying out its responsibilities. The Commission shall adopt its own rules of procedure. Its report and proposal or proposals shall be communicated to the Secretary-General not later than 15 June 1950 for distribution to Member States so as to enable final consideration during the fifth regular session of the General Assembly. The Interim Committee of the General Assembly shall consider the report and proposal or proposals of the Commission and report, with conclusions, to the fifth regular session of the General Assembly".

Paragraph 1 of section D reads as follows:

"D. With respect to the above provisions [the General Assembly]:

"1. Invites the Secretary-General to request the necessary facilities from the competent authorities of each of the States in whose territory it may be necessary for the Commission for Eritrea to meet or travel".

#### Section II. Organization of the Commission

(a) Composition of the Commission and Secretariat 13/

14. In accordance with resolution 289 (IV), the Commission consisted of representatives of Burma, Guatemala, Norway, Pakistan and the Union of South Africa. The following representatives and alternates were appointed to constitute the Commission in representation of their respective countries: Mr. Justice Aung Khine and U Maung Maung Soe (Burma), Mr. Carlos García Bauer and Mr. Jose Luis Mendoza (Guatemala), Mr. Justice Erling Qvale and Mr. Ivar Lunde (Norway), Mr. Mian Ziaud-Din and Mr. Mir Mohamed Shaikh (Pakistan),

Major-General F. H. Theron and Mr. F. J. van Biljon (Union of South Africa). Their credentials were found to be in due form.

15. The Secretariat of the Commission, totalling twenty persons, was headed by Mr. Petrus J. Schmidt as Principal Secretary, together with a Deputy Principal Secretary, Mr. David Blickenstaff, and two Assistant Secretaries.

(b) Rules of procedure

16. At the third meeting, held on 7 February 1950, the Commission adopted 14/ its rules of procedure. 15/

(c) Election of officers

17. All the representatives on the Commission were not present at the first meeting held at Lake Success on 10 January 1950, and as the Commission had not yet considered its rules of procedure, it was decided to elect a temporary Chairman. Mr. Justice Aung Khine (Burma) was unanimously elected temporary Chairman. 16/

18. At its third meeting, held on 7 February 1950, the Commission elected Mr. Justice Erling Qvale (Norway), Chairman, and Mr. Mian Ziaud-Din (Pakistan) Rapporteur.

19. At the 36th meeting, held on 31 March 1950, the Commission decided unanimously to amend its rules of procedure to provide that the office of Chairman would be assumed in future by representatives in rotation in the English alphabetical order of the names of the members for a period of seven days at a time. 17/ Accordingly, the Chairmanship of the Commission was assumed by representatives as follows:

31 March-6 April: Mr. Aung Khine (Burma);

7 April-13 April: Mr. Carlos García Bauer (Guatemala);

14 April-20 April: Mr. Erling Qvale (Norway);

21 April-27 April: Mr. Mian Ziaud-Din (Pakistan);

28 April-4 May: Major-General F. H. Theron (Union of South Africa);

5 May-11 May: Mr. Aung Khine (Burma);

12 May-18 May: Mr. Carlos García Bauer 18/ (Guatemala);

13/ Complete lists of delegations and Secretariat staff are given in annexes 1, 2 and 3 of this report.

14/ AJAC.34/SR.3, paragraph 38.

15/ AJAC.34/R.4.

16/ AJAC.34/SR.1, paragraph 14.

17/ AJAC.34/SR.36, paragraph 2, and AJAC.34/R.153.

18/ Due to the resignation on 16 May 1950 of Mr. García Bauer, he was replaced for the remainder of his term as Chairman by Mr. Qvale who served as Acting Chairman.

19 May-25 May: Mr. Erling Qvale (Norway);

26 May-1 June: Mr. Mian Ziaud-Din (Pakistan);

2 June-8 June: Major-General F. H. Theron (Union of South Africa).

(d) Subsidiary bodies

20. Sub-Commission I, comprising representatives of all five members of the Commission, was established by a resolution adopted at the seventh meeting, held on 18 February 1950, to investigate all the economic aspects of the evidence presented and available to the Commission. 19/

21. Sub-Commission I elected Mr. van Biljon (Union of South Africa) and Mr. Maung Maung Soe (Burma) as Chairman and Rapporteur, respectively. It held twenty-two meetings and submitted its report to the Commission on 8 May 1950. 20/

22. The Commission also set up three working groups at various stages in its work. When it became necessary, the Commission divided itself into two field groups.

#### Chapter II

Summary of the main activities of the Commission

##### Section I. Programme of Work

23. The Commission held seventy meetings, of which forty were public meetings and forty-four private in all or in part. 21/ The first and last meetings were held on 10 January 1950 and 8 June 1950 respectively.

24. On 15 February 1950, at 10 a.m., the flag of the United Nations was raised at the gate of the Palace grounds at Asmara by the Principal Secretary. The Chairman of the Commission addressed those attending the ceremony, who included members of the Commission and the Secretariat, officials of the British Administration and local Press representatives.

25. The Commission established a Working Group to prepare a programme of work and visits which was adopted and later adjusted as circumstances required. A complete schedule of the day-to-day meetings, visits and hearings of the Commission, detailing the witnesses heard, is included in annex 17 [not reproduced here].

##### Section II. Information from and Relations with the Administering Power

26. The Commission addressed to the British Administration-Eritrea four questionnaires or requests for information 22/ on political, economic and ethnographic subjects.

27. Following a communication from the British Administration, 23/ the Commission, at its 12th meeting,

held on 24 February 1950, adopted 24/ the following statement: 25/

"The Commission has no intention to disclose at the moment any information received from the British Administration. The papers submitted by the Chief Administrator will be given a restricted circulation and their contents will not be disclosed until the drafting of the report of the Commission, when disclosure might be necessary for that purpose." 26/

The British Administration thereafter addressed a series of replies to the Commission's communications. 27/

28. Further, the Commission communicated with the British Administration on various subjects when clarification or explanations were required in connexion with its work or that of its subsidiary bodies and when it was considered that the Administration could provide information on the matter.

##### Section III. Information from Representatives of the Population of the Territory, including Minorities

(a) Communiqué to the inhabitants of Eritrea

29. At the fifth meeting, held on 14 February 1950, the Commission approved the following communiqué: 28/

"Communiqué by the Commission to the inhabitants of Eritrea inviting written statements by individuals or groups:

"The United Nations Commission for Eritrea extends its greetings to the people of Eritrea.

19/ AJAC.34/R.15.

20/ Reservation by the delegation of Guatemala:

"In the meeting held on 29 April 1950, the Guatemalan delegation requested that the part of the rules of procedure relating to the rotation of Chairmanship should be applied in Sub-Commission I. The Chairman, Mr. van Biljon, refused to apply this rule."

21/ Reservation by the delegation of Guatemala:

"The Guatemalan delegation places on record that it was always opposed to the practice of holding private meetings without justified reason as it considers this contrary to the tradition of the United Nations."

22/ AJAC.34/R.21, AJAC.34/R.28, AJAC.34/R.58 and AJAC.34/R.84.

23/ AJAC.34/R.27.

24/ AJAC.34/SR.12, paragraph 14.

25/ AJAC.34/R.34.

26/ Reservation by the delegation of Guatemala:

"The Guatemalan delegation was opposed to the adoption of this resolution because this secrecy obstructed or made difficult the necessary verifying of information received from an interested source."

27/ AJAC.34/R.47, AJAC.34/R.49, AJAC.34/R.81 and Add.1, AJAC.34/R.68, AJAC.34/R.69, AJAC.34/R.70, AJAC.34/R.101, AJAC.34/R.132, AJAC.34/R.133, AJAC.34/R.129, AJAC.34/R.163, AJAC.34/R.166.

"The Commission has been appointed by the General Assembly of the United Nations with instructions to ascertain the wishes and the best means of promoting the welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea, and to report to the General Assembly with proposals for the future of Eritrea.

"In carrying out its responsibilities, the Commission will ascertain all the relevant facts and will consult the present Administering Power, other Governments, and representatives of the population, including such minorities, organizations and individuals as it may deem necessary. The Commission will take into account the views of the various racial, religious and political groups of Eritrea.

"The Commission has, therefore, decided to invite any individual or any group of individuals from among the inhabitants of Eritrea who so desire to send, as soon as possible and not later than 28 February 1950, to the Commission at its headquarters in Asmara any written statement relating to the future status of Eritrea.

"Such statements may, if it is desired, give the names of representatives whom the Commission might invite for oral hearings. The Commission may, in the future, issue further invitations with regard to the consultations which it may desire to hold with the inhabitants of Eritrea".

- (b) Request that the British Administration issue a proclamation

30. At the 12th and 13th meetings of the Commission, the representatives of a political group requested guarantees that all persons should be allowed to appear freely before the Commission, and an allegation, subsequently denied by the persons concerned, was also made that the leader of the parties of the group had been prevented from appearing by the Administration. The following resolution was adopted by the Commission at its 15th meeting, held on 25 February 1950: 29/

*"The United Nations Commission for Eritrea*

*"Decides*

"That in order to avoid all likelihood of certain allegations as made yesterday before the Commission, the Commission requests the British Administration in Eritrea to issue a proclamation to the population that all persons are free to express to the Commission their views about the future of Eritrea, and that any such expressions will not render them liable to disapprobation of any kind on the part of

the Administration, and that they will receive all possible protection".

31. A letter dated 28 February 1950 30/ was addressed by the Administering Authority to the Principal Secretary together with the following draft notice to the public:

"The Chief Administrator wishes to emphasize that all persons resident in Eritrea enjoy the utmost freedom to express to the United Nations Commission their views about the future of Eritrea, and that they will be afforded all possible protection by the Administration in the expression of such views both at the time and subsequently during the continuance of the British Administration. He wishes also to mention that, because of the limited time available to the Commission, and the importance of the work on which they are engaged, all statements made should be relevant to the terms of reference of the Commission and should, furthermore, when dealing with matters of fact only consist of such information as can be substantiated. He regrets to observe that many statements have been made in public to the Commission which are untrue and can be of no value to the Commission in their difficult task".

The Commission, at its 18th meeting, held on 3 March 1950, took note of the British communication. 31/

32. The Administering Authority published the proclamation in the Eritrean Press on 19 March 1950.

- (c) Hearings and visits 32/

33. The Commission heard representatives of the various political parties, of commercial and other organizations, of the Coptic Church and Moslem religious personages, at Asmara. It visited the other main centres of Eritrea and toured the countryside, either as a whole or in two field groups, and held sixty-four hearings at thirty-seven centres with the local representatives of the inhabitants. Where possible, the Commission inspected manufacturing and other establishments of interest.

- (d) Resolution of thanks to the people of Eritrea

34. The Commission, at its 42nd meeting, held on 6 April 1950, adopted the following resolution: 33/

*"The United Nations Commission for Eritrea*

*"Resolves*

29/ A/AC.34/R.35.

30/ A/AC.34/R.40.

31/ A/AC.34/SR.18, paragraph 1.

32/ See annexes 17 and 18, Map 2 of this report [not reproduced here].

33/ A/AC.34/R.175.

"To thank the people of Eritrea, for their hospitality and co-operation with the Commission and for their commendable conduct at the hearings in Asmara as well as in the field, thus contributing largely towards the completion of its task in this country".

*Section IV. Consultations with the Governments of Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy and the United Kingdom*

- (a) Invitation to the Governments of Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy and the United Kingdom

35. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 289 A (IV), section C, the Commission decided to invite the Governments of Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy and the United Kingdom to express their views concerning the future of Eritrea and to provide such information as they might believe useful to the Commission. Suitable letters were addressed to these Governments on 3 March 1950 in which it was indicated that the Commission would be prepared, provided the respective Governments so desired, to engage in direct consultations with each of them:

- (a) At Addis Ababa during the first week of April (letter to Ethiopia);  
(b) At Cairo during the second week of April (letter to Egypt);  
(c) At Rome during the third week of April (letter to Italy);  
(d) During the first three weeks of April at a time and place found to be mutually convenient (letters to France and to the United Kingdom).

The programme of work was subsequently modified and the changed dates for the visits were later communicated to the respective Governments.

- (b) Consultations with the Government of the United Kingdom

36. The following letter, dated 24 February 1950, 34/ was addressed to the Principal Secretary by the Special Liaison Officer of the British Administration-Eritrea to the Commission:

"I have, as agreed between us, consulted my Government informally as to the manner in which they wish, as an interested Government, to place their views before the Commission and I have been informed that they are quite willing to present them in written form to the Commission here in Asmara, provided that those views are not published so long as the Commission is actually in this territory. They would wish of course to be in a position to answer any questions upon their views and to submit any supplementary oral testimony at a later stage, but to avoid complications it would be preferable if this stage could be delayed until the Commission has

written its report, which I understand will take place in Geneva.

"Perhaps you would let me know what the next step should be".

37. The Commission, at its 16th meeting, held on 28 February 1950, adopted the following resolution: 35/

"Considering the letter from the Special Liaison Officer, B.A.E., dated 24 February 1950.

*"The United Nations Commission for Eritrea*

*"Decides* to inform the British Administration that the Commission will gladly accept the views of the United Kingdom Government in written form here in Asmara, and

*"Agrees* not to publish these views so long as the Commission is actually in this territory".

38. The Special Liaison Officer, British Administration-Eritrea, transmitted to the Commission a "Statement of the views of His Majesty's Government regarding the disposal of Eritrea laid before the United Nations Commission for Eritrea at Asmara on 18 March 1950". 36/

39. Further, the Commission, during its 30th meeting, held on 28 April in Geneva, heard the representative of the United Kingdom Government, Mr. Frank E. Stafford, Special Liaison Officer. 37/

- (c) Consultations with the Government of Ethiopia

40. The Commission, at its 24 meeting, held on 13 March 1950, adopted the following resolution: 38/

*"The United Nations Commission for Eritrea*

*"Decides*

*"To visit* such other towns and places in Ethiopia besides Addis Ababa as can be conveniently arranged in consultation with the Ethiopian Government".

41. The Commission further discussed the matter of its consultations with the Government of, and its visit to, Ethiopia at its 29th, 30th, 31st, 34th, 36th, 37th and 42nd meetings and it adopted various resolutions. 39/ In this connexion, a number of communications 40/ were received from the Government of Ethiopia, and the Commission at its

34/ A/AC.34/R.32.

35/ A/AC.34/R.43.

36/ A/AC.34/R.89 (annex 4 of this report [not reproduced here]).

37/ A/AC.34/SR.50, Part I (see annex 5 of this report [not reproduced here]).

38/ A/AC.34/R.73.

39/ A/AC.34/R.119, A/AC.34/R.122, A/AC.34/SR.36.

40/ A/AC.34/R.98, A/AC.34/R.99, A/AC.34/R.118, A/AC.34/R.128, A/AC.34/R.156, A/AC.34/R.158.

51st meeting, held on 25 March 1950, heard Mr. Deressa, the Ethiopian Minister of Commerce and Industry.

42. In conformity with its revised programme of work, 41/ the Commission was in Ethiopia, on the invitation of that Government, between 9 and 12 April, when it visited Gondar, educational, medical and other establishments in and around Addis Ababa and the Ethiopian Air Force training school at Bishoftu. 42/

43. At the 43rd meeting of the Commission, held on 10 April, 43/ Mr. Aklilou Abte Wold, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, made a statement giving the views of the Ethiopian Government. 44/ Consultations with the Government of Ethiopia continued during the 44th meeting, held on 11 April, 43/ and a letter dated 28 April 1950, transmitting "Supplementary remarks and observations" was addressed to the Commission by the Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs. 45/

(d) Consultations with the Government of Egypt

44. The Commission visited Egypt between 12 and 17 April 1950. At its 46th meeting, held on 15 April, it heard Mohamed Salah El-Din Bey, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who made a statement giving the views of the Government of Egypt. 46/

(e) Consultations with the Government of Italy

45. The Commission visited Italy between 17 and 20 April. A letter dated 17 April from Count Sforza, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, giving the views of the Italian Government, was addressed to the Chairman of the Commission. 47/

(f) Consultations with the Government of France

46. On 20 April 1950, in Rome, a letter was received by the Chairman of the Commission from the French Ambassador to the Italian Government, transmitting a communication from Mr. Robert Schuman, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs and giving the views of the French Government. 48/

#### Section V. Drafting of the Report

47. The general debate on the question of the disposal of Eritrea took place at Geneva during the 51st, 52nd, 58th, 59th, 63rd and 64th meetings held between 3 and 17 May 1950.

48. After the draft of chapters I and II of the report 49/ had been considered in the first reading, the Commission discussed the procedure to be followed with regard to subsequent chapters of the report and adopted, at its 65th meeting, held on 19 May 1950, the following resolution: 50/

"The United Nations Commission for Eritrea

#### "Decides

"That its report to the General Assembly will contain chapters I and II of the draft report as they will be approved in the second reading, to which will be attached any memoranda submitted individually or jointly by the various delegations, setting forth their views regarding the relevant facts and the solutions which they consider appropriate for the disposal of Eritrea, and a volume of annexes, containing the documents which the Commission may decide to include;

"That delegations are requested that their memoranda should not exceed twenty-five double-space typed pages per delegation;

"That these memoranda will be conveyed to the Rapporteur as early as possible and not later than 2 June 1950 and will be distributed by the Secretariat to the members of the Commission as soon as they are received;

"That after the receipt of the memoranda by the Rapporteur, a meeting of the Commission will be convened for the purpose of including these memoranda in the report and of approving the ultimate paragraphs of the report and its subsequent presentation".

49. Draft chapters I and II as approved during the first reading 51/ were considered in the second reading at the 66th meeting of the Commission, held on 20 May 1950. The memoranda submitted by the various delegations on 2 June 1950, in accordance with the above resolution, were subsequently included in the report and not discussed by the Commission.

50. The final draft report, drawn up in accordance with the above resolution, was submitted to the Commission during its 67th meeting held on 6 June 1950, and was approved by the Commission during its 69th meeting, held on 8 June 1950.

40/ A/C.34/R.98, A/C.34/R.99, A/C.34/R.118, A/C.34/R.128, A/C.34/R.156, A/C.34/R.158.

41/ A/C.34/R.157.

42/ A/C.34/R.169.

43/ See annex 7 of this report.

44/ A/C.34/SR.43, appendix A (annex 6 of this report [not reproduced here]).

45/ A/C.34/R.187 (annex 8 of this report [not reproduced here]).

46/ A/C.34/SR.46, Part I (see annexes 9 and 10 of this report [not reproduced here]).

47/ A/C.34/SR.47, appendix A (annex 11 of this report [not reproduced here]).

48/ A/C.34/R.182 (annex 12 of this report [not reproduced here]).

49/ A/C.34/R.183/Rev.1, A/C.34/R.186, A/C.34/R.192, A/C.34/R.195.

50/ A/C.34/R.197.

51/ A/C.34/R.196 and Add.1.

51. The Commission desires to express to the British Administration-Eritrea, and to the Governments of Egypt, Ethiopia and Italy its appreciation for the courtesies and facilities which were extended to it during the course of its work.

52. The Commission also expresses its appreciation of the work of the Secretariat and the service which it rendered in the arduous task of the Commission. 52/

#### MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY THE DELEGATIONS OF BURMA, NORWAY AND THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

##### Part I: Factual Review of the Problem of Eritrea

###### I. Introductory statement

53. In terms of resolution 289 A (IV) of the General Assembly, the Commission's report has to be in the hands of the Secretary-General not later than 15 June 1950. By 19 May 1950, the Commission had, however, only concluded the first reading of the two opening chapters of the report. The drafting of the substantive chapters of the report had not even been commenced; indeed, their draft outline had not by then been examined by the Commission in order to give a guide to the Rapporteur.

54. The Commission had concluded its general debate on the problem of Eritrea, but this discussion had shown that, as between some delegations, there were marked differences in regard to essential factual matters, and no way of bridging them had been revealed. An objective approach to the facts of the case, leading to a measure of agreement on them, is clearly a prerequisite to the formulation of the best solution for Eritrea. But in the circumstances mentioned, an agreed factual report by the Commission was precluded.

55. In addition, only three more weeks were available to the Commission and it was obvious that a far longer time would be needed for the Commission to prepare a comprehensive report, with the lengthy discussion, roll-call votes and numerous reservations which would certainly have been entailed.

56. The delegations of Burma, Norway and the Union of South Africa accordingly felt themselves compelled to support a resolution by the Commission on 19 May 1950, that chapters I and II, together with joint or separate memoranda on their views by the various delegations and a selected appendix of documents, be submitted as the Commission's report.

57. The delegations of Burma, Norway and the Union of South Africa herewith submit a memorandum consisting of two parts. Part I outlines the facts surrounding the problem of Eritrea. Part II contains the proposals by the three delegations for a solution of the problem.

#### II. Eritrea, its people and economy

##### A. Geography and population

###### Size and location

58. Eritrea is about 50,000 square miles in size. It adjoins Ethiopia along a broad front on the south, largely following the upper reaches of the Gash and Setit rivers. It stretches northwards triangularly, along the bulging Sudan border on the west and from the south of Port Sudan for 200 miles along the Red Sea to the Gulf of Zula. Below Zula, Eritrea has a long, narrow appendage, a strip of Dankalia desert, stretching a further 250 miles south along the Red Sea as far as French Somaliland, but only some 40 miles inland along an imaginary line parallel to the coast and forming Eritrea's western border with Ethiopia.

###### Topography and density of population

59. The Ethiopian uplands abut into Eritrea on its south, to form the central Eritrean plateau, often fragmented by sheer mountains and with an altitude ranging from 6,000 to 8,000 feet. These highlands comprise the administrative Divisions of Serae and Akkele Guzai in the south and the Division of Hamasien, with the capital, Asmara, towards the north. Though only 24 per cent of the area of Eritrea, these three Divisions have 56 per cent of the population.

60. The central highlands fall off steeply to the east where Massawa and the surrounding area, together with the Zula peninsula and Dankalia, form the Red Sea administrative Division, a dry, torrid and scantily populated region. It represents 22 per cent of the total area but has only 11 per cent of the population of Eritrea.

61. North of Asmara, around Keren, the altitude falls to 4,000 feet and the mountains become very broken. In the far north they become hilly in their descent to the Tokar region of the Sudan; to the east they slope steeply to the Red Sea plain but to the west more gradually to the Sudan plains. This whole area forms the Western Province Administrative Division, comprising 54 per cent of the area of Eritrea and a third of its people. The eastern Red Sea plain of this Division, like the northern hill country and the north-western steppe region, is dry and hot; only the Keren mountain area and the hilly and wooded region between the Setit river bordering Ethiopia and the Gash river have a better climate.

###### The diversity of the Eritrean people

62. The indigenous Eritreans are estimated at one million and, according to available statistics, have trebled

52/ Reservation by the delegation of Guatemala: "The delegation of Guatemala while recognizing the worthy and valuable contribution of a certain part of the staff of the Secretariat regrets that it is not able to accept a declaration of such general character."



in the last fifty years. The two principal language groups are in origin Semitic and their Tigrinya and Tigré languages, like Amharic which is spoken in Central Ethiopia and is the official language of the Ethiopian Empire, spring from a common root, Geez, the ancient language of Ethiopia which has survived only in Coptic liturgy. Tigrinya uses Geez characters; Tigré can be written both in Geez and Arabic script. The Tigrinya and Tigré languages are based on a common origin and structure rather than on recognizable similarity, and as now spoken they are mutually unintelligible. The Tigrinya-speaking people are mostly Copts and the Tigré-speaking groups mostly Moslem. In the west and east of Eritrea are representatives of the race habitually using languages of the Hamitic type, principally the Beni-Amer tribes, some of whom still use Beja, the tribes of the Danakil who speak a language of their own, and possibly the tribes on the eastern edge of the central plateau speaking a language called Saho; most of these tribes are Moslem. Arabic has been adopted as a second language by sections of the western tribes to whom Arab culture has spread, and it is almost the lingua franca of the Mohammedan quarter in the Eritrean towns. Neither the Hamitic nor Semitic linguistic groups are racially pure, they have absorbed so much alien blood from each other and from negroid and other groups that the term race is hardly applicable to them. A distinctive racial group is represented by small tribes of negroid or nilotic origin in the south-west of Eritrea.

63. These various population groups have different economic habits, different forms of social organization and largely live in different areas though the boundaries are blurred by seasonal migrations and overlapping of tribal areas. The central Eritrean highlands have a practically solid block of some 470,000 settled cultivators, Coptic in religion and Tigrinya-speaking. They live in villages, nestling against the mountains with a Coptic church prominent on the hill-top. These people are organized in kinship groups of families claiming descent from a common ancestor, but they, in effect, form small territorial units since the hereditary land right is corporate and vested in the kinship group. Elected councils of elders manage the communal affairs and chiefs were unknown until appointed by the Italians. There are close affinities between the highland dwellers and those of the adjoining Tigray Province of Ethiopia. Their language and religion are the same; inter-marriage is frequent, and so is migratory use of grazing in the Tigray. The central highlands have only 72,000 rural Moslems; some are settled in small groups throughout the area, but the main concentration is toward the eastern escarpment where the semi-nomadic Saho-speaking tribes live. In winter they move to the Red Sea foothills for grazing where, if

possible, some cultivate quick-maturing crops, returning to the plateau in the summer.

64. Adjoining the Saho tribes are the Danakil tribes, pure nomads speaking Danakil, a language distantly related to Saho. Both groups are organized on a kinship basis, with an elective chieftainship for each kinship group. Appointed tribal chiefs were introduced by the Italians. The Saho-speaking tribes never acquired any unity. A common language and religion and a common need for protection have developed a sense of cohesion amongst the Danakil.

65. Western, northern and eastern Eritrea are inhabited by numerous nomadic tribes of greatly varying size and language, yet united to some extent by the common religion of Islam. The Beni-Amer tribes predominate in numbers and mostly speak Tigré, but some speak Beja or are bilingual. With the advent long ago of new tribes in the north-west, a division of society into aristocratic and serf classes occurred, which in part still exists although feudal dues have been abolished by the British Administration. Tribal organization on a territorial basis is precluded by the nomadic nature of the tribes; it, therefore, developed on a kinship basis, with elective councils of elders and elective chiefs. Tribal chieftainship by appointment was introduced by the Italians and still exists.

66. The Keren mountain area, owing to its better rainfall, is largely inhabited by sedentary peasants. There is a block of Tigrinya-speaking Copts south of Keren in the so-called Abyssinian Districts, and a distinctive Belein-speaking tribe lives around Keren. The negroid or nilotic groups of Eritrea are located in the south-west, between the Setit and Gash rivers; they are mainly agriculturalists, speak two languages of their own and are still regarded as an inferior race by their Coptic and Moslem neighbours.

67. The bulk of the population of Eritrea is rural and 847,000 or 78 per cent of the estimated total of 1,067,000 are so classified. Since 1933, considerable urbanization of the indigenous Eritreans has, however, occurred. The main concentrations are in the capital, Asmara, and in the Red Sea port, Massawa, which respectively account for 126,000 and 26,000, or for a total of 152,000 of the estimated urban population of 219,000. The indigenous population of Asmara is predominantly Coptic, that of Massawa and other centres mainly Moslem. Many rural Eritreans have become detribalized and in their new surroundings have acquired a use of Italian.

68. In the light of the foregoing, the population statistics of Eritrea are tabulated below, showing the diversity of the situation in broad outline:

Estimated geographical distribution, religion, language and way of life of the Eritrean people by administrative divisions

Grouping	Highlands	Red Sea	Western Province	Total
<b>(a) Size and density:</b>				
Percentage of total area	24	22	54	100
Percentage of population:				
Rural	53	8	39	100
Rural + urban	56	11	33	100
<b>(b) Religion of indigenous people:</b>				
Moslem	104,000	105,000	315,000	524,000
Christian	470,000	2,000	34,000	506,000
Pagan	-	-	8,000	8,000
Total	574,000	107,000	357,000	1,038,000
<b>(c) Rural population:</b>				
<b>(i) Way of life:</b>				
Settled agriculturalists	388,000	17,000	80,000	485,000
Nomadic	62,000	47,000	254,000	363,000
Total	450,000	64,000	334,000	848,000
<b>(ii) Language:</b>				
Tigrinya	387,000	-	9,000	396,000
Tigré	-	29,000	243,000	272,000
Saho	63,000	7,000	-	70,000
Belein	-	-	37,000	37,000
Danakil	-	28,000	-	28,000
Other	-	-	45,000	45,000
Total	450,000	64,000	334,000	848,000
<b>(d) Urban population:</b>				
Moslem	31,000	41,000	17,000	89,000
Christian	93,000	2,000	6,000	101,000
Asiatic	5,000	1,000	2,000	8,000
European	19,000	1,500	500	21,000
Total	148,000	45,500	25,500	219,000
<b>TOTAL RURAL AND URBAN POPULATION ((c)(i)+(d))</b>	<b>598,000</b>	<b>109,500</b>	<b>359,500</b>	<b>1,067,000</b>

#### The administrative and judicial system

69. In view of the form of social organization existing in the village communities and amongst the nomadic kinship groups, their day-to-day affairs are regulated internally through that medium. District and tribal chiefs, appointed and paid by the Administration as in Italian times, are, however, responsible for the relations with the Administration of the groups of villages

and nomads under their control. These chiefs act as the general agents of the Administration in their areas and tribes, collect the annual Native tribute, perform certain judicial functions and convey administrative orders to the population. The chiefs act through unpaid subordinate chiefs, village headmen and heads of tribal sections designated by the Administration. It maintains direct contact with the rural communities through senior divisional officers, assisted by divisional officers. The main towns

of Eritrea are generally divided into European and non-European quarters; the affairs of the former are conducted by municipalities under close supervision of the Administration, while the latter are administered through chiefs appointed and paid by the Administration.

70. Apart from the employment of Eritreans in subordinate clerical and other grades, the British Administration has sought to train Eritreans for superior posts, but few have the requisite education. Eighteen Eritrean administrative assistants are being trained to replace British administrative officers and other Eritreans are being recruited. In the police, fifty-five Eritreans hold posts of police inspectors, and in accordance with their capacity some of them have been put in charge of the smaller police stations.

71. In the judicial system, the Eritreans play a growing role. The tribunals which have jurisdiction in all civil cases as between Europeans, and as between Europeans and non-Europeans, have Italian judges appointed by the Administration. The village headmen and heads of tribal sections appointed by the Administration have jurisdiction as judges of the first instance in civil cases between parties of the same religion and community. Sharia courts administer Sharia law in civil cases as between Moslems. The British Administration has, in addition, created Native courts, whose members are Eritreans, with jurisdiction in penal cases against non-Europeans under specific Italian or British laws, and also in civil cases between non-Europeans if customary law is applicable. There are three courts of appeal in the territory, presided over by European judges.

#### Educational standards of the Eritrean people

72. The educational standard of the Eritrean people is low. According to the Intellectual Association of Eritreans, only one of whose members holds a university degree, some 70 per cent of the people are illiterate. As yet, a little less than 10,000 Eritrean children attend school, which is approximately 6 per cent of the Eritrean population of school age.

#### Other communities in Eritrea

73. There are small Greek, Arab, Jewish, Indian and Sudanese communities in the Eritrean towns, mainly engaged in trading, though many of the Arabs are labourers. The Italian communities are larger and occupy a special position in that they supply the country with artisans, technicians, professional men and entrepreneurs, in view of the inadequate standards of education and training of the Eritreans. Before the preparations for the Italo-Ethiopian war, the number of Italians living in Eritrea, mainly in the towns but sometimes as farm colonists, was limited to about 5,000. Thereafter the

number of Italians increased considerably but figures of the Italian civil population are not available. Since the British occupation of Eritrea, the Italian population has progressively declined, from 60,000 in 1941 to 20,000 by March 1950. The Associazione Meticci dell'Eritrea estimates that the territory has 25,000 half-castes (including Eritrean mothers); many of them are associated with the Italians in the economic role they play in Eritrea.

#### Capacity of the people for self-government

74. Despite its small population, Eritrea is, therefore, a mosaic of religious and linguistic groups, and as will be shown later, acute political differences have now arisen on the basic question of its future. To govern such a country would be no easy task and the fact cannot be escaped that at present the Eritrean people lack the capacity for the self-government of Eritrea entirely on their own. There is no Eritrean intelligentsia to draw on for the purpose; the bulk of the people are illiterate; and only 6 per cent of the children attend school. Moreover, the leaders of the community have no knowledge of the responsibilities of government and possess no administrative or judicial experience other than in the regulation of tribal affairs and the application of customary law.

#### B. Eritrea's farming resources

##### Climate, land-use and waterworks

75. The rainfall map published as appendix D of annex 13 [not reproduced here] is based on official Italian and British rainfall records since 1938. It shows that the territory is largely sub-desert, and not a tenth of it receives twenty inches of rain a year, the minimum needed for stable crop production in warm climates.

76. The Red Sea plain receives winter rains, almost nil in Dankalia and only eight inches in the north, so that the whole area is largely desert; in summer the heat is intense. The rest of Eritrea has summer rains, except a small area on the eastern slopes of the highlands, around Ghinda and Fil-Fil, which receives summer and winter rains; with a total of forty inches this small area is a green oasis. On the highlands, the climate is equable and a rainfall of twenty inches fairly assured, but it is torrential and restricted to three to four months; the other months are dry and dusty. Around Keren the rainfall declines to fourteen inches, and to less in the north and south-west, so that most of the extensive western lowlands are too dry for crops; in summer they are hot and malarial. In the south-western corner, between the Setit and Gash rivers, the rainfall averages twenty inches, but it rains in strips and there are wide seasonal fluctuations so that crop production is shifting and precarious; the scarcity of

underground supplies of drinking water, common to the adjoining Sudanese plains, is a further obstacle.

77. The low rainfall permanently limits crop production in Eritrea. It severely hampers afforestation too as seedlings in plantations actually have to be watered in the dry months, otherwise less than 15 per cent survive after three years; in addition, the highland mountains which need re-afforestation most have often been eroded down to the bare rock. On account of the low rainfall, most of Eritrea is fit only for a migratory form of animal husbandry. The pattern of land-use is as follows:

#### Possibilities of land-use in Eritrea

	Acres	Percentage
Cultivable land	80,000	2.6
Wooded	1,520,000	5.0
Scrub	1,543,000	6.0
Grazing	23,069,000	74.7
Waste land	3,525,000	11.5
Mineral reservations	55,000	0.2
Total	30,792,000	100.0

The low percentage of cultivable land in Eritrea is common to other arid regions of Africa and not to its centre or south. In comparison with other African countries, however, the pressure of population in Eritrea is inordinate; the density of population per square mile of cultivable land is 700 in Eritrea, as against 30 in Ethiopia 53/ where the rainfall is much higher, and 1,420 in Egypt 53/ with its assured water supply and fertile delta.

78. The low rainfall, furthermore, limits the possibilities of irrigation in Eritrea. There is not a single river that runs for more than three months of the year, except the Setit on the frontier which originates in Ethiopia. River irrigation takes the form of flooding. The flood water is diverted to adjacent banked-in fields, either by means of a series of earth banks in the river beds as in the eastern lowlands, where little water now reaches the sea, or by permanent works as at Tessenei on the Gash river; most of its water which has not to be diverted to the Sudan cotton fields by agreement between the Governments is used by the Ali Gidr estate at Tessenei. On the Setit, to the northern bank of which Eritrea has access, little irrigation development has yet occurred and would involve pumping.

79. Extensive waterworks and hydro-electric development in the territory are also precluded by the low and seasonal rainfall. Twenty years ago, 54/ the popular theory was that the many gorges from the highlands to the eastern lowlands should be dammed in order to regulate the flood flow. Today, the Eritrean Chamber of

Commerce and the Italo-Eritrean Association assert that the deficient agricultural output and the absence of power supplies could both be solved by series of small dams on the highlands, to catch the run-off by means of canals and to regulate the flow to the eastern lowlands for irrigation purposes, coupled with hydroelectric works along the steep decline. The author of this plan, however, declared that security conditions had prevented him from traversing the territory to test "its real possibilities". It does not in any case seem to bear examination. Regularity of flow is a first principle of hydro-electric generation, whereas the lowland cultivators need the water over a few months; surplus flood water which now disappears in the sandy river-beds, moreover, feeds the water-holes of the nomadic herdsmen lower down. Furthermore, the recordings at the series of catchment dams supplying Asmara show an annual evaporation loss of 50 per cent, with the high altitude of 8,000 feet and warm cloudless days. The optimistic view of the Italo-Eritrean Association 55/ that apart from the projected long-term waterworks, it would be possible to raise Eritrea's cereal yields seven-fold by planting the seed in rows instead of sowing it, has no basis in fact.

80. While the Eritrean highlands have the best rainfall, the region is very broken except around Asmara and in the Serae, where they flatten out. In consequence cultivable soil is extremely scarce. The small fields hug the mountain sides and are very stony so that the steel-pointed wooden plough, drawn by two oxen, and merely scratching the meagre soil, is the only suitable implement in most of the highlands. Rudimentary terracing is practised but proper levelling is rare and the communal system of land tenure does not make for improvement as it provides no individual security of occupation. The highland mountains have themselves long been denuded of trees and soil. In result, this densely populated region, so vital to the agricultural economy of Eritrea, has lost much of its fertility and is rapidly eroding further. The food waters of the Gash river, which originates in the highlands, carry as much as 8 to 10 per cent of soil particles. The soil thus carried away by the seasonal run-off is deposited in the eastern and western lowlands of Eritrea or outside its borders. It is there that irrigation is practised on the rich alluvial soil, to the extent that the supply of flood water permits.

#### Farming output and productivity

81. It is apparent that Eritrea is an inherently poor agricultural country. It is short of water, and short of cultivable land where there is water. As a result, an

53/ H. Shantz, "Agricultural Regions of Africa", *Economic Geography*, March 1943, page 157.

54/ G. Dainelli, "The Italian Colonies", *The Geographical Review*, July 1929.

55/ AJAC.34/SR.26, paragraph 37.

average of only 250 lbs. of cereals and legumes are produced yearly per rural dweller, with an average per capita holding of 1 1/2 cattle and 2 1/2 goats. Compared with Egypt's yield of 2.3 metric tons of cereals and pulses per hectare, or 0.8 to 1 metric ton per hectare in the Middle East, Eritrea's yield is only 0.5. 56/ As 78 per cent of Eritrea's population subsists on farming, the effect of its low productivity on the economy of Eritrea as a whole is obvious, both now and in the future, since no large-scale alternative form of employment exists.

82. In view of shortages and payment difficulties, a determined effort was made by the British Administration, after the occupation in 1941 and the release of manpower, to step up the production of food in Eritrea and reduce the food deficit. By giving priority to cereals over other crops on the concessions and by means of propaganda amongst the Eritreans, the output of cereals and pulses was progressively increased, from the order of 50,000 to 100,000 tons per annum, and the area cultivated from 300,000 to 600,000 acres. Livestock numbers nearly doubled over the same period, and have quadrupled in fifty years with the extended application of animal medicine, though droughts still take their toll. Eritrea, however, still has to import 12,500 tons of cereals yearly, one-eighth of its requirements, and future possibilities of

expansion are restricted. Over-stocking is a serious problem in the highlands, and there practically all the available cultivable land is occupied. In the eastern lowlands a modest expansion under flood irrigation is possible and the western lowlands alone still have considerable scope for irrigation development. If and when the 170,000 additional acres capable of being watered in Eritrea have been put under irrigation, the human and animal population would also undoubtedly have grown. The main problem facing Eritrean farming is in fact not an expansion of acreage under irrigation but the rehabilitation of the densely-populated denuded highlands: this represents a task in terracing, levelling, re-forestation and the inculcation of the first elements of rotation and manuring, which will involve very considerable expenditure, labour and time.

#### Farming regions

83. The table below compares the farm output, livestock, crop land and forestry resources of Eritrea's natural agricultural regions. Although these regions do not coincide with the administrative divisions, the table is complementary to the detailed analysis of the Eritrean population in paragraph 68.

Estimated size, output and livestock of Eritrea's natural farming regions

	Highlands	Western lowlands	Eastern lowlands	Total
Area in acres	10,680,000	10,880,000	9,232,000	30,792,000
Acreage cultivated	392,000	135,000	33,500	560,500
Percentage	3.7	1.25	0.36	1.82
Acreage still cultivable	48,000	165,000	6,500	219,500
Total percentage cultivable	4.15	2.75	0.43	2.57
Average output of cereals and pulses, 1947-1949 (tons)	71,760	21,900	6,450	100,110
Cattle	740,000	360,000	100,000	1,200,000
Goats and sheep	900,000	800,000	450,000	2,150,000
Camels	30,800	70,000	5,000	105,000
Horses, mules and donkeys	65,000	17,000	1,000	83,000
Tonnage of timber available	3,600,000	4,500,000	900,000	9,000,000

84. There is a natural measure of specialization and hence a degree of inter-dependence between these different farming regions. The western lowlands, for instance, help to meet the total cereal deficit of the other areas. On account of differences in seasons and inadequate grazing on the highlands, the tribes in the south-

east move to the Ghinda area of the eastern slopes for grazing and cultivation in the winter and those from

56/ Yields derived from data in the report of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization Near East Pre-Conference Regional Meeting in Beirut during September 1949. (FAO document C.49/1/6).

Keren to the Sheb area. There also is a regular migration of cattle from the Serac and the western lowlands down to the Setir, and when grazing is bad, beyond the river into Ethiopia. On the other hand, many cattle from the highlands move into the Tigray, and Ethiopia, moreover, is the main source of supply to meet Eritrea's food deficit in cereals, coffee, etc.

#### European farming concessions

85. About 78,000 acres of State lands have been issued under concessions, principally to Italian settlers. Farmed along modern lines, they produce most of the fresh milk, vegetables and fruit needed in the towns and limited quantities of sisal, coffee and tobacco. Sisal and bananas are exported, the latter under preferential arrangement to Italy. A number of the farming concessions have lately been practically abandoned on account of insecurity. The experimental nature of these concessions has been most instructive, but since they often are exceptional in being well-watered, they have had little influence on Eritrean dry-land farming. They, however, provide considerable employment to Eritreans. The Ali Gidr estate at Tesseneti is, for instance, worked on a share basis and as the operations are not mechanized, employment during planting and harvesting reaches 5,000.

#### C. Other economic activities in Eritrea

##### Employment outside farming

86. As against about 850,000 people dependent on farming, the table below shows the relative importance of the other avenues of employment in Eritrea, except commerce and domestic service for which no figures are available:

##### Principal avenues of employment outside farming

Occupation	Eritreans	Europeans	Total
Manufacturing (1947)	23,900	5,000	28,900
Mining (1947)	3,200	400	3,600
Rail and road transport	900	2,800	3,700
Administration and public utilities	3,500	12,000	15,500

##### Manufacturing industry

87. Eritrea's manufacturing activities date mainly from 1936. Ancillary to the road construction and building programme launched by Italy, cement, brick and tile factories were established, and many servicing and electrical workshops, food plants, etc., were started to cater for the transport fleet and the enlarged Italian population. Many of the transport and construction works were no longer needed after the liberation of Ethiopia and the British occupation of Eritrea, and today, after the depar-

ture of two-thirds of the Italian civilians, rows of derelict buildings mark the scene in the smaller towns en route to Ethiopia and in the partly demolished Italian and Allied military and naval bases.

88. In the few big towns, however, a new phase of industrial expansion set in after 1943. When the wartime shortages threw the territory back on its own supplies, Italian ingenuity and enterprise played an important role in improvising new factories, to make such consumer goods as bottles, glassware, matches, beer, wine, paper and soap. The pre-existing cereal factories, edible oil plants, the tobacco monopoly, and chinaware and furniture factories supply food needs and conventional necessities. In addition, there are various fishmeal, mother-of-pearl and dum-nut button factories and vegetable fibre plants which cater largely for export overseas and two large salt-works which export sizeable quantities to Ethiopia and overseas. Also the beer, wine, glass, chinaware and match factories have come to rely on export, principally to the Sudan and to a lesser extent to Ethiopia, for a half and more of their sales. Some of these different factories are modern, but many are not and most are small. Their principal advantage seems to be the low level of Eritrean wages. Child labour, of both sexes, is extensively employed at still lower wages.

89. Lacking domestic sources of supply, imported petroleum and coal are used on the railways and for the generation of electricity, so that in this respect Eritrea has no advantage. The annual output of electricity is now about 22,500,000 kwh, a tenth of which is generated at hydro-electric works, and in view of the low rainfall and seasonal stream-flow, further development is inevitably restricted. Industrial minerals and agricultural and forestry raw materials in the territory are limited, though the marine resources and animal products still offer scope for further industrial development. The severe obstacles to re-afforestation have previously been noted and today reliance is largely placed on the limited supply of indigenous trees. The match factory, for instance, has to rely on the euphorbia candelabra tree, which is not very suitable for the purpose and takes fifty years to mature so that, at the present rate of match production, the supplies are visibly diminishing. Again, the dum palms, the nuts and leaves of which are used in industry, occur only in narrow fringes along the river banks of the eastern lowlands so that supplies are expensive to collect and limited, while also occupying some of the land still available for irrigation. The Eritrean market is, moreover, small and while the ingenuity of the Italians in using such raw materials as do exist, including substitutes, is remarkable and the low wage level is of advantage, it would be unwarranted to expect further considerable industrial expansion. The statement by the Italo-Eritrean Associa-

tion that, given a decision on the future of Eritrea which would provide the requisite political and financial security now lacking, the industrial employment could be readily stepped up to 100,000 people, has not been supported by any concrete facts.

#### Mining

90. Organized mineral exploration was undertaken in Eritrea late in the Italian regime by three semi-public concerns. One explored for gold in the western lowlands; another for copper, nickel and iron in the north; and the third drilled for oil on the Dahlak Islands off Massawa. No records of the oil drillings are available, but no discoveries are known, and the records of the two other concerns are not complete. The gold veins found and later worked are not of high value and though sometimes thick, they are vertical and often discontinuous. The northern region of Eritrea is potentially mineralized, but it is dry and difficult of access from the sea. The nickel ore located there is of low quality and the size of the deposits, like those of copper and white asbestos found in association, are not known; traces of manganese, titanium and chromium were also found. Mica, in very broken form, and vermiculite occur elsewhere in small quantities. Small seams of lignite, incapable of commercial exploitation, have been found. The known iron ore deposits total only 17 million tons. Marble and road stone abound. Kaolin and feldspar of good quality exist. The limited area of the torrid Dankalia depression falling within Eritrea, the greater part of it being in Ethiopia, contains sodium and potassium salts in considerable and payable quantities.

91. The limited mineral deposits which have been located and considerations connected with the geological history of the country, of which a certain knowledge was disclosed by the explorations carried out, suggest that Eritrea cannot be considered as a region favoured by mineral wealth. On the other hand, it could not be stated definitely that Eritrea is poor in minerals; her geology is too incompletely known and much further study and capital would be required to complete the task. The Red Sea plain north of Massawa, for instance, has sediments of miocene age which have not yet been drilled for petroleum. It would, however, clearly be unwarranted and rash to assess Eritrea's economic future on an assumption that oil mineral deposits of real value are going to be discovered.

92. In view of the limited known mineral deposits, and the fact that most is known of the gold occurrences, their extraction is the principal mining activity. Gold production, which commenced mainly after 1937, reached 17,000 ounces by 1940. Dismantling for war purposes, the damage done to five mines since 1948 by

terrorists and the closing of a further nine on account of insecurity and for economic reasons have reduced the gold output to as low as 2,800 ounces. Sale is allowed on the free market at a premium as it appears that working costs exceed the official gold price. Kaolin and feldspar are worked only to the extent of local requirements. No other mines exist.

#### Transport, foreign trade and balance of payments

93. Eritrea has one railroad. It links the port of Massawa with the highland capital Asmara, and as it was not designed to serve Ethiopian trade, it thence links up with Eritrea's own western hinterland. Traffic on the latter section is scarce, averaging 60 tons of goods and 800 passengers per day; the traffic density is somewhat higher, 220 tons of goods and 550 passengers per day, on the shorter section from Asmara to Massawa harbour, which is conveniently situated for traffic to and from the Tigray and Gondar regions of Ethiopia. Notwithstanding that competing motor transport parallel to the railroad is largely prohibited, the rail traffic barely produces enough revenue to meet current costs, with no provision for depreciation and renewal. The Italian ropeway between Massawa and Asmara is inoperative as there is not enough traffic even for the railway.

94. The Eritrean road system, comprising 485 miles of main roads and 1,400 miles of secondary dirt roads, is an engineering feat. Constructed largely after 1935, the roads not only link the territory internally but also northern Ethiopia with Massawa, the Dessie region with Assab, and Eritrea's west and centre with the Sudan. The road motor fleet conveys some 70,000 tons of goods yearly to and from Ethiopia and probably 50,000 tons internally.

95. The Eritrean Chamber of Commerce has stressed the importance of the transport earnings on the Ethiopian transit trade and of the additional income secured as commission, harbour revenue, freight and insurance. A related source of earnings is the value added to Ethiopian primary products, resorted, cleaned or processed in Eritrea for re-export. The inward and outward transit trade to and from Ethiopia totals about £3,000,000 a year, compared with Eritrea's own import-export trade total of £4,700,000. From this comparison, the vital economic significance to Eritrea of her location, astride the Red Sea trade route and with the potentially rich Ethiopian hinterland behind her, is self-evident. The *entrepôt* earnings from Ethiopian trade, together with dollar remittances to American personnel in Eritrea, have the result that Eritrea's own adverse trade balance of over £1,500,000 is largely wiped out. For the past three years foreign receipts and payments have been in approximate

balance, so that import control has been considerably relaxed.

96. Eritrea's own foreign trade conforms to the pattern of her domestic economy. Her principal exports are hides, skins, salt and other marine products; exports of manufactures are far smaller. On the other hand, due to the low rainfall and scarcity of cultivable soil, cereals and other foodstuffs bulk large in her imports, as do textiles, fuel and tires. As a source of cereals and other foodstuffs, Ethiopia ranks first and enjoys tariff preference. The distribution between countries of the import trade in manufactured goods seems to have been influenced considerably by import control and Britain now is the main supplier. Italy has, however, remained the principal market for Eritrean primary produce.

#### Taxation and finance

97. The Italian tax system for Eritrea is still in force, with a large variety of direct and indirect taxes. Customs duties (averaging 10 per cent), income tax (levied at progressive rates on incomes over £60 and averaging 10 to 12 per cent), a monopoly tax on tobacco goods of over 100 per cent, and the surcharges on petrol (88 per cent), spirits (89 per cent) and beer (43 per cent) provide three-fourths of the revenue. The annual tax yield of £1,200,000 is only about £1 per head of population. The Eritrean Chamber of Commerce has assessed the incidence of taxation at £46 per head for Europeans and at four shillings per Eritrean.

98. Budgetary expenditure exceeds the revenue of Eritrea, and the accumulated deficit met by the British Treasury over the past nine years is £1,508,200, of which £970,000 were spent on Italian relief repatriation, leaving a net deficit of £538,000. This figure excludes the costs of the British military forces and further understates the true budgetary deficit in that the administration has been conducted on a care-and-maintenance basis only; no provision for renewal of capital has been made and avoidable capital expenditure has been deferred. The charges for posts, telegraphs and veterinary services cover costs, but the medical, railway and port services are rendered at rates which would not nearly cover costs if due provision were made for capital depreciation. Inclusive of certain capital expenditure which could no longer be deferred, the estimate deficit for the current financial year has risen to nearly £450,000.

#### Is Eritrea economically viable?

99. Eritrea is largely sub-desert and an inherently poor farming country. Her known mineral deposits are negligible. She has practically no local sources of power. In the absence of any rich sources of raw materials, of domestic power or of widespread industrial skill, Eritrea

can have no real industrial future. A number of manufacturing industries exist, and some can develop further, but they are small and their principal advantage is the low wage level of the Eritreans, including the extensive child labour force. Eritrea's road links with Ethiopia and her two harbours, however, enable her to profit from the conveyance and handling of a large transit trade with Ethiopia, the resultant earnings contributing greatly to offset her own large adverse trade balance. Eritrea is closely linked with the Ethiopian economy in other respects as well. Ethiopian grazing lands are extensively used; Ethiopia is the most convenient supplier of Eritrea's cereal deficit, and if the population of Eritrea's densely occupied highlands continues to increase, emigration to the sparsely inhabited Ethiopian uplands will become a necessity. Furthermore, Ethiopia and the Sudan provide the largest export markets for Eritrean manufactures. In view of the paucity of her resources, Eritrea regularly has a budgetary deficit, even without provision being made for capital depreciation. The average tax yield is only £1 per head, the Europeans being estimated to contribute £46 each and Eritreans four shillings. The budget deficit cannot, however, be wiped out simply by inventing new tax formulae, since the Eritrean peasantry, comprising 78 per cent of the population, have a very low per capita output; crop yields in Eritrea are half those in the Middle East. In these circumstances outside financial assistance had to be provided to Eritrea, first by the Italians and then by the British Administration. Further assistance would be needed for the extension of medical services and educational facilities, for the rehabilitation of the denuded highlands which are the mainstay of Eritrean agriculture, and for exploration to discover minerals. The costs of defence are today met by the British Treasury.

100. Eritrea has, therefore, neither the resources nor the revenue to make her economically viable in the foreseeable future. Her economic dependence on Ethiopian economy is very great. And in view of the absence of any technical proficiency on the part of the Eritreans themselves; the continued presence of a sufficient number of foreign technicians, Italian and other, to operate her manufacturing industries and technical services, is vital to the maintenance of the present level of economic activity as well as for any possible increase in industrial development.

#### III. Political wishes of the people

##### A. Recent changes in political groupings in Eritrea

101. Since the survey made by the Four-Power Commission in Eritrea in 1947, important changes in the attitude of the different political parties have led to a new line-up of the main political organizations of the territory.

These developments have partly altered the situation which existed two years earlier.

102. The main change which has occurred since 1947 is the formation of the Independence Bloc and the subsequent development of new political parties. The Independence Bloc was formed in New York during the 1949 spring session of the General Assembly by a coalition of the Moslem League, the Liberal Progressive Party, the New Eritrea Party (formerly the Pro-Italia Party), the Nationalist Party, the Veterans' Association and the Italo-Eritrean Association. These parties had variously favoured independence, Italian trusteeship or continued British Administration, but now united in a demand for the immediate independence of Eritrea. The Bloc was joined by two new organizations, the Independent Eritrea Party (composed mostly of former Unionists from the Keren District) and the Intellectual Association of Eritreans (composed of a small number of individuals).

103. This concentration of parties and groups around a common programme for independence was soon followed by important secessions from the Bloc and by the establishment of new parties by dissident elements. The groups concerned all stated that they seceded because of their conviction that Italian interests and interferences influence the policy of the Bloc, but in some cases personal division of opinion between different party leaders was also a probable cause. The first change of allegiance occurred with the formation of the Independent Moslem League of Massawa, mainly amongst Moslem residents of the Red Sea, Hamasien and Akkele Guzai Divisions; this group has come out in favour of union with Ethiopia under conditions designed to protect Moslem interests. After the arrival of the Commission in Eritrea, three new parties were organized by groups breaking away from the Independence Bloc. Two of these are the Liberal Unionist Party (composed of former members of the Liberal Progressive Party) and the Independent Eritrea United to Ethiopia Party (composed of former members of the Independent Eritrea Party) who both favour union with Ethiopia, the former under certain conditions. The third is the Moslem League of the Western Province (composed of former members of the Moslem League) which advocates the continuance of the present British Administration in the Western Province for a period of ten years, leaving the rest of the territory to decide its future for itself. The Independence Bloc, favouring an independent Eritrea, therefore now consists of seven political parties, of which the Moslem League is numerically the largest.

104. The Unionist Party has remained the biggest single party in Eritrea and has continued to urge the reunion of the whole of Eritrea with Ethiopia. In this it is supported by three smaller parties. Recently, in the

circumstances explained more fully in paragraph 110, the Unionist and allied parties signified that, if the majority of the inhabitants of the Western Province were found to oppose reunion, they would not oppose a separate solution for it, provided that the remainder of Eritrea were then united with Ethiopia.

105. These political shifts are indicative of the state of feeling and uncertainty which has been engendered in Eritrea by the long delay in applying a final political solution. The continued uncertainty also is a root cause of the insecurity and violence which have marked the past months. It must be stressed that while the major political parties are active in propagating their views and enlisting the support of the people, they are not as highly organized as in other countries and have little appreciation of the practical responsibilities of government.

#### B. Assessment of the political wishes of the parties and people

106. The Commission sought to ascertain the political views and wishes of the population through hearings of representatives of the different political parties and other associations as well as by inquiries in the country. The leaders were called to state their opinions before the Commission in Asmara, and the different parties and associations also submitted written statements to the Commission. Furthermore, during the field hearings in the countryside and other towns, representatives of local branches of the various organizations were questioned by the Commission or its field groups.

107. The questions put to the representatives who met the Commission in Asmara and in the field were designed to establish as much information as possible about the membership and numerical support claimed by the different associations, parties and leaders of the local political groups. The questions were also framed so as to elicit their main political views on the future government of the territory and their wishes with reference to independence, union or association with Ethiopia, trusteeship, continuation of the present Administration, the disposal of the territory as an undivided entity under these different solutions, and partition of Eritrea with the view to according separate treatment to the Western Province. Additional questions ranging over a diverse field were put by the different delegations.

#### C. Views of the principal political parties and associations

108. The Commission gave hearings in Asmara to the eighteen political and other associations which desired to be heard. The views expressed by the leading parties and allied organizations during these hearings are briefly summarized.

The Unionist Party and allied parties

109. *The Unionist Party* 57/ desired the immediate and unconditional reunion of Eritrea with Ethiopia, basing its claims on the close links of race, geography, history and economy between the two countries. It asserted that this course was favoured by the great majority of the Eritrean population (including 75 per cent of the inhabitants of the Western Province). The Party was against independence without association with Ethiopia, stressing that real independence for a poor country such as Eritrea could not thereby result. It opposed the Independence Bloc on the grounds that it was a foreign creation and alleged that the Bloc was directly supported and financed by the Italians. The Unionist Party rejected all allegations that the Moslems were badly treated by the Ethiopian Government and maintained that all groups of the population in Ethiopia were accorded equal treatment, which would also be the case in Eritrea after reunion with Ethiopia. The Unionist Party rejected the criticism that it supported terrorism and stated that accusations to that effect were only put forward by the Independence Bloc and its sympathizers in order to conceal their own weakness and lack of support from the population. It did not admit that the economic work of the Italians had been intended to benefit the Eritrean population as such and was opposed to allowing the Italians to exercise any influence or take part in the administration of the country; they and the half-castes would be protected under a democratic constitution, based on international law and human rights, provided that they obeyed the laws of the country and wished to do good for the whole of the country and not merely for themselves.

110. The Unionist Party, in claiming the reunion of the whole territory of Eritrea with Ethiopia, originally rejected the claims of the Moslem League of the Western Province for partition, considering this party only to consist of a few chiefs dependent on the British Administration and in the belief that the Unionists themselves were in the majority in the Western Province. At a later stage, 58/ the Unionist Party informed the Commission that, while not departing from its basic desire for reunion of Eritrea with Ethiopia, it might be that one solution for the whole country would not be considered workable at the forthcoming meeting of the General Assembly. Having also taken note of a recent change of views in the Western Province, the Unionist Party, therefore, indicated that, if the majority of the inhabitants of the Western Province were found to oppose reunion, it would not oppose a separate solution for that Division, provided that the remainder of Eritrea were then unconditionally joined with Ethiopia. It was stated that this decision had been taken by the leaders of the Party, as they were entitled to do in an emergency and since a basic change

of policy was not at issue. 59/ The Keren branch, however, protested to the Commission against the action of the party headquarters. 60/ An agreement was reached at the same time between the parties favouring conditional union with Ethiopia and the Moslem League of the Western Province. 61/ that neither group would oppose the respective solutions advocated by the other in the event of partition being decided upon by the United Nations.

111. *The Independent Eritrea United to Ethiopia Party* 62/ expressed the same desires as the Unionist Party, except that it was prepared to agree to independence, provided that union with Ethiopia would subsequently be possible. This party, which claimed its main support in Keren and the neighboring districts of the Western Province, stated that it had broken away from the Independence Bloc and from the Independent Eritrea Party because of the Italian interference with the policy of the Bloc.

112. The Liberal Unionist Party, 63/ which claimed its main support in Eastern Eritrea, desired union with Ethiopia on certain conditions designed to preserve the use of Eritrean languages and to safeguard the customs of the country. The members of this Party had originally adhered to the Liberal Progressive Party but had broken away after the latter had joined the Independence Bloc. They stated that they were now opposed to the Bloc because of its Italian affiliations, which clearly showed that the Italians intended to regain control over Eritrea through the Bloc. Representatives of the party had visited Addis Ababa and had received satisfactory assurances from the Ethiopian Government as to the realization of the conditions they wanted as the basis for the union of the two countries. The Party did not want the Italians or the Italo-Eritrean half-castes to have any part in the political life of the country but stated that they would be free to remain in Eritrea "as workers".

113. The Independent Moslem League, 64/ which claimed its main support in Massawa and the eastern lowlands, desired union with Ethiopia under conditions designed to preserve the rights of Moslems and especially assuring equal treatment of Moslems and Copts, recognition of all Moslem institutions and recognition of the Arabic language which should be taught side by side with the official language of Ethiopia. The majority of the members of the party had belonged to the Moslem League, but it was stated that they had broken away when the League joined the Independence Bloc. Representatives

57/ A/AC.34/SR.17.

58/ A/AC.34/R.151.

59/ A/AC.34/SR.42.

60/ A/AC.34/R.170.

61/ A/AC.34/R.168.

62/ A/AC.34/SR.14.

63/ A/AC.34/SR.23/Part I.

64/ A/AC.34/SR.24, A/AC.34/SR.25.

of the Independent Moslem League had been to Addis Ababa and stated that they had received satisfactory assurances as to the fulfilment of the conditions they put forward for the union of Eritrea to Ethiopia. This party, too, considered that real independence for Eritrea could be obtained only in union with Ethiopia. It felt that the Italians in Eritrea would be humanely treated by the Ethiopian Government, in the same way as their compatriots now residing in Ethiopia, but refused to state the views of the party as such, declaring that the Italians had their own country, as the Eritreans had theirs.

#### The Independence Bloc and allied parties

114. *The Independence Bloc 65/* desired immediate independence for the whole of Eritrea, and that a constituent assembly should determine the form of government. It was claimed that the Bloc and its affiliated parties were supported by the vast majority of the population, who opposed union with Ethiopia, the partition of Eritrea or any form of trusteeship. The Eritrean people were considered fully able to rule themselves. The representatives of the Bloc expressed strong opposition towards the claims of Ethiopia, maintaining that Eritrea had never formed a real-part of the Ethiopian Empire, that there were no real racial links between the two countries, and that even the Province of Tigray had been annexed to Ethiopia against the will of its inhabitants. The Ethiopian Government was accused of supporting terrorist activities in order to prevent the free expression of public opinion particularly in the highlands. Moslems were said to be ill-treated in Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian Government was said to be unable to manage its own affairs. The British Administration was criticized on the basis of allegations that it supported plans for the partition of Eritrea, favoured the Unionists and did not seriously try to prevent terrorism. The Bloc dismissed the claims of the Unionist Party because it considered it to be in the minority, which compelled it to resort to terrorism. The claims of the Moslem League of the Western Province were opposed by the Bloc on the grounds that that party was composed only of chiefs in the pay of the British Administration and because it aimed at the partition of the territory, which was against the wishes of the whole population. The attitude of the Bloc towards the Italians in Eritrea was that they would be treated according to international law and enjoy the same position as other foreign communities. Because of the ties of blood relationship which many Italians had with Eritreans, they would be welcome to stay in the territory.

115. The views of the Bloc were supported in separate statements by the representatives of the *Independent Eritrea Party 66/* and the *Veterans' Association. 67/*

116. *The New Eritrea Party* supported the declarations of the Independence Bloc, 68/ but was also prepared to accept United Nations trusteeship should immediate independence prove impracticable. The spokesmen of this group made strong accusations against the Unionists for resorting to terrorism in order to prevent opponents from expressing their opinions, and accused the British Administration of seeking to influence the political opinions of the people. The Party was of the opinion that the Italians, whose exodus would spell economic disaster, should remain in Eritrea in accordance with provisions to be inserted in the future Eritrean constitution.

117. The Intellectual Association of Eritreans, 69/ which did not claim to be a mass movement, supported the policy of the Independence Bloc. The group would not object to union with Ethiopia if it were approved by a majority in the Eritrean Parliament after independence had first been gained.

118. *The Italo-Eritrean Association*, to which the Commission gave three hearings, 70/ supported the main statements of the Bloc. The Association, which claimed the support of Italians and many half-castes, desired immediate independence for Eritrea, with a United Nations trusteeship for an interim period if the United Nations so decided. Free harbour zones at Massawa and Assab were proposed in order to afford Ethiopia an outlet to the sea. As noted earlier in this memorandum, the spokesmen of the Association stressed the economic inter-dependence of the different regions of Eritrea, the important role the Italo-Eritreans were called to play in the evolution of the country and ways and means of making it self-supporting. They averred that annexation to or federation with Ethiopia would be a retrograde step for Eritrea, which had higher social, economic and administrative standards. It was said that agreement had been reached with the other parties of the Bloc that the social and economic rights of Italians and Italo-Eritreans would be safeguarded if independence were granted. They asked that if independence were rejected and another solution, which was not desired, were decided upon, the United Nations should properly safeguard the position of the Italians in Eritrea so that they could remain in the country and freely carry on their activities which were indispensable to the life of the country.

119. The claim for the independence of Eritrea was further supported by the C.R.I.E., 71/ *The Representative Committee of Italians in Eritrea*, on behalf of the 20,000

65/ A/C.34/SR.12.

66/ A/C.34/SR.13.

67/ A/C.34/SR.19.

68/ Ibid.

69/ A/C.34/SR.22.

70/ A/C.34/SR.15; A/C.34/SR.16/Part I, A/C.34/SR.26

71/ A/C.34/SR.15, A/C.34/SR.34/Part I, A/C.34/SR.41.

Italians then residing in the territory. Should immediate independence not be granted, the Committee considered Italian trusteeship as most appropriate, or alternatively a United Nations trusteeship with wide Italian participation. The statements of the Committee also paid attention to considerations of an economic nature, relating to the inter-dependence of the different parts of Eritrea and explaining how the country could be made self-supporting. The Committee indicated that if the majority of the people after receiving independence wished to join Ethiopia, the Italian group would follow the decision, but did not believe that a majority would be obtained. In view of the prevailing insecurity in Eritrea, which the British Administration was alleged to be unable or unwilling to combat, the C.R.I.E. submitted a request to the Commission, for transmission to the United Nations, that the present Administration not be allowed to remain in the territory any longer.

120. *The Eritrean Chamber of Commerce* submitted several papers of an economic nature, to which reference has been made earlier in this memorandum, in support of its view that Eritrea should not be partitioned and that, if properly administered, it could in a very short time become a self-supporting country.

#### Moslem League of the Western Province

121. *The Moslem League of the Western Province* claimed to represent the majority of the population of that area, who were stated to be opposed both to union with Ethiopia or with the Sudan. It therefore pleaded for a separate solution for the Western Province. It desired British administration for the area for a period of ten years and subsequent independence. It also requested the establishment of a legislative assembly for the Western Province. In advocating partition, the spokesmen of the party declared that they were speaking only for the Western Province and that the population of the other parts of Eritrea must be left to take their own decision as to their future.

The party had broken away from the Moslem League because of alleged affiliations of the latter with the Italians, and because the League had abandoned its original programme, which was to promote proposals for independence after a preparatory period of British trusteeship.

#### D. Hearings of the local population

122. During extensive travels throughout Eritrea, the Commission visited thirty-seven centres and held sixty-four hearings at which the views of political groups of the local population were heard. On the recommendation of the Administration, and in order to avoid clashes and disorder, the procedure followed by the Commission and its field groups was to hold meetings at separate

places in the different centres with the local groups representing the main trends of political opinion. In this way two meetings were held at each centre in the highlands and in the eastern lowlands, where the main division was between the parties favouring union with Ethiopia on the one hand, and the parties favouring immediate independence on the other. In the Western Province separate meetings were also held for the supporters of the Moslem League of the Western Province.

123. The spokesmen of the different groups appearing at the field hearings were heard in their capacity as representatives of the local branches of the respective political parties and only exceptionally were hearings accorded to individuals, local chiefs or other persons connected with the Administration. In the main it can be said that the local spokesmen who appeared at the field hearings merely repeated the view expressed to the Commission in Asmara by the political parties to which they belonged; often party leaders and some mobile supporters preceded the Commission in order to be present at these meetings. The procedure followed by the Commission thus differed from that of the Four-Power Commission which had heard representatives of each village, family or tribal unit and so assist in establishing the real numerical support of the political parties.

124. The attendance at the meetings gave a certain indication of the relative strength of the different parties. The impressions gained in this way broadly confirm the claims of the Unionist Party and allied groups that they have the support of a large majority of the people of the highlands in the Hamasien, Akkele Guzai and Seraye Divisions. The Unionist meetings in this area drew large numbers while those of the Independence Bloc were small, and sometimes none appeared. The representatives of the Bloc nevertheless claimed to have the real support of the inhabitants and attributed the absence of large numbers of people at their meetings to terrorist activities on the part of the "Shifra" gangs, which they alleged were organized from Ethiopia and helped by the Unionists, and to the seasonal absence of the people for grazing purposes.

125. Throughout the Red Sea Division by far the largest attendances were at the meetings of supporters of the Independence Bloc, mostly represented by adherents of the Moslem League. The Unionist Party and the Independent Moslem League, however, also assembled considerable numbers of people, except at Assab. At the end of the Commission's work at Asmara, claims were made by representatives of certain nomadic tribes in the southern Danakil region that the hearings at Assab and Zula had been called without sufficient warning to these tribes, who had therefore been unable to appear in support of the Independent Moslem League.

126. In the Western Province the Unionist Party seemed to have its main support at Keren and in the immediate neighbouring districts; Unionist meetings in other parts of the Province only showed negligible attendances. The Independence Bloc and the Moslem League of the Western Province were able to muster considerable numbers of supporters at hearings also in the more remote parts of the area, the meetings of the Bloc assembling the largest crowds everywhere in this Division.

#### E. Membership and support of the political parties

127. The information gathered by the Commission and the claims put forward by representatives of the various groups do not provide a basis for an evaluation of the precise number of supporters of the different political parties. Both at the hearings at Asmara and during the field hearings the representatives of all parties made the most exaggerated statements as to the number of their members and supporters. The number of supporters, claimed by the different parties both in the territory as a whole as well as in the different districts, were often considerably in excess of the total population as estimated by the British Administration. Large discrepancies could also be noted between the figures given by the central organizations of the parties at Asmara, and the figures indicated by the local representatives at the field hearings. A tabulation of figures of membership and supporters, claimed by the various political parties in Eritrea at the hearings at Asmara and at the field hearings, shows that the parties claimed to have the support of more than 3.5 million people, while the total population of Eritrea is estimated at not much more than one million. The Unionist Party and allied parties claimed about 1.3 million, while the Independence Bloc claimed more than 2 million supporters. The Moslem League of the Western Province was more modest in claiming the support of about 215,000 people out of the total population of the Western Province estimated at about 360,000. These exaggerated claims were made more conspicuous by the fact that the various parties were unable to give exact information as to how they arrived at them and usually admitted that the number of actually registered members was small as compared with the number of supporters, which included women and children.

128. An approximate general evaluation of the relative strength of the various political parties can, therefore, not be based on the claims put forward by the parties themselves, but must be made on all available evidence and sources of information, including the direct observation which the members of the Commission were able to make during the field trips in the territory.

129. In this connexion account also has to be taken of the extent to which extraneous factors may have

influenced the formation and expression of the political wishes of the people of Eritrea: As noted in the earlier summary of the views of the political parties, the pro-Unionist group has incited the Independence Bloc as being the product of Italian intervention, and not the result of spontaneous growth. Again, the Moslem League of the Western Province alleged, and on occasion produced witnesses to testify, that food, clothing and funds were distributed by the Bloc to draw adherents. On the other hand, there is the counter-charge by the Bloc against the pro-Unionist parties, that they accepted assistance from Ethiopia and that terrorist practices and the sanctions of the Coptic Church were employed to swell the Unionist ranks and stifle their opponents.

130. There is little doubt that such extraneous influences have been at work. But there is a strong tendency to exaggerate them, and to take refuge behind them in weak situations. No reliable proof ever was adduced, and the Abuna Marcos, head of the Eritrean Coptic Church, consistently denied, that non-Unionist Copts had been forcibly enrolled by threats of excommunication. The two priests who alleged discrimination for political reasons admitted their participation in theological disputes of long standing. The Coptic Church certainly wields considerable influence, but it must not be overlooked that the Unionist movement in the highlands has many of the characteristics of an expanding popular movement. Operating with simple and easily understandable slogans, it reflects the fact that the Tigrinya-speaking Copts undoubtedly consider themselves as Ethiopians. The salute "Ethiopia!" not only resounded at their meetings but met the Commission all along the highways in southern Eritrea, whether from a few tiny children on a hill-top, casual passers-by or village communities massed along the roadside. Such results cannot be produced by transporting large bodies of adherents from one place to another.

It was confirmed by Administration officials that "Shifra" bands have sought to influence political dissidents in some highland districts, but it also is a fact that the bulk of the terrorist outrages in Eritrea have mainly been directed against individual Italians. Moreover, weak attendances at Bloc meetings were too often attributed to terrorism, or to absence on nomadic grazing, when other meetings were well attended, for the excuses to be convincing. In one case, 72/ a solitary witness of the party of the Bloc tried to explain the absence of his numerous supporters by producing a typewritten declaration to the effect that he had himself walked throughout the night to elude his pursuers and reach the meeting, only to admit in an unguarded moment that the letter had been typed before he set out on the journey.

72/ AJAC.34/R.87, questions (c) and (d).

On the other hand, as far as the Independence Bloc is concerned, its close association with Italian political interests is apparent from its composition. After the field group hearing at Mansura, the distribution of food by officials of the Bloc to those who had attended the meeting was actually witnessed. There also is no question that, in the case of the Moslem League, by far the strongest party in the Bloc, religious sentiment has been a powerful aid to unifying political sentiment. However, at most Independence Bloc meetings real enthusiasm was encountered and this invalidates any charge that the Bloc is entirely a creation, and under the direction, of the Italians and does not represent a substantial trend of opinion.

131. It therefore cannot be said that, on account of extraneous influences or propaganda dodges, the Commission's field hearings failed in their purpose of affording a reasonable indication of the views held by the people of Eritrea on the different solutions which have been proposed for the country and which have to quite an extent penetrated their political perception. It would, however, be proper to recognize that, whatever the means which might be employed, it is impossible to gauge accurately the permanence and exact strength of the political persuasions of the people of Eritrea. This is because of the primitive character of Eritrean society, the large-scale illiteracy of the people and the obvious limitations of the political parties as shown by their unblushing claims to many more supporters than there are people and their naive approach to the practical aspects of government.

#### F. Summary finding on the wishes of the people

132. The hearings have shown that, in the three administrative divisions of the highlands, the bulk of the Christian Coptic population strongly favours the reunion of Eritrea with Ethiopia. In addition, a not inconsiderable number of Moslems there support the claim for union, and this is not unexpected in view of the close association of interests with their Coptic neighbours. The Unionist and allied parties have strong support also around Keren and a noticeable adherence through the Independent Moslem League on the eastern slopes and the area around Massawa. The support of these Moslems for the proposal of union with Ethiopia certainly cannot be explained away by such arguments as a reference to the instance where fifteen Copts attended a meeting of the Commission dressed as Moslems. In view of the overwhelming support enjoyed by the pro-Unionist parties in the highlands, and to a lesser extent also in the other areas mentioned, it is not unlikely that a majority of the Eritreans favour political association with Ethiopia. In the

circumstances obtaining in Eritrea, however, accurate figures cannot be compiled.

133. On the other hand, there are large groups who oppose the movement for union with Ethiopia, mainly among the Moslems in the Western Province and in the Red Sea Division, including the Danakil desert. Generally, few Copts appeared at hearings of the Independence Bloc, except one whole village group in the Akkele Guzai, whose chief is the President of the Bloc, and another group in the Serae headed by a chief of the same family. With the defection of the Moslem League of the Western Province from the Bloc, there is little doubt that the supporters of the proposal that an independent Eritrean State be created immediately today represent a definite minority of the Eritrean population.

134. Both the pro-Unionist and pro-Independence groups, who together make up a large majority of the population, reject the partition of Eritrea in principle. Attention has already been drawn to the declaration of the pro-Unionist group of parties that a separate solution would be accepted for the Western Province, if the United Nations should decide on a dual solution and a majority in the Western Province want it. The Moslem League of the Western Province asked for such a dual solution but it did not appear that its adherents were in the majority.

135. The alternative possibility of trusteeship was put by the Commission at all hearings. The Unionist Party, however, insisted on reunion as the only solution and said it would accept no other. The Moslem League in turn requested an independent Eritrea, and declined to express views on trusteeship in the event of the United Nations not acceding to independence. The Representative Committee of Italians in Eritrea intimated that, in the contingency mentioned, Italian trusteeship (which Italy itself no longer supports) would be preferred, failing which direct United Nations trusteeship should be applied. It was definitely established that most of the indigenous population completely reject Italian trusteeship. Indeed, there is a large measure of agreement amongst all parties that there should be no participation by the local Italian population in the future government of Eritrea, no exception being made for Italians born in Eritrea or for Italo-Eritrean half-castes.

#### IV. The views of interested governments

##### Ethiopia

136. The Ethiopian Government, in its declaration to the Commission, requested the incorporation of the whole of Eritrea into Ethiopia, but said that it would respect the desires of the people of the Western Province for a separate solution for that territory, if a clear majority there want it.

137. The Ethiopian Government referred to the joint history of the present-day Eritrea and Ethiopia. It stated that 3,000 to 4,000 years ago the Hamitic and Semitic immigrants into Ethiopia settled in the Tigray first, that Eritrea has formed a part of the Tigray, and that the rulers of that area owed allegiance to the Ethiopian sovereign; hence natural and historical bonds of ethnic and social affinities have always existed between Eritreans and Ethiopians, and their language, customs, art and religion are identical. The Ethiopian Government furthermore asserted that there is an overwhelming support on the part of 75 per cent of the Eritrean people, for union with Ethiopia. Allegations that pressure has been brought to bear to that end by the Ethiopian Government and the Patriarch of the Coptic Church were rejected, as also that "Shifita" terrorists have been condoned by that Government. The Ethiopian Government, on the other hand, insisted that Italy had expended large sums to influence the views of the Eritrean people in favour of so-called independence. In further support of the proposal for incorporation, the Ethiopian Government drew attention to the economic dependence of Eritrea on Ethiopia in the following respects: Eritrean imports are double its exports; a balance is obtained, and the ports of Massawa and Assab can provide a livelihood, only with the help of earnings on Ethiopian transit trade, even though the bulk of Ethiopian foreign trade still passes through Djibouti. Ethiopia is the main source of Eritrea's food imports. Finally, some 90 per cent of the Eritrean people depend directly on Ethiopian pasture lands. In these circumstances, the Ethiopian Government has rejected the validity of proposals "to subject the population of Eritrea to facing the rigours of an artificial independent existence". It declared that Italy is attempting to regain control over the territory of Eritrea "through a formula that at the same time flies in the face of clear economic facts, the wishes of the population, the political possibilities, and the national security of Ethiopia". The statement of the Ethiopian Government added that "Ethiopia will no longer supinely tolerate through this patent disguise of a so-called Italian independence of Eritrea, any such threat to our existence". The Ethiopian Government also rejected the accusations of discrimination against Moslems. It pointed out that one-fourth of the inhabitants of Ethiopia are Moslem, but that on the other hand one-third of its higher government officials, 17 per cent of the elementary school children in Ethiopia, and 22 per cent of the Ethiopian students studying abroad with government financial assistance, are Moslem. As far as the Italian minority is concerned, the Ethiopian Government drew attention to the presence of thousands of Italians in Ethiopia, who have themselves sought permission to stay rather than return to Italy.

138. In carrying out its responsibilities, the Commission was instructed by the General Assembly, *inter alia*, to take into account the rights and claims of Ethiopia based on geographical, historical, ethnic or economic reasons, including in particular its legitimate need for adequate access to the sea. That the Eritrean highlands geographically form part of the Tigray plateau is evident from any map, and there is no doubt that historical and ethnical bonds exist between the populations of the two areas. These features are present in a lesser degree in other parts of Eritrea. Economically, Eritrea is without doubt closely dependent on Ethiopia. The reverse is also true because of the location of Eritrea between Ethiopia and the Red Sea. Direct access to the sea is, therefore, of considerable economic significance to Ethiopia and of vital strategic importance to her as well. Geographically, the excellent deep-water harbour of Massawa is the natural outlet from, and point of supply to, northern Ethiopia, which includes the Tigray and Gondar. Assab is the nearest port to the Wollo Province, around Dessie. The railway from Djibouti in turn provides the shortest coastal link with Addis Ababa. At present Ethiopian imports and exports go over the following routes:

*Tonnage of Ethiopian  
imports and exports (1948)*

By railroad to Djibouti	180,000
By road to or via Eritrea	39,000
By Bahr River to Sudan	4,000
Via British Somaliland	20,000
Unknown	37,000

139. It is seen, therefore, that the needs of Ethiopia are so intertwined with the future of Eritrea that, in devising a plan for the well-being of the latter, justice demands that suitable provision should be made for the interests of the former.

*Egypt*

140. The Government of Egypt has confirmed its announcement, made at the Conference of the Deputies of Foreign Ministers at London on 29 July 1948, that it supports the unanimous wishes of the Eritrean people that their country's unity should be safeguarded. At the same time, the Government of Egypt reserved its right to express at a later stage its point of view on the final disposal of Eritrea, as it would be premature to anticipate the results of the Commission's work.

141. However, the Government of Egypt indicated that if the Commission were to confirm the conclusions previously arrived at by the Four-Power Commission of

Investigation, as to the desire of the Eritrean population to ensure the country's unity, the point of view of the Government of Egypt would remain unchanged. If, on the other hand, the United Nations Commission for Eritrea should reach different conclusions owing to new data, or an unforeseeable reversal of opinion ascertained in the course of investigation, the Egyptian Government would then duly reconsider the question in the light of those new facts and its own historical rights.

*France*

142. In the communication transmitted to the Commission, the French Government stated that it relied entirely upon the Commission to proceed within the framework of its terms of reference, taking into account the conditions at present obtaining. The Government of France, however, referred to the statements made by its representatives at the third and fourth sessions of the General Assembly, to the effect that the territory of Eritrea was heterogeneous in its population and that Ethiopia was entitled to compensation for the past and to guarantees for the future. It also stressed the desire to conform to the wishes of the indigenous inhabitants, including the Italian minority.

143. The French Government also pointed to its statement in the Political Committee on 1 October 1949, to the effect that any constructive decision should receive the agreement of both Ethiopian and Italian Governments so as to prepare for their future collaboration. Such collaboration would in the opinion of the French Government ensure peace and security and the development of prosperity in that part of the world.

144. Finally, the French Government considered that the necessary measures should be taken to provide adequate guarantees for foreign interests and property.

*Italy*

145. The Italian Foreign Minister, Count Sforza, informed the Commission verbally that the Italian Government no longer advocated or desired Italian trusteeship over Eritrea. In the note presented by that Government, it was indicated that Italy was deeply interested not only in the welfare of the Italians and their descendants who, having dedicated their activity to Eritrea, are bound to that country, but also in the welfare of the Native population. The Italian Government recognized the right of Eritreans to have their wishes respected and considered that the basic criterion to be adopted in the disposal of Eritrea is respect for the wishes, rights and interests of the population, including the Italians in Eritrea. It was of the opinion that there is no reason why Eritrea should be delayed on its road to independence, if independence corresponds to the historical conditions

and the interests of the country, and it saw no reason to believe that if independence were granted it would be against the interests of Ethiopia; it stated that the solution of the Eritrean problem must be accompanied by the protection of the legitimate interests of Eritrea and Ethiopia, the chief common interest of both being to live in peace together and to co-operate fruitfully to mutual advantage. The Italian Government considered that the characteristics and structure of Eritrea are such as to make a strong argument for the maintenance of its unity. It stated that the various parts of Eritrea constitute complementary elements which give to the whole a large measure of economic and financial self-sufficiency. The Italian Government also emphasized that Eritreans, though divided by race and religion, have in the past lived peacefully side by side, and that they still know how to live together profitably in a community which includes them all and which is based on collaboration and peace.

146. The Italian Government denied that any part of Eritrea occupied by Italy was taken from Ethiopia. It stated that Danakil, where Italy first established itself, was occupied after agreements with the local sheikhs; that the northernmost part, including Massawa and the Dahlak Islands, was part of the Ottoman Empire; that the western lowlands were acquired by Italy by a tripartite agreement between Italy, Great Britain and Ethiopia in 1903; and that the highlands were not considered as an integral part of the Ethiopian Empire inasmuch as King Menelik of Ethiopia invited the Italians to occupy the district of Asmara, while the highland zones south of Asmara were recognized as part of Eritrea by the Italo-Ethiopian treaty of 1900.

*United Kingdom*

147. The Government of the United Kingdom reiterated the view previously expressed at the General Assembly, that the Red Sea Province, including Massawa, and the Hamasien, Akkele Guzai and Seraye Divisions should be incorporated in Ethiopia subject to safeguards for the Italian and other minorities, including appropriate municipal charters for the city of Asmara and the port of Massawa. The United Kingdom Government did not put forward detailed proposals to safeguard minorities and for municipal charters but stated that if the idea were accepted in principle, the details could be worked out. In proposing the inclusion of Massawa in the area to be ceded to Ethiopia, it pointed out that this is the natural port of the plateau and could not be separated from it or from Asmara without grave economic disruption. It supported the incorporation of the port of Assab and the Danakil coast because of the absence of lateral communication with the rest of Eritrea and the close racial,



geographical, and linguistic affinities of this region to the adjacent Danakil areas of Ethiopia.

148. As regards the Western Province, the United Kingdom Government did not consider that the inhabitants should be incorporated in Eritropia contrary to their expressed wishes, nor that the Province could justifiably be placed under a separate trusteeship looking to its future existence as a separate State. It, therefore, supported its incorporation in the adjacent Sudan, as being the best solution on ethnic, geographic and religious grounds.

149. The Government of the United Kingdom was firmly of opinion that the establishment of an independent Eritrean State is not a practicable solution. It stated that the territory is not and never has been economically viable and that it possesses neither the national, religious, racial, linguistic, nor geographical unity which would be prerequisites of such a State.

The Government stated that it could not support any proposal involving the return of an Italian Administration to Eritrea in any form.

150. The United Kingdom Government expressed its opposition to trusteeship, either for a definite or an indefinite period, and stated that on account of the facts given above trusteeship could have no aim or purpose since the inhabitants of Eritrea could not, in the foreseeable future, be in a position to take over their own government from a Trustee Power. It stated through its representative that it would not accept the responsibilities of trusteeship for the whole or any part of the territory.

#### V. Peace and security in East Africa

151. The Commission has been directed to take particular account of the following factors in examining the problem of the disposal of Eritrea:

- (a) The wishes of the inhabitants of Eritrea;
- (b) The best means of promoting their welfare;
- (c) The capacity of the people for self-government;
- (d) The rights and claims of Ethiopia;
- (e) The interests of peace and security in East Africa.

The facts pertaining to the first four items have already been set out in this memorandum. The interests of peace and security in East Africa remain to be considered.

152. Eritrea is a very rugged and broken country, and this fact has throughout made adequate policing difficult and costly. Strategically, the external defence of Eritrea is rendered complicated by her long coastline and flat coastal plain and by the absence of natural frontier barriers in the interior. Whether or not peace and security could be maintained in such conditions would, however, be influenced less by pure strategic considerations than by the ability of the territory to meet the costs of policing

and defence, by the degree of internal unity or dissension and by the political relationships with neighbouring countries.

153. There is an acute internal political division amongst the people of Eritrea on the basic question of the future of the country. This division of opinion has recently led to an outbreak of political violence between groups of Moslems and Copts in Asmara, while "Shifra" bands have over a period committed sporadic outrages in various parts of the territory. The security position in Eritrea is, therefore, perilous. The fact must be faced, moreover, that the movement for union with Ethiopia has many of the characteristics of a popular movement, and it is more than likely that outright frustration of these wishes would make the position of internal security in Eritrea untenable. Nor would it in that event be unrealistic to expect assistance for the unionist groups from Ethiopia, in view of that country's own espousal of the same cause.

154. It has, in addition, been demonstrated that Eritrea is not economically viable and lacks the resources and financial means to become such in the foreseeable future. In such circumstances and in view of the acute internal political division and state of tension in Eritrea, the conclusion is ineluctable that the creation of a separate Eritrean State entirely on its own would contain all the elements necessary seriously to prejudice the interests of peace and security in East Africa, now and in the future.

### PART II. PROPOSALS FOR THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF ERITREA

#### VI. General conclusions

155. A fair and lasting solution for the problem of Eritrea must be realistic and take into account all the salient facts of the case. They were, therefore, examined in detail in part I of this memorandum.

156. Attention is, firstly, drawn to the fact that Eritrea is a poor country, without any prospects of progressing as a separate economic entity, and dependent in most vital respects on Ethiopia's rich farming resources and transit trade. In the view of the delegations of Burma, Norway and the Union of South Africa, these facts preclude a solution which has as its aim the creation of an entirely separate Eritrean State, whether in the immediate future or after an interval of international trusteeship.

157. Secondly, attention is drawn to the expressed political wishes of the people. With the defection of the Moslem League of the Western Province from the Independence Bloc, the protagonists of an independent Eritrean State, who were probably close on half the total population before, are now in a definite minority. On the

other hand, it is not unlikely that an over-all majority of the total Eritrean population favour reunion with Ethiopia, in view of the support for this course by the overwhelming mass of Christian Copts and by sizeable numbers of Moslems living next to them in the highlands and in the Red Sea Division.

158. Thirdly, attention is drawn to the legitimate aspirations of Ethiopia for access to the sea, both on economic and security grounds, and for the reintegration of the Eritrean people, many of whom have the most intimate bonds with the people of northern Ethiopia.

159. The close affinities between large sections of the Eritrean and Ethiopian peoples, the strong demand for reunion by probably the majority of Eritreans, the common strategic interests of the two countries and the fact that Eritrea lacks the resources to protect herself, have convinced the delegations of Burma, Norway and the Union of South Africa that, in the interests of peace and security in East Africa and of the welfare of the Eritrean people, the best solution for Eritrea must be based on close political association with Ethiopia. Economic and financial association also is a *sine qua non* in view of the dependence of Eritrea on the rich Ethiopian hinterland and of Ethiopia on the transport and harbour facilities of Eritrea, and in view of Eritrea's poor resources, weak finances and inability to maintain itself without aid from a strong partner.

160. It is appreciated that a solution, based on the principle of economic and political association with Ethiopia, may not at the moment command general support in Eritrea, where passions have been inflamed by political propaganda and the resort to violence by irresponsible elements. These activities do not, however, reflect the true feelings of the people. Although Eritrea's boundaries are the product of colonial expansion in the 1880's, so that it is neither a geographical unit nor an economic whole, a common past and seventy years of common rule have had potent unifying effects not only between the diverse peoples of Eritrea but also in their relations with the Italian settlers; such amity cannot readily be destroyed and there is no doubt that resort to violence is repugnant to the deep-rooted desire of all sections in Eritrea to continue to live in peace side by side. The delegations of Burma, Norway and the Union of South Africa, in condemning the resort to murder and violence by irresponsible elements, must emphasize that they believe this in large part to be a direct consequence of the unfortunate delay in settling the future of the country. They truly fear that the situation would, perhaps irretrievably, go from bad to worse unless a final settlement is effected soon.

161. In view of this paramount need for an early and final solution, the delegation of the Union of South

Africa has decided to relinquish the suggestion it made to the Commission during the general debate. It then proposed that the highlands and Red Sea Division be placed under Ethiopian trusteeship with a view to eventual self-government as a federal part of Ethiopia, and that British Administration be temporarily continued in the Western Province until the people there are able to make up their minds between joining either Ethiopia or the Sudan since an independent State in the Western Province would be fantastic. The course suggested would, however, involve a further period of suspense before a permanent settlement of the problem could be effected, and in order to avoid this the delegation of the Union of South Africa has decided to join with the delegation of Burma and support its federal solution which would permanently and effectively meet the exigencies of the case.

162. The delegation of Norway, like the delegations of Burma and the Union of South Africa, subscribes to the principle of political and economic association between Eritrea and Ethiopia, but differs from these delegations in regard to the precise formula to be applied to that end. The delegations of Burma and the Union of South Africa, therefore, submit their joint recommendations below, and these are followed by separate recommendations by the delegation of Norway.

#### VII. Proposals by the delegations of Burma and the Union of South Africa

163. In the course of investigations, it soon became apparent that the crux of the problem in Eritrea is the conflict of two ardent forms of nationalism, namely, the desire of the Unionist groups to join Ethiopia and the striving of the Independence Bloc for an independent Eritrean State. These respective claims have the stamp of validity and they have been steadfastly put forward by these two political groups. As these claims are irreconcilable, it is impossible fully to satisfy the demands of either group without causing a grave miscarriage of justice to the other. A fair but effective compromise is, therefore, necessary.

164. For the reasons stated in conjunction with the delegation of Norway, the delegations of Burma and the Union of South Africa are convinced that a solution for Eritrea must be based on close political and complete economic association with Ethiopia. On the other hand, the delegations of Burma and the Union of South Africa are emphatic that such a solution should be designed so as also to satisfy to a material extent the political sensibilities of the Moslem population of Eritrea, who on the whole are afraid to join Ethiopia, and to safeguard the position of the Italian settlers and Italo-Eritrean half-castes who have a permanent stake in the country.

165. The delegations of Burma and South Africa are not satisfied that the rights and interests of the large Moslem community would be fully safeguarded in every respect, and if they were that the general body of Moslems would believe it, if Eritrea were to be incorporated outright into Ethiopia, as the Unionists desire. The two delegations consider, however, that the overriding aims of the political and economic association between Eritrean and Ethiopia and of effective safeguards for the rights and interests of the Moslems and the Italian and other minorities could be achieved by means of a federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia. Such a federation should take place on terms compatible with the self-respect and domestic autonomy of both countries and provide for joint responsibility and collective action in such fields as defence, external affairs, taxation, finance, inter-State commerce and communications. A customs union and a general rule of non-discrimination would also be prerequisites.

166. A federal plan of this nature received considerable attention in Sub-Committee 17 of the First Committee of the General Assembly, and the Ethiopian delegation then indicated to the Political Committee 73/ that it did not reject it in principle. In the opinion of the delegations of Burma and the Union of South Africa a federal solution would answer the two most vital issues of the Eritrean problem, to which all other considerations are subordinate, namely, (a) the wishes and welfare of the people of Eritrea and (b) the maintenance of peace and security in East Africa. For such a plan recognizes the inalienable right of the people of Eritrea to fashion their own destiny, in conjunction with their federal partner on certain common problems, without the wishes and aspirations of either of the two main sections of the people of Eritrea being subordinated to those of the other. This is as it should be, since the two main religious and linguistic groups of the territory have in the past shown striking proof of their ability to co-operate with each other, and the delegations of Burma and the Union of South Africa are convinced, notwithstanding the vicissitudes of Eritrean politics, that the people can and will collaborate to serve the interests of their common land in the future, when a final decision to institute federation is given by the General Assembly. This desire to continue to live side by side is strongly evidenced by the reluctance of all groups and parties in Eritrea to assent to the partition of the country. Although the Unionist and allied parties and the Moslem League of the Western Province recently accepted partition on a conditional basis, this took place as a direct alternative to completely abandoning their respective points of view, without a possible synthesis and compromise to safeguard the rights of all groups having been considered. The federal plan put

forward by the delegations of Burma and the Union of South Africa accordingly seeks to preserve the unity of Eritrea, thus encouraging her people to pattern their loyalty and patriotism to one single design and to find expression for their energy and skill in a united Eritrea within the framework of a federal constitution.

167. By this means recognition will, therefore, be accorded at one and the same time to the twin facts that Eritrea is the common motherland of the highland Copts and lowland Moslems and has close historical, ethnical and social associations with Ethiopia. In that way alone can peace and security be preserved in this part of East Africa. By strengthening the existing close economic ties between Eritrea and Ethiopia, the welfare of the people of Eritrea will, moreover, be actively promoted and Ethiopia's legitimate claim for adequate access to the sea satisfied.

168. The joint review by the delegations of Burma, Norway and the Union of South Africa has shown to what considerable extent the level of Eritrean economy is dependent on the technical proficiency and managerial activities of the Italian settlers. To a lesser extent this is also true of other foreign communities, but they are smaller and it is an advantage that many urban Eritreans understand the Italian language, while many Italians are conversant with the vernacular and customs of the indigenous people. The continuance of Italian enterprise in Eritrea is vital also for the further development of the territory, and the delegations of Burma and the Union of South Africa, therefore, consider that the personal and property rights of the Italian and other foreign communities in Eritrea should be safeguarded in the federal constitution. In order to be fully effective, the delegations urge that, on the suggestion of the General Assembly, this question should form the subject of friendly discussion and agreement between the Governments of Italy and Ethiopia. In view of the declarations of these two Governments to the Commission there is every reason to believe that a harmonious understanding would be welcomed by both. This is highly necessary. Without Italian technical guidance, Eritrea would sustain a serious economic setback, and that would be the very negation of the upliftment programmes of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

169. The proposal for federation by the delegations of Burma and South Africa, therefore, holds tangible promises for the future. This cannot be said in respect of two other solutions which are widely canvassed. The total integration or incorporation of Eritrea into Ethiopia would arouse popular Moslem antagonism and might lead to internal strife with possible external intervention.

73/ A/C.1/W.8/Add.2, page 140.

The immediate or future independence of Eritrea, without close political association with Ethiopia, must result in the economic disruption of Eritrea and in political upheaval on the part of the Coptic population. Nor have the people of Eritrea developed a sufficient capacity for self-government to stand on their own. In federation with Ethiopia, the administrative and financial burdens of government would, however, be shared on important questions of mutual concern to the two countries.

170. The delegations of Burma and the Union of South Africa accordingly submit to the General Assembly the following proposals, which accord with the Commission's mandate and would make it possible to settle the urgent problem of Eritrea in a manner which would be both fair and effective:

(a) Eritrea to be constituted a self-governing unit of a federation of which the other member shall be Ethiopia, under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian crown;

(b) Each member shall possess local legislative and executive autonomy, but full authority shall be vested in the federal government with regard to such matters as defence, external affairs, taxation, finance, inter-State commerce and communications;

(c) A customs union between the two members shall be obligatory;

(d) A common citizenship shall prevail throughout the federation. No discrimination shall be practised as regards religious, personal, civic or property rights and equal rights and privileges shall be guaranteed in the constitution for all minorities;

(e) The federation shall be established following a transitional period not exceeding three years. During this period the current affairs of the territory shall continue to be conducted by the present Administration, subject to the understanding that residents of Eritrea shall be inducted in office as much as possible, and that the General Assembly shall appoint an advisory council consisting of the United Kingdom, Ethiopia and Egypt to arrange for the transfer of power to the people of Eritrea and, in conjunction with the Government of Ethiopia and an elective assembly of Eritreans to be established for the purpose, to ensure the formulation of the federal constitution;

(f) The establishment of the Federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia shall be declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations as soon as its advisory council certifies that the federal constitution has been adopted by the Government of Ethiopia and the Eritrean Assembly.

#### *Suggestions by the delegation of Burma*

171. The delegation of Burma is in agreement with the delegation of the Union of South Africa that the General Assembly should cause the details of the pro-

posed federal plan to be worked out. For the guidance of the Assembly, the delegation of Burma submits the following detailed provisions which, it suggests, might find a suitable place in the federal plan and constitution:

(i) The governmental structure of the two States of Ethiopia and Eritrea shall be federal and shall consist of a federal government and governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea, with the Emperor of Ethiopia as the constitutional Head.

(ii) Among the organs of government there shall be an executive body, a federal body and a federal court;

(iii) The federal legislative body shall be composed of two chambers;

(iv) Election to its first chamber shall be on the basis of proportional representation of the population as a whole;

(v) Election to its second chamber shall be on the basis of equal representation of the Ethiopian and Eritrean people;

(vi) The federal legislative body shall be empowered to legislate on all matters entrusted to the federal government;

(vii) Legislation shall be enacted when approved by a majority of votes in both chambers of the federal legislative body;

(viii) Full authority shall be vested in the federal government with regard to defence, external affairs, taxation, finance, and inter-State commerce and communications;

(ix) The executive branch of the federal government shall be responsible to the federal legislative body;

(x) The federal court shall be the final court of appeal with regard to constitutional matters;

(xi) The members of the federal court shall be appointed by the Emperor with the approval of both chambers of the federal legislative body;

(xii) All decisions of the federal court are final;

(xiii) There shall be but one citizenship throughout the federation;

(xiv) The constitution shall guarantee equal rights and privileges for all minorities, irrespective of race or religion;

(xv) The two States of Ethiopia and Eritrea shall enjoy full powers of local self-government in all matters other than defence, external affairs, finance and inter-State commerce and communications and shall pass such local laws and regulations as may be desirable, subject only to the provisions of the federal constitution.

#### VIII. Proposals by the delegation of Norway

172. The delegation of Norway subscribes to the factual review elaborated in agreement with the delegations of Burma and of the Union of South Africa and to

its ample demonstration of the necessity for the political association of Eritrea with Ethiopia. The delegation of Norway, after close examination of all sides of the problem, finds, however, that such association would be best secured, to the mutual benefit of both countries, by their complete and immediate reunion.

173. We are fully satisfied that the overwhelming majority of the people of Eritrea are in favour of such a reunion. It is true that different views have been expressed by the spokesmen or leaders of groups or parties who proclaim a desire that Eritrea obtain autonomy as an independent State. Apart from the absolute impossibility of checking the figures given by the various groups as to the number of their adherents, we find it more important to consider the fact that the people especially of the highlands always considered themselves as Ethiopians, and that before 1946 no political division existed in the country. Except for the Unionists, who in 1941 under the name "Patriotic Association for the Union of Eritrea with Ethiopia" had already manifested their views, the opposition parties did not appear until 1946 and 1947; they were obviously born out of the political possibilities presented by the discord between the Powers about the future of Eritrea, and were created by a handful of ambitious Eritreans, partly former officials in Italian service, who by uniting in their groups the apparently greater part of the Moslem population have undeniably succeeded in giving to the newborn political activity an aspect of religious differences. Not only did no political division exist before 1946, but there had, indeed, never before existed any political feeling at all; except for the popular movement which, after the liberation of the country in 1941, sprang from the then awakened national consciousness of the Eritrean people and tended quite naturally towards reunion with the country they felt they belonged to. Nor did there ever exist any hostile religious feelings. The townspeople as well as the rural population, Moslem and Christian, lived in perfect harmony, the rural dwellers, regardless of their different creeds or tribal customs, being fully occupied with their tasks of cultivation and grazing, as indeed they are until this day in Eritrea and—what is worth mentioning—also in Ethiopia. It can therefore safely be said, we think, that the situation which has now been created is to a great extent artificial; it is not founded on serious political considerations, but is partly the result of a confusion in the mind of the primitive masses who are supposed to support the independent movement as to the true meaning of the word "independence" in opposition to the word "union".

174. We feel convinced that if Eritrea and Ethiopia, after their liberation from Italian domination in 1941, had been united together, such a union would have met with no opposition. We believe that this solution, for

what had since become the problem of Eritrea, would still respond to the wishes of the people as dictated by their real interests.

175. On account of the economic interdependence of the two countries, which embraces all fields of their activities, and because of the similarity in the natural conditions of both countries, the union of Eritrea to Ethiopia would secure to the Eritrean people, nomadic or settled, the undisturbed continuation of their customary livelihood. Moreover, and this is not of least importance, the possibilities would thereby be created for progress and development along lines consistent with their traditions and economic realities, by the mutual effort of the Eritrean and Ethiopian peoples, who are so closely related and whose contacts are so congenial. That would mean, in our opinion, the welfare of all the inhabitants of Eritrea.

176. Having regard to the fact that the Eritreans are so far removed from the stage where they could govern themselves, that, regardless of the number of the claimants, the claim for independence has to be dismissed, we consider the reintegration of Eritrea into Ethiopia as the only rational and satisfactory solution. In principle this solution should apply to the whole territory of Eritrea. It seems to us impossible to give way to the separatist wishes of that part of the population of the Western Province which, in refusing union either with Ethiopia or Sudan, aims at the setting up in this area of a separate independent State. This can only be characterized as a utopian and unrealistic dream. In case it should be found, however, that the opposition of the Western Province presents an obstacle to the union of Eritrea with Ethiopia, we would not be opposed to its provisional exemption from such a union, nor to its continued administration by the British Government for the period required to give the people of the Western Province the opportunity of deciding in fuller knowledge which of their two neighbouring countries they wish to join. It should be noted in this connexion that if, in determining the future status of Eritrea, the Western Province were excluded, the adherents to the Independence Bloc in the rest of the country would find themselves reduced to a trifling minority compared to the numerical strength of the Unionists, since the parties opposing union with Ethiopia have most of their adherents in the Western Province.

177. The reunion of Eritrea to the "mother country" would, in our opinion, offer the best guarantees for the peaceful existence of Eritrea's inhabitants, native or foreign, and give them the best conditions of security. On the other hand, it is certainly to be feared that an independent Eritrea, poor as it would be and helplessly ex-

posed to interference from many sides, would soon become the scene of serious discord and internal strife.

178. We do not share the apprehensions which have been expressed by certain groups of the population, and especially by some political groups of the population, and especially by some political groups of Italians, with regard to possible discrimination which could be expected from the government of a united Eritrea and Ethiopia. No other foreign communities voiced such fears, and there is no reason to believe that Italian residents in Eritrea would be prevented from carrying on their trade or industry, which is so important for the economy of the country, any less freely than do thousands of Italians until this day in Ethiopia itself. Taking into account the repeated declarations made by the Government of Ethiopia that it is fully prepared to respect and maintain the rights of all minorities, we do not consider it necessary to try to establish any system of special safeguards or guarantees of such rights. On the contrary, we believe that stipulations of that nature might only create new possibilities for dissension and so imperil the position of the minorities they were meant to protect.

179. As for the external peace and security of this part of Africa, it is evident and needless to demonstrate that this could not possibly be better secured than by the unification of the economic and defensive resources of both these territories in the hands of one Government, which would be in a position to impose respect for its rights.

180. The claims of Ethiopia, so clearly expressed at many previous occasions and lately revived with ample justification before the Commission, should not be confused with an imperialistic attempt towards colonial expansion. They are based as much on geographical, economic and ethnic reasons as they have their background in the history of Ethiopia and of the disputed territory which now forms Eritrea. There is no need to go into the remote history of this subject, and it is sufficient to recall the events through which Italy came to Eritrea. In 1869 it acquired a strip of coast near Assab; in 1885, it occupied Massawa, till then held by the Egyptians on a kind of lease from the Ethiopian Emperor; next came the Italian defeat in 1887, when the garrison at Dogali, near Massawa, was destroyed by the Emperor's Governor of Eritrea; further battles and treaties finally led up to the Italo-Eritrean Treaty of 1900, by which the Ethiopian Government ceded the southern part of Eritrea to Italy. These facts prove the exercise by Ethiopia of its sovereignty over the Eritrean territory right down to the Red Sea, and offer ample justification for the historical claim for its reintegration.

181. The return of Eritrea does not, therefore, mean its submission to the domination of an alien Power;

reunited to Ethiopia, Eritrea would be rejoining the independent Ethiopian Empire, remaining as independent as Ethiopia itself, and participating in the Government with equal rights and responsibilities. The proposal to reunite Eritrea to Ethiopia is not a new one. It has always been in the centre of the discussions at the United Nations General Assembly, now favoured by various Governments and then again abandoned. We believe that any further attempts to by-pass this solution, e.g., by introducing any form of trusteeship with a view to later independence which materially would prove impossible, would only be an expedient causing useless postponement of a final solution. The same would be true of proposals to establish a trusteeship over Eritrea with the view of future self-government in federation with Ethiopia. Both these solutions imply the perpetuation of an Eritrean State as a separate entity, although there is no doubt that within its present borders it is not in a position of ever becoming a viable State. Eritrea was an artificial creation by the Italians, and the first thing they did when they occupied Ethiopia was to split up Eritrea and to link certain parts of it with the neighbouring Ethiopian province. To establish Eritrea as an entity, either independently or as a self-governing federal Province, would make it impossible to effect the necessary adjustments in its administration.

182. We further believe that, in order to ensure a harmonious development, it must be left to the Ethiopian State to adopt the constitutional provisions which would be best suited to conditions in this part of Africa. To impose obligations on Ethiopia to organize its relation with Eritrea on the basis of a federative status, without any knowledge as to whether this would be the best constitutional solution, could easily lead to future conflict and unrest, and in the end endanger the peace of East Africa. It must here be stressed that the suspense in which the establishment of the status of Eritrea is being held, and would continue to be held under trusteeship, seriously hampers its normal life and gravely endangers the security of its people. It is therefore imperative that a final and definite decision be taken now. The immediate reunion of the two countries would end this highly dangerous state of affairs and, in our opinion, it offers the only realistic and rational solution of the problem, conforming to the wishes of the people, securing their welfare, and serving the interests of peace and security in this part of the world.

183. The delegation of Norway, therefore, proposes that the whole territory of Eritrea be reunited to Ethiopia, it being understood that, in the conditions and for the purposes set forth earlier, the Western Province could provisionally and for a limited period of time be left under the present British Administration.

General political situation in Eritrea

184. Before reaching Eritrea the Commission had learnt from various sources that the political situation in the country was tense and that several bombing incidents and murders had taken place during the previous year or two.

185. During its stay at Asmara the Commission learnt with regret of several murders, road hold-ups, arson and other violent crimes in which the victims were mostly either Italian colonists or supporters of the Independence Bloc. The attempted assassination of Italians and others continued throughout the period of the Commission's stay in Eritrea, and, according to information received at Geneva, the situation remained the same even after its departure.

Disorders at Asmara on 21 to 23 February 1950

186. On 21 February the Commission heard with dismay that large-scale rioting between Copts and Muslims had started in the town of Asmara, the immediate cause of which was the throwing of a bomb near the headquarters of the Unionist Party, at the funeral procession of a Muslim who was opposed to Unionists and who had been murdered the previous day by a gang of "Shifra." 76/, 77/ The consequence was three days of bloody rioting in which about fifty persons lost their lives and a large number were wounded.

Wishes and welfare of the population

187. The Commission found the following organized parties, representative of three different policies with regard to the future of Eritrea:

(a) Parties advocating independence for the whole territory:

Muslim League  
Liberal Progressive Party  
New Eritrea Party  
Italo-Eritrean Association  
Veterans Association  
Intellectual Party  
National Party  
Independent Eritrean Party

(b) Parties advocating union of the territory with Ethiopia:

Unionist Party  
Liberal Unionist Party  
Independent Eritrea united to Ethiopia Party  
Independent Muslim League (of Massawa)

(c) Party advocating trusteeship by the United Kingdom for the Western Province prior to independence:

Muslim League of the Western Province

188. The parties wanting independence of the territory have grouped themselves into what they call the "Independence Bloc", although they continue to maintain their original identity.

189. It is extremely difficult to ascertain the exact numerical strength of the different political parties. Their leaders and spokesmen always gave evidently exaggerated figures to the Commission. This was carried to such an extent that, if the figures supplied to the Commission were added up, the total would be several times larger than the whole population of the territory.

190. The Commission held hearings at numerous places in Eritrea in order to ascertain the wishes of the population with regard to the future of the country. These hearings took place in specially arranged settings, the groups being separated from each other by several kilometres, and in such a way that the Commission could not announce its arrival sufficiently in advance. Generally, the same people, including spokesmen of different groups, were constantly seen at the different places. It was noticed at our field hearings that the representatives who came to make statements repeated the same answers to questions put to them and gave the impression that they had been carefully rehearsed. Whenever questions were put to persons in the crowd, the answers were confused and unintelligible. It was evident at the hearings held in the highlands, where the bulk of the adherents of the Unionist Party are found, that the organization of those

74/ Original: English-Spanish

75/ The notes appearing at the foot of the pages in the name of one delegation are the responsibility of that delegation. It should be understood that the other delegation subscribing to the memorandum does not necessarily share those points of view. In drafting this memorandum we have avoided repeating information appearing in the report of the Four-Power Commission.

76/ "Shifra" means political terrorists in Eritrea.

77/ The delegation of Pakistan wishes to add the following: Information received from the British Administration from time to time was that the "Shifra" bands mainly attacked those persons who were opposed to union with Ethiopia. It was common knowledge in Eritrea that these gangs withdrew from Eritrea into Ethiopia whenever they were pursued by forces of law and order and that the Tigre Province was used by them for rest and perhaps sanctuary. The British Administration was good enough to make available to the members of the Commission, for their information, secret reports relating to the activities of the gangs. These reports, which could not be made public, showed clearly that many of the gangs came from Ethiopia into Eritrea and that, if some of their members were wounded, they were treated in the hospitals in Ethiopia. A formidable list of political outrages was presented to the Commission by Mr. Ibrahim Sultan, Secretary-General of the Independence Bloc. The Commission was not informed of any steps having been taken by the Ethiopian Government for the suppression of these gangs in their territory. The statement of the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia mentions that terrorism will increase if the problem is not solved in accordance with the will of what he considers to be the "majority".

present was semi-military. Quite a number of them wore uniforms and distinctive marks, notwithstanding an order from the British Administration prohibiting the use of uniforms on such occasions. It was apparent that the Unionist cause enjoyed the favour of the Administering Authority in that region.

191. The influence of religion is a preponderant factor in the development of political trends in Eritrea. In that connexion, the Commission was able to verify what had already been observed by the Four-Power Commission, which visited the country in 1947. 78/ The religious beliefs of the inhabitants is closely connected with their political adherence, which mainly accounts for the fact that the majority of the Christian Copts advocate the annexation of the territory to Ethiopia. With regard to the influence of the Coptic Church in favour of annexation, it is important to point out that the Coptic Church of Eritrea depends hierarchically upon Ethiopia. The Commission was informed about interference by religious authorities of that Church in favour of annexation and of the ideas of the Unionist Party. It also heard complaints about threats and reprisals by the leaders of the Coptic Church of Eritrea against those who opposed annexation.

192. The Commission heard allegations to the effect that several Copts had been excommunicated because they did not hold the same political views as those of the Unionist Party. At nearly all the gatherings of the Unionist Party a large number of priests were seen with church emblems, and it was obvious that the clergy was using its influence over the laity. At some places priests and monks complained that they had been threatened or actually excommunicated by the Abuna of the Coptic Church for refusing to support the Unionist Party.

193. Terrorism, which has developed in Eritrea in the form of a system to support a particular policy, is another important factor leading to the grouping of the inhabitants into political parties. Some people who were opposed to the annexation of the territory of Eritrea have been subjected by terrorists to attacks on their person and property. Others, out of fear, have been compelled to follow the parties which advocate annexation. Prominent leaders of political parties favouring independence have been attacked, such as the President of the Independent Eritrea Party, Mr. Woldemariam, on whose life four attempts have been made. Such criminal practices make it difficult to ascertain even approximately the true desire of those who now declare themselves in favour of annexation, as it cannot be said that, in every case, the spontaneity of their political affiliation is guaranteed.

194. In these conditions, the political conviction of many of the inhabitants who support the Unionist cause cannot but be viewed with doubt. This is even more

understandable if one takes into account the scant knowledge of political questions by the majority of the inhabitants, which is natural in a country that has been administered as a colony and where, up to recent times, a number of them were still serfs.

195. The Commission questioned the representatives of the various groups, both in Asmara and at many other places in Eritrea, for which it had to travel thousands of kilometres. It endeavoured, within the limit of its possibilities, to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants with regard to the following fundamental matters:

- (a) Independence of the territory;
- (b) Trusteeship of the territory;
- (c) Annexation of the whole territory to Ethiopia;
- (d) Partition of the territory and annexation of the eastern part of Ethiopia and the Western Province to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

196. The great majority of the inhabitants of the eastern and western lowlands, and groups of varying importance in the plateau, were in favour of immediate independence. When they were questioned as to which Administering Authority they would prefer if it were considered that the country was not ready for independence and it were decided to place the territory under the Trusteeship System, the majority expressed the desire that the United Nations be directly entrusted with the administration of the territory.

197. The case for annexation of Eritrea to Ethiopia found strong support in the provinces of the plateau, where, judging by the demonstrations, a considerable majority favours that solution. Opposition to partition of the territory, such as the annexation of the highlands and the Red Sea Division to Ethiopia and the Western Province to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, was almost unanimous. One political party, the Muslim League of the Western Province, advocated trusteeship by the United Kingdom for that province, with a view to independence. Even the groups which formed this League expressed their opposition to the annexation of the Western Province to the Sudan.

198. All observations lead to the conclusion that it is necessary to maintain the unity of the territory. The highlands and the lowlands, linked by railroad, a good highway system, and other means of communication, are complementary to each other. The idea of annexing the provinces of Hamasien, Akele Guzai, Serae and the Red Sea Division to Ethiopia and the Western Province to the Sudan has been put forward. We do not find any reasons which would justify the partition of Eritrea. This solution is contrary to the expressed wishes of the inhabitants, would do harm to the economy and the prosperity of the territory, and does not conform to the Charter of the

78/ Report of the Four-Power Commission, paragraph 39, page 96.

United Nations. In our opinion, separation of the Western Province from the rest of Eritrea will mean the fragmentation of the Muslim population and will not be in the interests of the country. We should point out that, in accordance with this solution, as proposed, it is desired to annex to Ethiopia the province covering that part of the coast line of the Red Sea, where strong resistance and even hostility towards that country prevails among the great majority of the inhabitants. In order to achieve the wellbeing of the population of Eritrea, the unity of the territory must be maintained. The solution to the problem of the disposal of Eritrea must therefore be a single one and must apply to the whole country.

199. The Muslim League of the Western Province, whose importance, even in the only province in which it exists, is relatively small, declared itself in favour of placing the Western Province under United Nations trusteeship, irrespective of the solution applied to the remainder of the country. A separate Western Province will have no means of communication with the sea, as the only railway line and the main road which connect it with the port of Massawa pass through the highlands. Such a proposition would not be to the benefit of the territory, and it would clearly be against the desires of the great majority of the population of the whole territory in general, and of that province in particular.

200. Several parties have declared themselves in favour of the annexation of Eritrea to Ethiopia. The Unionist Party is the most important of this group. 79/

201. We have already mentioned the participation of the Coptic Church in favour of annexation, as well as the part played by terrorism in support of that policy.

202. The population of the plateau has a certain affinity with one of the Ethiopian provinces, namely, the Tigré Province. In that part of Eritrea, as in Tigré, the Tigrinya language is spoken, but this affinity between a part of Ethiopia and a part of Eritrea is not sufficient to justify the absorption of Eritrea by Ethiopia. This language, on the other hand, is not spoken throughout Eritrea, nor is it spoken throughout Ethiopia. Neither is it the official language of that country. No important and general affinity exists between Ethiopia and Eritrea. On the contrary, the inhabitants bear resentment and hostility towards Ethiopia.

203. The economic, ethnic, historical and security reasons, 80/ together with others advanced in favour of annexation, are not sufficient for us to recommend this solution to the United Nations, nor are we convinced that the majority of the population wishes it, or that this would be the best course for promoting the welfare of the inhabitants.

204. In our tour throughout Eritrea, we saw that a large number of people were opposed to the annexation

of the territory to Ethiopia and in favour of independence. We were impressed by the way in which these people behaved, as well as by the courage and firmness with which they expressed their views, notwithstanding the risks to which they often exposed themselves. There can be no doubt that, in the eastern and western lowlands, the great majority of the population is in favour of independence and is strongly opposed to any idea of annexation or partition of the territory. All over the country we met groups that were in favour of independence, particularly among the Muslims, but it is evident that their greatest strength is in the lowlands. 81/

205. All peoples have the right to be free. The Eritreans have the right to independence, since a majority of the population claims it and there are no juridical reasons justifying any other procedure. Under present conditions there is nothing to justify a different solution for this territory. Independence does not exclude subsequent decisions taken in a democratic way by the people of Eritrea to link their country in the form of confederation or federation, or even of unconditional union with Ethiopia, when it happened to be the unmistakable wish of the people, should the occasion arise. But that is not the case at present and it is not possible to tie the fate of one country to that of another in advance and irrevocably, when a large part of the population rejects that solution and demands independence. 82/

79/ *The delegation of Pakistan wishes to add the following:* The Secretary-General of the Unionist Party, Mr. Tedla Bairu, admitted that the figures which he had supplied relating to the supporters of his party were inaccurate and that the Muslim population of the western lowlands had ceased to support union with Ethiopia. With regard to the eastern lowlands, he preferred not to give a categorical reply until the question had been studied further by his party. Our delegation took care to find out the extent of the Muslim following of this party. From what we observed in the field trips, we noticed that, in all the big gatherings which the party presented to us in the highlands, the Muslims were very few. In the lowlands, at the Unionist gatherings, the total number never exceeded a handful of persons and even among them Muslims were conspicuous by their small number. In order to dupe the Commission, the party resorted to many malpractices. One such which came to light was through the arrest of some Coptic Christian supporters of the Unionist Party disguised as Muslims. At some other places representatives who came to support the Unionist cause were found to be bogus. The Commission received numerous complaints of impersonation by Copts as Muslims at Unionist gatherings.

80/ See paragraphs 213-218; 252-258.

81/ *The delegation of Pakistan wishes to add the following:* The numerical strength of the population as given is not exact. The figures supplied by the British Administration show that nearly half the population of Eritrea is Muslim and a little under half is Coptic—the difference between the two being a few thousands. These population figures, however, are not based on any census and cannot be regarded as entirely accurate. The Muslim League claims that the total Muslim population of Eritrea is 70 per cent and that even in the highlands they are equal in number to the Copts.

82/ To the question whether they would be prepared to submit to a test of opinion by a democratic method, such as by setting up a constituent assembly elected by a wide franchise which would have the power and authority of declining for union with Ethiopia or remaining independent, the supporters of the Independence Bloc welcomed it, whereas the Unionist Party demurred.

206. We observed that, while Eritrea possesses trained people, it does not have a sufficient number of them to assume the government of the territory immediately. A period of time is necessary for the political, economic, social and educational development of the inhabitants, and to ensure the tranquillity of the territory before they are able to take over the government.

207. For cases such as this, the United Nations Charter has provided the Trusteeship System. In Article 81, it establishes that the authority which exercises the administration of a Trusteeship Territory may be one or more States or the Organization itself. The Independence Bloc generally agreed to a limited period of direct United Nations trusteeship. It objected in general to a single Power trusteeship. The Unionist group demanded immediate union with Ethiopia and therefore the question of trusteeship does not arise in that case.

208. Taking into account the difficulties which exist in the designation of one State or a group of States in the particular case of Eritrea, we are of the opinion that the most appropriate course would be for the United Nations to take direct charge of the administration.

#### *The Italian minority*

209. We were impressed by the work which the Italians have done and are doing in the territory. The wonderful road system, railway, port facilities and all other kinds of public works are essentially the result of Italian technical skill and enterprise. The industries of importance in the territory, such as the match factory, button factories, glass works, sisal products, brewery, chinaware factory, and electric works belong to and are run by Italians.

210. The Italian agricultural and dairy farming concessions are a model of industry and efficiency in a backward territory.

211. The mines, some of which have had to be abandoned on account of lawlessness, are worked under the direction of Italian engineers. In all these activities, considerable native labour is employed. The towns of Asmara and, to some extent, Massawa, can be described as Italian towns and without the Italian population they are liable to crumble and come to an end. The Commission witnessed the sad state of the town of Decamere, which now appears completely deserted after the departure of a large number of its Italian residents.

212. In order to keep alive the economic life of the principal towns and of Eritrea as a whole, the continuing participation by Italians and half-castes is essential. Many of the former were born in Eritrea and know no other home. They are entitled to protection, which should be of a kind of which they could feel confident. They feel that, in an independent Eritrea, they will be able to live

in peace and prosperity. Therefore, from the point of view of this very important minority also, independence is the best possible solution for Eritrea. They are confident that Eritrea can be economically a self-supporting country within a few years, and that partition will do it great harm.

#### Peace and security in East Africa

213. The terms of reference of resolution 289 (IV) of the General Assembly instruct the Commission for Eritrea to take into consideration the interests of peace and security in East Africa in studying the problem.

214. It has often been repeated that Ethiopia needs the control of Eritrean territory for reasons of security against possible aggression from outside. Such a possibility does not exist. The surrounding countries, such as the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, the countries on the other side of the Red Sea, and the neighbouring colonial territories administered by France and the United Kingdom, as well as former Italian Somaliland, which is now under the International Trusteeship System of the United Nations, do not present any danger to the peace of Ethiopia, nor, in general, to the peace and security of that area of the world.

215. Trusteeship by the United Nations over Eritrea would be the best guarantee of internal peace and security in that territory and of international peace and security in East Africa. The main groups would live in peace side by side, as they have been living for centuries. In Eritrea, under trusteeship or independence, the minorities are confident that they also would have security. Within the framework of a union of Eritrea with Ethiopia the Muslim majority and the Italian minority feel that they could never be happy. The Muslims and Italians have expressed their views in no uncertain terms. 83/

216. An independent Eritrea—which can never become a military stronghold—could never constitute a threat to Ethiopia.

217. Against a hypothetical future aggression on the part of a great military Power, alien to Africa, there is the international guarantee by the United Nations. If, by any unhappy chance, that guarantee should become ineffective, the control of the territory of Eritrea would not save Ethiopia nor safeguard it against an aggression of that type.

218. On the contrary, the annexation of Eritrea, in part or in whole, to Ethiopia, or the annexation of a part of Eritrea to the Sudan against the will of a large portion of the Eritrean population, would create constant internal

83/ *Note by the delegation of Pakistan:* The apprehensions of the Muslim population of Eritrea are justified by the conditions prevailing in Ethiopia up to the present time.

friction, giving rise inter alia to police measures of repression and to political persecutions which could jeopardize the internal tranquillity of Ethiopia and peace and security in that part of the world.

#### Economic situation in Eritrea

219. The economic capacity of Eritrea and its possibilities of development have been one of the most discussed points and have, at the same time, served as a political instrument for the support of one or another policy in favour of a given solution of the problem.

220. Thus, those who support the Unionist cause have passionately exaggerated the bad situation, in order to arrive at the conclusion that the territory cannot at present and will never be able to become self-supporting from the economic point of view. On the other hand, those who support the principle of independence have also exaggerated the future possibilities of Eritrea and have asserted, also passionately, that the country will be able to achieve complete economic independence in a short period.

221. Both views are exaggerated and both are erroneous.

222. There is, however, one undeniable fact: that, at present, there hardly exists a country in the world which could be said to be economically independent. The idea of economic interdependence has already replaced the old concept of self-sufficiency.

223. On the other hand, it is very difficult, and would be erroneous, to judge the economic capacity of Eritrea in the light of the present situation only, without taking into consideration the fact that the existing circumstances are abnormal.

224. When the Second World War started, a flourishing economy had already been initiated in Eritrea with the development of important agricultural, industrial and mining activities. Even if it is true that the war produced other industries in the economic life of Eritrea, it also obstructed the progressive course of the methodical development which had been initiated. To this circumstance could be added another no less important. During the last decade nothing has been done towards the economic improvement of the territory, whereas much has been done to the contrary. It may be pointed out, by way of example, that prosperous enterprises, such as the cultivation of cotton, have been abandoned; the more important gold mines have been closed, destroyed, or dismantled; the free development of the growing of tobacco and other plants has been handicapped. All this has been due to administrative action, to which most unfortunately be added some other decisive factors, such as: (a) the uncertainty regarding the future disposal of the territory; (b) political agitation bearing on the same subject;

(c) terroristic activities and the complete lack of security for life and property, which have brought about the abandonment of important agricultural and industrial activities, handicapped transport, and caused unrest throughout the country; (d) the continuous exodus of Italians, which has been, in the main, due to (c) above.

225. Among the abandoned agricultural farms, it is enough to mention those of coffee which, in 1940, promised to meet the local requirements within a short time. The present harvest is less than one-third of that of 1940, not to speak of the abandoned young plants which, today, could be in full production.

226. It is also important to mention, as a further factor, that the complete lack of bank credits for agriculture, manufacturing and trade has greatly hindered the economic development of the territory. The role that credit plays at present in the economic life of any country, including the more advanced ones, is well known.

227. It should also be considered that, since the present Administering Power in Eritrea is interested in a certain political solution of the problem and hopes that at least a part of that territory may be added to its possessions, it should not be surprising that far from improving the existing conditions, that Power is not even concerned about their deterioration, for the more that Eritrean economy suffers, the more probabilities there would be for that Power to carry out its political plans.

228. Any evaluation that may be made of the present Eritrean economy, that did not take into account the circumstances and factors briefly outlined above, would give an erroneous picture of the situation and would lead to an estimation, also erroneous, of the future possibilities.

229. Most of the information on the economic situation of the territory received by the Commission emanates from the British Administration and obviously tends to support the political position of the British Government with regard to the problem.

230. In the present abnormal circumstances, the economic situation of Eritrea is not only bad but deteriorates from day to day. This situation is not capable of change so long as the problem of the disposal of Eritrea remains unsolved.

231. It is true that climatic conditions of the territory are not the most favourable for easy large-scale agricultural development. Rainfall is comparatively scanty and in some areas is insufficient for farming. There is no river that flows continuously, with the exception of the Setit—which in places serves as the frontier between Eritrea and Ethiopia. However, the land is not bad generally speaking, and, in view of the topography of the country, the possibility of storing rain water for irrigation is very considerable and could be carried out compara-

tively economically. Irrigation by canals would also be possible, using the water of numerous seasonal streams—a system which was begun before the Second World War, with satisfactory results.

232. Thus, though it is not possible to increase the rainfall in a short period of time so long as gradual and extensive plans of re-afforestation are not carried out, it is at least possible and relatively easy, through the increased storage of rain water for irrigation and the use of the seasonal running streams to the same end, to increase progressively the percentage of cultivated lands, not only for solving the deficit in the production of grains (one-sixth of the consumption), but even for maintaining some reserves for export.

233. The main agricultural products of Eritrea are grain, vegetable-fibres, coffee, tobacco, cotton, citrus fruits, tropical fruits, and others. This is one of the few places in the world where the dum palm exists, the nut of which is used for the manufacture of buttons, alcohol, and oil for soap and cattle fodder. The skin of the nut contains tannin in industrial quantities and the shell is used as fuel. From the palm leaves are obtained fibres of excellent quality for marine ropes, and raw material for the manufacture of paper.

234. Cattle breeding is a considerable source of wealth in Eritrea on account of the dairy and meat products and the industry and export of skins. This important item in the economy of the territory is also affected by the insufficient rainfall of the country. The cattle are forced to migrate twice a year for pasture. Any measure taken towards storing rain water would alleviate the situation, with consequent progress for this important industry, which, moreover, is a truly popular source of wealth, since cattle breeding is not concentrated in big farms, but is the patrimony of the individual Eritrean.

235. The agricultural production statistics are incomplete and insufficient and have not the real value which is generally attached to statistics, since the present conditions are not normal, as has already been pointed out.

236. As regards the mineral wealth of Eritrea, one principal fact should be emphasized: there is not sufficient information to form an idea of its extent, quality and value.

237. The fact best known concerning mining is that numerous deposits of gold exist both in the highlands and the lowlands. In 1940, the output, which was beginning to reach a steady level, amounted to 17,000 ounces, with great probabilities of increase. The main mines were destroyed, closed or dismantled and during several years there was no yield. The gold mines have also been greatly affected by terroristic activities and the lack of security in the country. In 1949, the production was only 2,800 ounces.

238. It is also known that there are deposits of iron, copper, nickel, mica, asbestos and other minerals. Traces of manganese, titanium, magnesium and chromium have been found, but the available information, in general, is extremely deficient. In some cases, it has been said that either the material is not of good quality, as for example, nickel, or that its location is difficult of access.

239. There are also deposits of salts of sodium and potassium, of kaolin and feldspar, which are used in local manufactures. There is a great deal of marble, and, although it seems that there is no coal, lignite of low quality has been found.

240. It is also known that, during the last years of the Italian régime, drillings were made to locate oil in the Dahlak Islands off Massawa, but, due to the war, those prospectings were not completed, and no report is available regarding the results. On the other hand, the existence of sediments of the Miocene Age on the coast north of Massawa has been confirmed, but no drillings have been made.

241. While it cannot be said that Eritrea is very rich in minerals, neither can it be said that it is poor. Knowledge about mining in Eritrea and the information available on which to base a judgement are extremely deficient. It is a fact, however, that mining is practically an unexplored field.

242. Eritrea has several hundred kilometres of coast and an important archipelago in the Red Sea—one of the richest seas in the world. The fishing industry and the exploitation, in general, of the marine wealth offer a very ample and promising field for the economy of Eritrea. There are already some industries, such as fish meal, oils, sea-shell products, mother-of-pearl, snails, coral and pearl, with immense possibilities of development.

243. Geographically, Eritrea includes two completely different regions: the highlands of Hamasien, Serae and Akele Guzai and the western and eastern lowlands. Both regions are complementary to each other economically by the diversity of their animal, vegetable and mineral products, by the interchange of industrial raw materials, by the differences of climate and season and by the facilities afforded by one to the other for the seasonal migration of cattle. It should also be pointed out that both regions are linked by excellent highways and railways.

244. Eritrea has a considerable number of industries whose importance is based mainly on the good quality of their products. The industries in Eritrea vary greatly, as can be judged by the following: chemical products, preserved meats, butter, cheese, fish, fish meal, beer, wines, liquors, alcohol, glassware, chinaware and porcelain, matches, paper, medicinal and pharmaceutical products, leather goods, dum-palm and mother-of-pearl

buttons, vegetable fibres (sisal and dum-palm), essential oils and shark oils, skins and leather, and gum arabic. The majority of these products are exported. There are also other products for local consumption, such as soap, perfume, cigarettes, and cement products.

245. Most of these industries use local raw materials. There are other industries, merely for processing, which employ mainly imported raw materials, such as wheat-flour, whose exportation reached more than a million kilogrammes in 1948, with a value of more than £76,000.

246. Eritrean industries are not artificial, as they have, on occasion, been characterized, nor do they depend mainly on cheap labour. They are well established and their products, on account of their quality, are well received in the neighbouring markets, such as Ethiopia, Sudan and the countries on the other side of the Red Sea. Many of their products, such as buttons, vegetable fibres, and fish meal, go to European markets. Another industry is that of salt, which has a good market in the Far East, mainly in India and Japan.

247. There is no reason to doubt the success, development and increase of these industries in the future. On the contrary, if they have been able to subsist through the difficult conditions of recent years, it can be logically inferred that they will subsist and develop better in the future, when the conditions of unrest and abnormality, pointed out above, disappear.

248. Another industry worthy of mention, on account of its public value and its contribution to many aspects of the economic life of Eritrea, is the electric power industry. Considerable efforts have been made to develop hydro-electric power and there are plans already prepared, the implementation of which was prevented by the war and subsequent conditions, for its expansion to the point where it would be possible to dispense with electricity produced by imported fuels.

249. There is no reason to suppose that foreign markets may be closed to Eritrean products in the future, since the latter are of good quality and some of them, such as buttons and fibres, do not encounter strong competition. Moreover, it could not be said that Eritrea itself is a small or poor market for its own products. In the same measure as the Eritrean people (more than one million) are able to raise their standard of living, their consumption capacity will increase accordingly, particularly with regard to products such as matches, foodstuffs, edible oils and soap. There is no reason to say that the match industry will not be able to subsist because it depends on euphorbia wood, the consumption of which contributes to the deforestation of the country, since the wood used for boxes and sticks can be replaced by cardboard, the

manufacture of which is easy and for which there is in the territory adequate raw material. The sticks can also be substituted by cotton fibres coated with paraffin.

250. As has already been indicated elsewhere, Eritrea has an excellent system of communications. Transportation is also, at the present time, affected by the abnormal conditions under which the country suffers and to which reference was made at the beginning of this chapter.

251. The railway has an annual deficit of approximately £25,000, despite the fact that its use is compulsory for most goods traffic and that the use of motor trucks has been prohibited alongside the railways. This deficit, however, is also largely due to the abnormal situation and to the fact that many of the economic activities of the country are paralysed.

252. An important factor in the economy of Eritrea is the transit of goods to and from Ethiopia through Eritrean ports and territory.

253. There is no doubt that there exists a strong community of economic interests between Eritrea and Ethiopia, not only on account of the need of the latter to use Eritrean ports for its foreign trade and the gains which accrue to Eritrea by this transit, but also on account of the markets mutually afforded for their various products. At present, Ethiopia supplies most of the grain deficiencies in Eritrea (one-sixth of the consumption) and, in turn, imports several products manufactured in Eritrea. On the other hand, several Eritrean industries—certain vegetable oil factories, for example—utilize Ethiopian raw materials. Eritrea also carries on certain import and re-export business in some products of Ethiopia and of the Arabian peninsula, after certain processing in Eritrea.

254. These economic ties deserve the greatest consideration and merit the conclusion of appropriate agreements which would facilitate close co-operation and would tend eventually towards a very advantageous economic union for both countries.

255. It should be pointed out that external trade to and from Ethiopia cannot be exclusively channelled through only one of the Eritrean ports. Products to and from the northern region of Ethiopia naturally pass through the port of Massawa, while products to and from Addis Ababa and the central and southern regions of Ethiopia pass through the ports of Djibouti, in French Somaliland, and Assab in Eritrea. The port of Assab is, therefore, the most suitable one for external trade from the Ethiopian region of Dessie.

256. The transit trade of the Eritrean ports is much greater than the Eritrean trade of those ports.

257. In considering these circumstances, the advantageous geographical position of Eritrea, from the

commercial point of view, should be taken into account. In the neighbourhood of important commercial centres such as Port Sudan, Djibouti, Aden, Hodeida and Jeddah, Eritrea has within reach very important maritime routes, such as those uniting the Indian Ocean and the Far Eastern countries with the Mediterranean Sea and the European countries through the Red Sea. Its two ports have good anchorage, size and facilities sufficient for a prominent commercial position, both with regard to the maritime routes themselves and access to and from the rich lands of the interior.

258. This privileged position could be better taken advantage of for the economic development of Eritrea through the establishment of free zones in the ports of Massawa and Assab, which, besides attracting great quantities of merchandise to such ports, would enormously facilitate an extensive commercial exchange and, in a very special way, the external trade of Ethiopia.

259. As is the case in all countries under colonial régime, Eritrea has a decided disequilibrium in her balance of trade. Her exports reach an average of £1,600,000, while her imports exceed £3,000,000. It should be remembered that these figures correspond to the present abnormal period in which, for example, Eritrea, while able to produce enough coffee for its own consumption and even for export of a certain amount, is importing 500 tons annually at a value of £75,000. It should also be remembered that, due to that colonial policy, its imports are subject to special controls and it cannot freely negotiate for the imports of its requirements in the most favourable markets, but only in those which the authorities permit. These are seldom the least expensive or the nearest.

260. The Eritrean Chamber of Commerce has explained that the deficit in the balance of trade is smaller than it seems to be, since important invisible revenue items have not been taken into consideration, and points out the following as concrete instances: (a) revenue derived from transit trade (£25,500); (b) revenue derived from land transportation (£34,000); (c) sea cargo and passenger fares (£27,000); (d) transport insurance policies taken out in Eritrea (£5,000); (e) air cargo (£12,187); (f) tourist trade, including movement of foreigners (£20,000); (g) payment for servicing ships and planes (£12,225). To these revenues should be added the remittances made to their families by Eritrean workers living outside the territory. Consequently, the Eritrean Chamber of Commerce reaches the conclusion that there are a number of invisible revenues, to the extent of approximately £140,000, which should be deducted from the deficit in the balance of trade.

261. It is necessary to stress also that this deficit in the balance of trade, as well as that which at present exists

in the budget, which will be dealt with below, is due also in part to the following factors: (a) the complete lack of bank credit for agriculture, industry and trade; (b) the inadequate system of taxation in force; (c) the customs system in force, which is also inadequate and antiquated and tends to direct the trade to and from specific countries; (d) the lack of proper organization in the ports, which would expedite the traffic of goods and the increase in their volume; (e) the policy of transport, designed only to solve the problem of the operation of the railways; (f) the impossibility of negotiating commercial treaties with other countries at present. In this regard, one cannot fail to note another important factor relating to the imports of foreign products, equal and often inferior in quality to the products of Eritrea. For example, we ourselves saw in the territory matches imported from India and the Union of South Africa, and butter imported from Australia.

262. The budget of revenue and of administrative expenditure has also, as in almost all colonial territories, a substantial deficit—around £400,000 in the current budget—which itself hardly amounts to a total of £2,800,000. It should be emphasized that the greater part of the Eritrean budget is allocated to Police and Prisons to the amount of almost £400,000, while Education receives only £107,000 and Agriculture hardly £56,000. This fact is the more significant because, in spite of the amount allocated to the police service, the Administering Authority has not been capable of maintaining order and security in the territory.

263. The budget deficit, however, will easily disappear with the return to the country of normal conditions and, above all, tranquillity. The normal increase of economic activities will itself balance the budget deficit, mainly through a more careful and less expensive administration than the colonial one, a more just revision of taxes, a more economic and effective system for their collection, the suppression of arbitrary exemptions, such as the one at present applied to officials of the Administration who pay taxes in London and not in Eritrea, in spite of the fact that they receive salaries paid out of the meagre budget of the territory.

264. Finally, Eritrea would be able to maintain, in normal conditions, an economic position which would allow it to live and progress with dignity, to balance its trade and not only to eliminate the budget deficits of the previous years, but even to increase its income in such a way as to be able to take care of the urgent and pressing requirements of its population, in social, educational and agricultural matters and gradually to undertake the work of progress and betterment in all aspects of the life of the Eritrean community, with the technical assistance which

could be provided by the specialized agencies of the United Nations.

#### Conclusions

265. We believe the best solution for the future of Eritrea to be independence. But, at the same time, we are of the opinion that independence cannot be made effective immediately. Therefore, the welfare of Eritrea can best be promoted by placing the territory under direct trusteeship by the United Nations for a maximum period of ten year, at the end of which it should become completely independent.

266. The Charter of the United Nations provides that territories of certain categories, which include those detached from enemy States as a result of the Second World War, are to be treated as Trust Territories with the objective of their progressive development towards self-government or independence.

267. Therefore, we recommend to the General Assembly:

(1) That Eritrea, within its present boundaries, shall be an independent sovereign State.

(2) That this independence shall become effective at the end of a period of ten years from the date on which the General Assembly approves this recommendation.

(3) That, during the period mentioned in paragraph 2, Eritrea shall be placed under the International Trusteeship System, with the United Nations itself as the Administering Authority.

(4) That the Administrator who exercises authority on behalf of the United Nations be appointed by the General Assembly and be assisted and advised by an advisory council composed of representatives of the following States:

United States of America (in view of its contribution to the programme for the development of underdeveloped areas and its interest in the future of dependent territories);

Ethiopia and Italy (in view of their well-known interests);

A Muslim country (in view of the proportion of the Muslim population and to ensure geographical distribution);

A Latin-American country (in view of the principle of geographical distribution and of Latin America's interest in the fate of dependent territories).

That, to ensure the representation of the population, a representative of the Coptic Christians, a representative of the Muslims and a representative of the minorities be included in the advisory council.

(5) That economic agreements be concluded between Eritrea and Ethiopia for the primary purpose of facilitating trade and the transit of goods, and with a view to an eventual economic union.

(6) That free zones be established in the ports of Massawa and Assab to facilitate the exchange of goods and the movement of shipping, taking advantage of the special conditions of the two ports and their strategic geographical position.

(7) That, with a view to promoting the integral development of the country, the United Nations send a mission of experts from the various specialized agencies in order to make appropriate studies for the development of the country on a technical basis.

(8) That the present administering Power, on the appointment of the United Nations Administrator, shall initiate immediately all necessary steps for transfer of power to him.

It is further considered opportune to recommend:

(a) That the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization study the advisability of establishing a university with its centre at Asmara, making use of its suitable position, for the benefit not only of Eritrea but also of the neighbouring countries, which do not possess centres of higher education.

(b) That, on receipt of the report of the mission of experts recommended above, appropriate steps be taken for financing the programmes suggested for the development of Eritrea, in accordance with that mission's recommendations.

## Document 5

### *Report of the Interim Committee of the General Assembly (excerpt)*

A/1388, 1950

#### II. Work of the Interim Committee

##### A. *Consideration of the report of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea*

7. The report of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea was presented to the Interim Committee at its 39th meeting held on 13 July 1950 by Mr. Mian Ziauddin (Pakistan), Rapporteur of the Commission.

8. At the same meeting, the Committee was informed by the Secretary-General of the desire of the Italian Government to participate in the discussions of the Committee on the question of Eritrea, and decided to invite the representative designated by the Italian Government to attend the meetings of the Committee for that purpose. His Excellency, Mr. Giuseppe Brusasca, Under-Secretary of States for Foreign Affairs of Italy, thereafter took part in the discussions of the Committee on this subject.

9. Debate on the report of the Commission for Eritrea took place during the 40th, 41st, 42nd, and 44th meetings, held during the period from 14 to 31 July 1950.

10. At the 45th meeting held on 15 September, the Chairman summarized the situation with respect to the report of the Commission for Eritrea in the following statement to the Interim Committee:

"The trend of the speeches in the Interim Committee, since it started the examination of the report of the Commission for Eritrea and the evident drive of all the delegations to reach a solution on a basis of compromise, encouraged me, as I expressed in our last meeting, to explore every means of reconciling the conflicting interests which have hitherto prevented any decision being reached regarding the future status of Eritrea.

"Confidential discussions, initiated jointly by the United States and United Kingdom delegations, has taken place with the representatives of the interested delegations in an endeavour to find suitable grounds for a satisfactory formula. The unremitting efforts made by these two delegations resulted in considerable progress being made in establishing principles on which such a formula could be built.

"As Chairman of the Interim Committee, I had been kept confidentially informed of the steps which were being taken as discussion proceeded and I, myself, later participated in them. When the proper moment arrived, I assumed the responsibility, again on a strictly informal basis, of taking them further. In this, Ambassador Padilla Nervo of Mexico joined, in a personal capacity, in order to widen the scope of the discussion. The formula which resulted from these strenuous efforts to seek a compromise that might lead to the solution of this complex and difficult problem appears to those who took part in the conversations under my direction as a carefully balanced formula capable of meeting the widely divergent views. It affords a common denominator to the opposing interests. It takes into consideration the positive and constructive elements contained in the report of the Commission for Eritrea and the trend of the debate in the Interim Committee. It agrees with the directives established by the Treaty of Peace and with the principles of the United Nations Charter. It respects the best interests of the inhabitants of Eritrea and affords an adequate protection to the foreigners resident therein. It recognizes the fundamental needs of Ethiopia as expressed in the discussions which have taken place in the General Assembly. Although that formula does not give entire satisfaction to all interests involved, at least it can be said that it affords a useful basis for further discussion in the General Assembly in view of finding a solution for the Eritrean question.

"Considerations which were alien to the principles involved in the solution of this problem did not permit us to recommend to the Interim Committee the formula which arose from the consultations carried on under my direction. I regret that the Interim Committee has not now the necessary time to proceed with its endeavours in order to make a set of recommendations to the General Assembly on the question of Eritrea. Much of our time was consumed in the process of consultation to arrive at a formula capable of reconciling so many divergent views, and which could obtain the necessary majority. Our inability, despite our best efforts, to succeed in reaching a consensus of opinion among a substantial number of delegations, must not however cause us to lose heart. Our strivings have not been in vain.



No striving when sincere can ever be in vain. The results of our efforts might again be taken up and carried further by the General Assembly.

"The Interim Committee did a good job. The general debate which took place here contained a wealth of wise suggestions which most surely will be greatly helpful to the General Assembly when it tackles again a settlement of this difficult problem. The question of the future destination of Eritrea was entrusted to the General Assembly for a solution, and the General Assembly cannot rest at ease before it settles that question in accordance with the prin-

## Document 6

### *General Assembly resolution concerning the report of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea and the report of the Interim Committee of the General Assembly*

A/RES/390 (V), 2 December 1950

A

Whereas by paragraph 3 of Annex XI to the Treaty of Peace with Italy, 1947, the Powers concerned have agreed to accept the recommendation of the General Assembly on the disposal of the former Italian colonies in Africa and to take appropriate measures for giving effect to it,

Whereas by paragraph 2 of the aforesaid Annex XI such disposal is to be made in the light of the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants and the interests of peace and security, taking into consideration the views of interested governments,

Now therefore

The General Assembly, in the light of the reports of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea and of the Interim Committee, and

Taking into consideration

(a) The wishes and welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea, including the views of the various racial, religious and political groups of the provinces of the territory and the capacity of the people for self-government,

(b) The interests of peace and security in East Africa,

(c) The rights and claims of Ethiopia based on geographical, historical, ethnic or economic reasons, including in particular Ethiopia's legitimate need for adequate access to the sea,

Taking into account the importance of assuring the continuing collaboration of the foreign communities in the economic development of Eritrea,

ciples of the Charter and to the advantage of the people of Eritrea.

"In view of the extremely short time which remains before the opening of the General Assembly session, I suggest that the best course for us to follow is to request our Rapporteur to make his report to the General Assembly incorporating in it this statement of the Chairman."

11. The Interim Committee concurred in the suggestion of the Chairman.

Recognizing that the disposal of Eritrea should be based on its close political and economic association with Ethiopia, and

Desiring that this association assure to the inhabitants of Eritrea the fullest respect and safeguards for their institutions, traditions, religions and languages, as well as the widest possible measure of self-government, while at the same time respecting the Constitution, institutions, traditions and the international status and identity of the Empire of Ethiopia,

A. Recommends that:

1. Eritrea shall constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown.

2. The Eritrean Government shall possess legislative, executive and judicial powers in the field of domestic affairs.

3. The jurisdiction of the Federal Government shall extend to the following matters: defence, foreign affairs, currency and finance, foreign and interstate commerce and external and interstate communications, including ports. The Federal Government shall have the power to maintain the integrity of the Federation, and shall have the right to impose uniform taxes throughout the Federation to meet the expenses of federal functions and services, it being understood that the assessment and the collection of such taxes in Eritrea are to be delegated to

<sup>1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifth Session, Supplements, Nos. 8 and 14.</sup>

the Eritrean Government, and provided that Eritrea shall bear only its just and equitable share of these expenses. The jurisdiction of the Eritrean Government shall extend to all matters not vested in the Federal Government, including the power to maintain the internal police, to levy taxes to meet the expenses of domestic functions and services, and to adopt its own budget.

4. The area of the Federation shall constitute a single area for customs purposes, and there shall be no barriers to the free movement of goods and persons within the area. Customs duties on goods entering or leaving the Federation which have their final destination or origin in Eritrea shall be assigned to Eritrea.

5. An Imperial Federal Council composed of equal numbers of Ethiopian and Eritrean representatives shall meet at least once a year and shall advise upon the common affairs of the Federation referred to in paragraph 3 above. The citizens of Eritrea shall participate in the executive and judicial branches, and shall be represented in the legislative branch, of the Federal Government, in accordance with law and in the proportion that the population of Eritrea bears to the population of the Federation.

6. A single nationality shall prevail throughout the Federation:

(a) All inhabitants of Eritrea, except persons possessing foreign nationality, shall be nationals of the Federation;

(b) All inhabitants born in Eritrea and having at least one indigenous parent or grandparent shall also be nationals of the Federation. Such persons, if in possession of a foreign nationality, shall, within six months of the coming into force of the Eritrean Constitution, be free to opt to renounce the nationality of the Federation and retain such foreign nationality. In the event that they do not so opt, they shall thereupon lose such foreign nationality;

(c) The qualifications of persons acquiring the nationality of the Federation under sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) above for exercising their rights as citizens of Eritrea shall be determined by the Constitution and laws of Eritrea;

(d) All persons possessing foreign nationality who have resided in Eritrea for ten years prior to the date of the adoption of the present resolution shall have the right, without further requirements of residence, to apply for the nationality of the Federation in accordance with federal laws. Such persons who do not thus acquire the nationality of the Federation shall be permitted to reside in and engage in peaceful and lawful pursuits in Eritrea;

The rights and interests of foreign nationals resident in Eritrea shall be guaranteed in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 7.

7. The Federal Government, as well as Eritrea, shall ensure to residents in Eritrea, without distinction of nationality, race, sex, language or religion, the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental liberties, including the following:

(a) The right to equality before the law. No discrimination shall be made against foreign enterprises in existence in Eritrea engaged in industrial, commercial, agricultural, artisan, educational or charitable activities, nor against banking institutions and insurance companies operating in Eritrea;

(b) The right to life, liberty and security of person;

(c) The right to own and dispose of property. No one shall be deprived of property, including contractual rights, without due process of law and without payment of just and effective compensation;

(d) The right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right of adopting and practising any creed or religion;

(e) The right to education;

(f) The right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association;

(g) The right to inviolability of correspondence and domicile, subject to the requirements of the law;

(h) The right to exercise any profession subject to the requirements of the law;

(i) No one shall be subject to arrest or detention without an order of a competent authority, except in case of flagrant and serious violation of the law in force. No one shall be deported except in accordance with the law;

(j) The right to a fair and equitable trial, the right of petition to the Emperor and the right of appeal to the Emperor for commutation of death sentences;

(k) Retroactivity of penal law shall be excluded;

The respect for the rights and freedoms of others and the requirements of public order and the general welfare alone will justify any limitations to the above rights.

8. Paragraphs 1 to 7 inclusive of the present resolution shall constitute the Federal Act which shall be submitted to the Emperor of Ethiopia for ratification.

9. There shall be a transition period which shall not extend beyond 15 September 1952, during which the Eritrean Government will be organized and the Eritrean Constitution prepared and put into effect.

10. There shall be a United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea appointed by the General Assembly. The Commissioner will be assisted by experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

11. During the transition period, the present administering Power shall continue to conduct the affairs of Eritrea. It shall, in consultation with the United Nations Commissioner, prepare as rapidly as possible the organization of an Eritrean administration, induct Eritre-

ans into all levels of the administration, and make arrangements for and convoke a representative assembly of Eritreans chosen by the people. It may, in agreement with the Commissioner, negotiate on behalf of the Eritreans a temporary customs union with Ethiopia to be put into effect as soon as practicable.

12. The United Nations Commissioner shall, in consultation with the administering Power, the Government of Ethiopia, and the inhabitants of Eritrea, prepare a draft of the Eritrean Constitution to be submitted to the Eritrean Assembly and shall advise and assist the Eritrean Assembly in its consideration of the Constitution. The Constitution of Eritrea shall be based on the principles of democratic government, shall include the guarantees contained in paragraph 7 of the Federal Act, shall be consistent with the provisions of the Federal Act, and shall contain provisions adopting and ratifying the Federal Act on behalf of the people of Eritrea.

13. The Federal Act and the Constitution of Eritrea shall enter into effect following ratification of the Federal Act by the Emperor of Ethiopia and following approval by the Commissioner, adoption by the Eritrean Assembly and ratification by the Emperor of Ethiopia of the Eritrean Constitution.

14. Arrangements shall be made by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as the administering Power for the transfer of power to the appropriate authorities. The transfer of power shall take place as soon as the Eritrean Constitution and the Federal Act enter into effect, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 13 above.

15. The United Nations Commissioner shall maintain his headquarters in Eritrea until the transfer of power

has been completed, and shall make appropriate reports to the General Assembly of the United Nations concerning the discharge of his functions. The Commissioner may consult with the Interim Committee of the General Assembly with respect to the discharge of his functions in the light of developments and within the terms of the present resolution. When the transfer of authority has been completed, he shall so report to the General Assembly and submit to it the text of the Eritrean Constitution;

B. Authorizes the Secretary-General, in accordance with established practice:

1. To arrange for the payment of an appropriate remuneration to the United Nations Commissioner;

2. To provide the United Nations Commissioner with such experts, staff and facilities as the Secretary-General may consider necessary to carry out the terms of the present resolution.

316th plenary meeting,  
2 December 1950

The General Assembly, to assist it in making the appointment of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea,

Decides that a Committee composed of the President of the General Assembly, two of the Vice-Presidents (Australia and Venezuela), the Chairman of the Fourth Committee and the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Political Committee shall nominate a candidate or, if no agreement can be reached, two or three candidates, for the post of United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea.

316th plenary meeting,  
2 December 1950

resolution 390 A (V), Section A, Eritrea has been under United Kingdom administration since 1941.

2. Under Article 23.3, of the Peace Treaty with Italy, bearing the date of 10 February 1947, the Governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and France were to determine jointly, within one year from the coming into force of the Treaty, the final disposal of Italy's territorial possessions in Africa, including Eritrea, to which Italy, under Article 23.1, renounced all rights and title.

3. The Four-Power Commission of Investigation for the former Italian Colonies stayed in Eritrea from 12 November 1947 to 3 January 1948. In view of the Council of Foreign Ministers not having reached any agreement upon the expiry of the period set out in Article 23.3, the following provision of Annex XI to the Peace Treaty came into effect:

"If with respect to any of these territories the Four Powers are unable to agree upon their disposal within one year from the coming into force of the Treaty of Peace with Italy, the matter shall be referred to the General Assembly of the United Nations for a recommendation, and the Four Powers agree to accept the recommendation and to take appropriate measures for giving effect to it."

4. The question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies was considered at the second part of the third regular session of the General Assembly by the First Committee, but the General Assembly rejected a resolution recommended by it providing, *inter alia*, that Eritrea, except for the Western Province, be incorporated into Ethiopia, and decided to postpone further consideration of the question. At the fourth regular session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 289 (IV), establishing the United Nations Commission for Eritrea to consist of representatives of Burma, Guatemala, Norway, Pakistan and the Union of South Africa, "to ascertain more fully the wishes and the best means of promoting the welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea, to examine the question of the disposal of Eritrea and to prepare a report for the General Assembly, together with such proposal, or proposals as it may deem appropriate for the solution of the problem of Eritrea".

5. The United Nations Commission for Eritrea held plenary, sub-commission and working group meetings in Eritrea from 14 February to 6 April 1950, and in conformity with its terms of reference, obtained information from the Administering Power and from representatives of the population of the territory including minority groups. The Commission also consulted the Governments of Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Italy and the United Kingdom and drafted its report in Geneva, where it sat between 25 April and 8 June 1950.

6. The report of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea (Official Records of the General Assembly, fifth session, Supplement No. 8 (A/1285)) included a "Memorandum submitted by the delegations of Burma, Norway and the Union of South Africa" and a "Memorandum submitted by the delegations of Guatemala and Pakistan". The various solutions advocated in the two memoranda were as follows:

(a) *The delegations of Burma and the Union of South Africa*

A federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia "on terms compatible with the self-respect and domestic autonomy of both countries" and providing for a "joint responsibility and collective action in such fields as defence, external affairs, taxation, finance, inter-state commerce and communications. A customs union and a general rule of non-discrimination would also be prerequisite."

(b) *The delegation of Norway*

Reunion of the whole territory of Eritrea to Ethiopia, it being understood that, in certain conditions and for certain purposes, the Western Province could provisionally and for a limited period of time be left under the present British Administration.

(c) *The delegations of Guatemala and Pakistan*

Direct trusteeship by the United Nations for a maximum period of ten years, at the end of which Eritrea should become completely independent. During the period of trusteeship there should be an Administrator appointed by the General Assembly and advised by a council composed of representatives of the United States of America, Ethiopia, Italy, a Moslem and a Latin-American country and a representative of the Coptic Christians, of the Moslems and of the minorities; economic agreements to be concluded between Eritrea and Ethiopia, with a view to an eventual economic union; free zones in the ports of Massawa and Assab; the United Nations to send a mission of experts from the various specialized agencies, on the report of which appropriate steps should be taken to finance the programme suggested for the development of Eritrea, and finally a study by UNESCO of the advisability of establishing a university with its centre at Asmara.

7. Pursuant to section C, paragraph 4, of resolution 289 (IV), the Interim Committee of the General Assembly considered the report of the Commission for Eritrea during its 40th, 41st, 42nd and 44th meetings, and at the 45th meeting it concurred in the suggestion of the Chairman to incorporate in the report to the General Assembly a statement by the Chairman of the Interim Committee. In this statement (A/1388) (Official Records of the General Assembly, fifth session, Supplement No. 14, p.2), the Chairman referred to confidential discussions with the representatives of the interested delegations, which had been initiated jointly by the representatives of the United Kingdom and United States of America, and in which the Chairman of the Interim Committee and Mr. Padilla

## Document 7

### Progress report of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea during the year 1951 (excerpt)

A/1959, 16 November 1951

#### Chapter I

Historical background, terms of reference and appointment of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea

##### Section 1. Historical background

1. Following the occupation of Eritrea by the Allied Armed Forces and in conformity with Article 10 of the Conditions of Armistice signed by Italy on 3 September 1943, with Article 23.2 of the Peace Treaty with Italy and with paragraph 11 of United Nations General Assembly

Nervo (Mexico) had later participated. It was further stated that, although the resulting formula afforded "a useful basis for further discussion in the General Assembly," considerations "alien to the principles involved in the solution of this problem" did not permit those participating in the discussions to recommend the formula to the Interim Committee.

8. The reports of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea and the Interim Committee of the General Assembly were considered at the fifth regular session by the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee. A draft resolution sponsored by Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Canada, Denmark, Ecuador, Greece, Liberia, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Turkey and the United States of America (A/AC.38/L.37 and Corr.1) was introduced by the representatives of the United States at the 48th meeting and approved by the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee at its 56th meeting, by 38 votes to 14, with 8 abstentions (A/1561). Further, the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee at its 64th meeting approved, by 28 votes to 4, with 4 abstentions, a second draft resolution relating to the appointment of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea (A/1561/Add.1). The General Assembly, at its 316th meeting held on 2 December 1950, adopted the first resolution submitted by the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee in its report (A/1561), by 14 votes to 10, with 4 abstentions. Further the General Assembly, at the same meeting, adopted, with a drafting change, by 45 votes to 5, with 6 abstentions, the second draft resolution submitted by the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee in its additional report (A/1561/Add.1).

### Section 3. Appointment of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea

10. By virtue of resolution 390 B (V) of 2 December 1950, *1/a* Committee, established by the General Assembly to nominate a candidate or candidates for the office of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea, agreed to nominate the following candidates:

Mr. Victor Hoo (Assistant Secretary-General);

Justice Aung Khine (Burma);

Mr. Eduardo Anze Matierzo (Bolivia).

The General Assembly, at its 325th plenary meeting on 14 December 1950, elected by secret ballot Mr. Eduardo Anze Matierzo to the office of United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea.

## Chapter II Activities of the Commissioner

### Section 1. Preliminary discussions with the Governments of the United Kingdom, Italy and Ethiopia

#### 11. (a) The United Kingdom

Following on an invitation received from the Government of the United Kingdom before leaving the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the Commissioner visited London on his journey to Eritrea in the last days of January 1951. There he had informal talks with officials of the British Foreign Office covering all matters of mutual concern in the implementation of the United Nations resolution. The Commissioner was given assurance of the determination of the United Kingdom Government to carry out to the letter its obligations under the United Nations resolution and hopes were expressed that there would be the closest co-operation between the Commissioner and the Administering Authority.

#### 12. (b) Italy

Continuing his journey to Eritrea, the Commissioner accepted an invitation from the Italian Government to stop in Rome for informal talks with members of the Government. In the course of the talks he was given full assurance of the desire of the Italian Government to collaborate with him in the fulfilment of his mission.

#### 13. (c) Ethiopia

Shortly after his arrival in Eritrea, the Commissioner flew to Addis Ababa to pay a courtesy visit to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian Government. The Commissioner was received in audience by his Imperial Majesty and had unofficial conversations with members of the Ethiopian Government. Friendly expressions of a desire to collaborate in the implementation of the United Nations resolution were exchanged, and on his return to Asmara, the Commissioner informed the Eritrean Press that he felt that he had reached full agreement with the authorities in Addis Ababa on broad lines of policy and objectives. He added that he was relying on the understanding and co-operation of the Ethiopian Government for the success of his mission.

*1/ The text of the resolution reads as follows:*

"The General Assembly, to assist it in making the appointment of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea,  
"Decides that a Committee composed of the President of the General Assembly, two of the Vice-Presidents (Australia and Venezuela), the Chairman of the Fourth Committee and the Chairman of the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee shall nominate a candidate or, if no agreement can be reached, two or three candidates for the post of United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea."

### Section 2. Statement by the Commissioner on his arrival in Eritrea

14. On 9 February 1951, the day of his arrival in Eritrea, the Commissioner held a conference and other personalities and members of the Press attended. At the opening of the conference, the Commissioner made the following statement, which was subsequently conveyed to the inhabitants of Eritrea through the Press and other means of communication:

#### "(1) Inhabitants of Eritrea:

"I feel deeply moved on setting foot on Eritrean soil, where I am going to live among you, working with you and your leaders and learning to know you during the coming momentous months when your country is to be led along the path to local self-government, within a federation with your neighbour, Ethiopia.

"(2) I have been sent here to represent the United Nations, an organization of sixty nations, large and small, which was established towards the end of the Second World War in order to maintain peace, and so safeguard the welfare of the peoples of the world. This organization has for some time been trying to find a satisfactory solution for the future of Eritrea, taking into account all your problems, your history and traditions and your wishes. It has been a source of inspiration to me to find these countries, most of which have no direct interest in the future of Eritrea, striving in the spirit of the United Nations Charter to find a solution which would give satisfaction to all parties. The solution which has now been adopted is a middle-of-the-road plan which should give satisfaction not only to those who want to be united with Ethiopia, but to those who want Eritrea to be independent.

"(3) I am deeply conscious of the honour done to me by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and of the heavy responsibility it has laid on me in electing me as United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea. It gives me great satisfaction to take part in such a constructive task, the implementation of which will, I hope, bring happiness, stability and freedom to the people of Eritrea. I am also very happy that the plan will give satisfaction to Ethiopia in recognizing her claims for an outlet to the sea, and the historical ties and traditions binding Ethiopia and Eritrea. May it bring about one great country in Africa, in which all the inhabitants will have equal right to live peacefully and to receive legal protection.

"(4) My principal task will be to draft a constitution for Eritrea and to assist and advise you in adopting its provisions. I cannot help you, however, towards this goal of brotherhood unless you are all prepared, irrespective of party or creed, to help me in this important work. To carry this out successfully the first condition is that strife must disappear and that you all accept peacefully and with single-hearted co-operation this decision of the United Nations, which is in keeping with the high principles of the United Nations Charter. These same principles have inspired all the decisions of the United Nations, and, indeed, they have guided the Members of the United Nations in finding what is considered as a fair and just solution for the future of your country. It has been recommended by a majority of nations, both large ones and small ones—such as my own country, Bolivia—that Eritrea and Ethiopia shall become a federation under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown, with Eritrea constituting an autonomous unit.

"(5) You now have new hopes for the future on which to build. This new spirit has been already shown in the discussions at Lake Success, when all the interested countries showed a remarkable spirit of compromise, and gave assurances that they would carry out the plan adopted and aid the United Nations Commissioner. In these discussions the General Assembly was deeply impressed with the sincerity and tenor of the statement made by the Ethiopian Foreign Minister. He stated before the assembled United Nations that, while feeling that the recommendations would not entirely satisfy the hopes of the Eritrean population or the claims of Ethiopia, his country would respect them and would loyally exert all its efforts to bring about their implementation. He also stated that the Ethiopian Government had deeply at heart the interests and the welfare of the population of Eritrea; that Moslems in Eritrea could be assured of the fullest respect for their rights and privileges and would receive equal opportunities for posts in Ethiopia and Eritrea; that no bitterness or discrimination would be shown towards any political group in Eritrea; that Italians would not be treated as former enemies, but as friends, and, in fact, that all Eritreans, irrespective of their former political attitude, would be brothers with the Ethiopian people, thus bringing to an end a long epoch of exile and sufferings.

"(6) I was also impressed with the statement by the representative of the British Government, who pledged his Government to do its best to carry out



the General Assembly's recommendations for a Federation between Ethiopia and Eritrea. I have since received in London the renewed assurances of the British Government that it will do its utmost to support me in my task and to carry out the United Nations decision. I should like to emphasize at this point that the British, who liberated your territory in the Second World War, have borne the burden of administering Eritrea for the last ten years. With their traditional high sense of duty and responsibility they have carried this out constructively and have laid the foundations on which Eritrea could develop politically.

"(7) In this respect I can also say the same thing of the Italian Government. Not only did its representatives make sincere statements at Lake Success, showing its willingness loyally to abide by the United Nations decision, but I have received renewed personal assurances from the Italian Government in Rome in recent days. I fully realize that the existence of the Italian population in Eritrea has been and will be one of the important factors in the progress and development of Eritrea under federation."

"(8) In my concern for the future well-being of Eritrea, I visited Washington before leaving for Asmara, and was very happy to find that the United States Government had very much at heart the welfare of Eritrea. The United States is ready to help the Eritrean people with economic and technical assistance within the framework of President Truman's plan, known as Point Four, which is designed to help the under-developed countries. I can also say that the Secretary-General of the United Nations is prepared to help by providing all the staff I need to assist me. He has also given me assurances that his staff of technical assistants are ready to assist in the progress of Eritrea. I am very hopeful that all these offers, given in the spirit of co-operation, will help to build a new political entity in Africa.

"(9) I will try now to explain to you more clearly what the resolution adopted by the General Assembly means to your territory. Eritrea will have a government of its own which will possess legislative, executive and judicial powers in internal and domestic affairs. The jurisdiction of the Federal Government, in which Eritreans will be included, will extend to defence of the whole territory, to foreign affairs, currency and finance, foreign and interstate commerce and communications both external and interstate, including ports. All these matters are clearly set out in a Federal Act which has been drawn up and recommended by the United Nations, and

which will be submitted to the Emperor of Ethiopia for ratification. The Act will ensure to residents in Eritrea, without distinction of nationality, race, sex, language or religion, the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental liberties. In plainer terms, this means that all of you who inhabit Eritrea will have the right to live freely and peacefully, to own property, to hold your own opinions, to follow your own religion, to receive education and to have the right of fair trial, with the right of petition to the Emperor.

"(10) The first step towards this goal will be the formation of a representative Eritrean assembly. The British Administration, which will continue to conduct the affairs of Eritrea while the plans of which I have told you are being put into effect, will, in consultation with me, organize as early as possible an Eritrean public administration in which Eritreans will serve at all levels.

"(11) *Inhabitants of Eritrea*, the United Nations has set you an example of conciliation and compromise. It is for you now, in that same spirit, to grasp firmly this opportunity and, setting aside your personal views and differences to join together in the single purpose of serving your country during this momentous period, when the foundations are to be laid for an Eritrean Administration in federation with Ethiopia.

"(12) In conclusion, I can warmly assure you that I shall not spare myself in labouring to bring about the successful conclusion of the responsible task laid on me by the United Nations. I am here as your friend to help you, and my door will always be open to you. I appeal to you all to assist me and the British Administration by exercising restraint, peacefulness, loyalty and brotherly love, so that the interests of you all, of your country and of Ethiopia may be served, and the wishes of the United Nations fulfilled."

### Section 3. *Initial visits of the Commission to various parts of Eritrea*

15. The Commissioner, shortly after his arrival in Eritrea on 9 February, 1951, embarked upon a series of personal visits to various towns and villages in the territory. The visits extended over a period of eleven weeks, from 28 February to 12 May 1951, inclusive.

16. The purpose of such visits was twofold. In the first place they were designed to give the Commissioner a first-hand impression of the inhabitants, their way of life, the character of the country and its agricultural and other resources, while at the same time, the Commis-

sioner would learn something of the problems of the inhabitants, their hopes and their aspirations. In the second place, the visits would give the inhabitants an opportunity to meet the Commissioner and express their views concerning the plan for Federation as well as permit the Commissioner to explain in some detail the background of the General Assembly's recommendation for federation, the nature of his task and the future status of Eritrea federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown.

17. With the assistance of the British Administration, the Commissioner, accompanied by members of his staff, visited almost all the principal centres of population as well as numerous towns and villages. He talked with district and tribal chiefs, village elders, religious and political personalities, peasants, artisans, and representatives of minority groups. He visited agricultural concessions, mining properties, factories, schools, hospitals and public works, and was made acquainted with the administrative, legislative and judicial machinery of government. He also visited the port of Assab, approximately two hours by air from Asmara.

18. All political groups and indeed, all sections of the population with which the Commissioner came into contact, voiced their approval and acceptance of the General Assembly's resolution of 2 December 1950, and the Commissioner was given assurances of their support in the discharge of his responsibilities. In turn, he urged them to work together in a spirit of harmony and co-operation so that the terms of the General Assembly's resolution would be carried out during the transition period with a minimum of friction.

19. In spite of the acceptance of the idea of federation, however, the Commissioner had an impression of pessimism among the population, which he ascribed to the lack of security in the territory. He also had the feeling that a number of people did not fully believe in the federal solution or in the possibility of its being carried through. On all possible occasions, therefore, he attempted to instill a spirit of optimism and self-confidence into the population.

## Chapter III Developments in Eritrea

### Section 1. *Security: The shifita problem*

150. The problem of organized banditry and terrorism carried out by *shifita* in Eritrea on a wide scale until very recently was one which the Administration had the greatest difficulty in meeting.

151. During recent years, *shifita* activity progressively increased in scope and intensity to such an extent

that lives and property in unguarded areas became endangered and the economic life of the country suffered in consequence. *Shifita* activity took the form of terrorism and banditry, the latter directed against Europeans as well as against the indigenous inhabitants. It was also introduced into communal warfare and inter-tribal raids.

### *The general security situation*

152. Opinion was widely shared that final agreement on the plan for federation would result in the restoration of more normal conditions and thereby reduce, if not eliminate entirely, the *shifita* menace. Unfortunately, this expectation was not realized during the first part of 1951. Apart from communal and tribal disputes in which the *shifita* appeared to have taken an active part, organized banditry and terrorism against peaceful elements of the population perpetrated by *shifita* gangs increased in intensity and over a wide area of the country. *Shifita* activity took the form of armed hold-ups of trains, buses and individuals, the theft and destruction of cattle and other property, raids on concessions and attacks on villages, police posts and motor convoys, resulting in the killing and wounding of a considerable number of innocent civilians, police and military personnel. Free movement outside Asmara and other towns was consequently restricted by the authorities and normal economic and social intercourse severely curtailed.

### *Action by the United Nations Commissioner*

153. Since his arrival in Eritrea, the United Nations Commissioner has been deeply concerned with the problem. While realizing that under the terms of the United Nations resolution he had no direct responsibility for security in the country, he felt entitled, nevertheless, to take cognizance of the situation. In his initial visits to various parts of Eritrea, he had urged all sections of the population to work toward a common goal in a spirit of understanding and co-operation and to assist the British Administration and himself wholeheartedly in carrying out their respective tasks. In that connexion, he deplored *shifita* terrorism and expressed his earnest desire to see security re-established throughout the country in order that plans for federation could be carried out unimpeded by strife and bloodshed.

154. On 31 March 1951, the Commissioner addressed a communication to the Chief Administrator, in which he declared his preoccupation with the problem and offered the moral weight of the United Nations in dealing with what he considered to be a grave emergency. He believed that the activities of *shifita* were having a

<sup>1/</sup> A schedule of visits is contained in Annex 1 [not reproduced here].  
<sup>3/</sup> A/C.4/R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.8, R.9, R.14.

detrimental effect on public opinion at a time when it was important to ensure a feeling of security and confidence among the inhabitants in order to implement properly the provisions of the United Nations resolution of 2 December 1950. He agreed that one approach to the problem would be the institution of an amnesty programme combined with a vigorous policy of carrying out sentences against *shifita*.<sup>4/</sup>

155. At a press conference held in Asmara on 4 April 1951, the Commissioner condemned the activities of *shifita* against lives and property in Eritrea and reiterated the views which he had communicated to the Chief Administrator in his letter of 31 March 1951. <sup>5/</sup> The Commissioner also became deeply interested in the methods pursued by the British Administration in combating *shifita* terrorism and on two occasions (19-20 April 1951), on an invitation from the Administration, the Commissioner, accompanied by the Special Advisor to the Chief Administrator, journeyed to a number of remote localities in small observation planes in order to inspect police field force posts and discuss the situation with the officers in charge.

156. In spite of the Administration's earnest efforts to combat banditry and terrorism, the situation in the view of the Commissioner showed no appreciable improvement during the ensuing month. Consequently, on the eve of inaugurating consultations with the inhabitants concerning the preparation of a draft of the Eritrean constitution, on 1 May 1951, he announced that he felt compelled to postpone consultations because of the condition of insecurity which continued to exist throughout the territory. In making this announcement he voiced the following views:

"I do not believe it advisable, from the psychological point of view, to begin these consultations at a time when the population, which desires peace and security above all else, is in danger. Furthermore, I do not think it proper that I should travel about the country, flying the flag of the United Nations, over roads stained with the blood of people attacked by the terrorists. While I know there are cases where the United Nations flag has had to be flown over roads stained with blood, it has been as a symbol of the United Nations stand against aggression and in the protection of human rights. Finally, my conscience will not allow me to travel at present throughout the territory with an armed escort, while the inhabitants whom I desire to meet will run the risk of ambushes and attacks from *shifita* when coming to meet me.

"I want you to know that this decision does not in any way constitute a cessation but only a postpone-

ment of the consultations with the inhabitants; the staff of the United Nations will continue with the complicated task of the preparatory work. I may, however, in the meantime, consult members of the population who will not incur any risks by having to travel long distances for this purpose.

"I have the profound hope that this delay in my work will only be of short duration, and that soon the situation will have improved sufficiently to permit me to meet the inhabitants of Eritrea in an atmosphere of optimism and security; such improvement will be the harbinger of a happy future for this country.<sup>6/</sup>

157. In a letter dated 21 May 1951, addressed to the Commissioner, the Chief Administrator made the following observations concerning the Commissioner's statement of 1 May 1951:

"On my return to Eritrea my attention has been drawn to your statement to the press on 1st May last regarding the effect of banditry on the populace.

"I appreciate that your motive, as you explained in a subsequent speech, was to make a moral protest against the prevailing lawlessness in Eritrea. But your statement might, I suggest, give a reader, and particularly a reader outside Eritrea, the impression that the lives and property of the population at large are endangered and that the people you wish to consult in accordance with the United Nations resolution are threatened with intimidation by violence for political reasons.

"It is regrettably true that banditry has continued in spite of the United Nations resolution of December 1950 but it is generally considered to have lost the political complexion formerly attributed to it. On the contrary, the political parties which were formerly in bitter opposition presented an agreed and joint address at your recent meetings in Asmara.

"The evidence available to the British Administration does not lead me to believe that persons you have consulted have been subject to intimidation nor that those you may wish to meet are endangered for political reasons. In the three months which have elapsed since the United Nations Commissioner arrived in Eritrea, two persons have lost their lives while travelling on the main roads. The remaining fatal civilian casualties, some sixty in number, occurred in tribal and communal affairs and acts of

<sup>4/</sup> The full text of the communication is contained in Annex 10.  
<sup>5/</sup> N/A C.44/R.7.  
<sup>6/</sup> Annex 11.

armed brigandage. The highway robberies which have occurred were indiscriminate acts for reasons of gain and had no apparent political complexion.

"I do not wish to suggest that this letter should be communicated to the press or otherwise published but I should be grateful if you would give it the same distribution in official circles as was given to your statement. Its contents are not intended to influence your own conclusions but only to record the opinion of the British Administration in pursuance of the full, frank and close consultations which we mutually maintain in all aspects of our joint task."<sup>7/</sup>

158. The Commissioner, in a communication dated 24 May 1951, addressed to the Chief Administrator, replied in the following terms:

"I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 21 May 1951, concerning my statement to the Press on 1st May 1951, regarding the effect of banditry on the population of Eritrea.

"While I am still concerned about the gravity of the problems of banditry and public security in this country, I have taken note of the optimistic picture which you have presented in your letter:

"I am particularly pleased to have received your Excellency's communication on this important subject at a moment when His Britannic Majesty's Government has approved a measure which I am sure will contribute to the pacification of this country, and in whose execution I am prepared to assist to the extent of my abilities.

"I am happy to inform you that, in accordance with the wish expressed in your letter, I am making the necessary arrangements so that it may have the same distribution in official circles as was given to my statement, in order that the opinion of the British Administration may be placed on record."<sup>8/</sup>

159. By letter of 26 July 1951, the Chief Administrator replied to the Commissioner as follows:

"I have refrained until now from acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 24th May, regarding the effect of banditry on the population of Eritrea, because I wished, before doing so, to be in a position to gauge the effect of the measures the British Administration has been taking to suppress banditry since your letter was written. I am glad to say that they have met with considerable success.

"With respect, I would suggest to Your Excellency that I drew no optimistic picture of banditry or public security in my letter of 21st May 1951. The

letter simply explained that, in my view, the persons whom you had consulted in Eritrea had not been subjected to political intimidation from bandits, and that those whom you wished to meet were not in danger of politically inspired attacks by bandits because they were coming to meet you for your consultations. I felt it necessary to do this because your public statement on the 1st May might give the impression that such political intimidation was rife."

160. By letter of September 1951, the Commissioner informed the Chief Administrator that in his statement of May 1951 announcing the postponement of consultations with the inhabitants, he had not intended to imply that persons who came to consult him were in danger for political reasons. His main concern was that conditions of insecurity in the territory had led to pessimism and fear, and therefore he had considered it inadvisable to initiate consultations in such an atmosphere as prevailed at that time.

*Measures taken by the British Administration to combat shifita activity: proclamation of a general amnesty and other security measures*

161. The British Administration, meanwhile, had had under consideration for some time a plan for granting a general amnesty to all *shifita* in respect of their past lawless activities, linked with vigorous measures to be taken against *shifita* who failed to surrender or who committed offences following the proclamation of a general amnesty. Such a plan for combating *shifita* activity was favoured by important groups among the inhabitants. Furthermore, it was held to be in keeping with local traditions and historical precedents, although a conditional amnesty in the past, while inducing large numbers to surrender, had not brought about the elimination of *shifita* bands.

162. On 19 June 1951, the Chief Administrator proclaimed a General Amnesty which carried the following provisions:

"GENERAL ASSEMBLY

"In view of the United Nations resolution concerning the Federation of Ethiopia and Eritrea and in view of the necessity for creating an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity in which to give effect to this resolution, His Majesty's Government have approved the granting of a General Amnesty in the following terms to all *shifitas* in respect of their past activities as *shifitas*.

<sup>7/</sup> Annex 12.  
<sup>8/</sup> Annex 12.

"No action will be taken by the police or by the courts against any *shifita* in respect of his past activities as a *shifita* if he presents himself to a competent official of the Administration within one month after the date of this Notice and had not committed any offence after the terms of this Amnesty have received general publicity. The *shifitas* who so present themselves to the authorities will be required to hand over their arms.

"The most rigorous action will be taken against *shifitas* who do not avail themselves of this Amnesty, or who commit offences after this Notice has received general publicity.

"If this offer of Amnesty is successful in bringing about a cessation of *shifita* activities, a Commission will be set up to advise the Chief Administration regarding the review of sentences on *shifitas* now in prison which have been imposed on them in respect of offences committed by them as *shifitas*, and the extension to such *shifitas* of the benefits of this Amnesty.

"The Administration expects those who take advantage of this General Amnesty to return to their families and resume their normal peaceful occupations. Should circumstances make this impossible in all cases temporary provision will be made for their subsistence by public works and other means.

"Disputes and feuds which have been created during the period of *shifita* activities will be settled, as far as possible, by customary methods of conciliation and compensation.

"Detailed instructions to give effect to the above will be issued to officers of the Administration and by other means." 9/

163. This proclamation was accompanied by a "Notice to the Public" which stated that "His Excellency the Chief Administrator in proclaiming the general amnesty published to-day wishes it to be known that H.M.G. are desirous of bringing peace to Eritrea by traditional methods of clemency and pardon. He has been guided in recommending this course by the advice he has received from almost every organ of public opinion in the country and all sections of the people, as well as the expressed desire of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia that peace should be restored to Eritrea by traditional and merciful means. The opposite course would entail further hardship to the guilty and innocent alike. He therefore now appeals to the people of Eritrea to extend the same measure of forgiveness for the injuries they have suffered from those to whom the Administration is now offering clemency. He calls upon all the people, including the

injured and those who have caused their injuries, to co-operate with the Administration in making the amnesty offered by H.M.G. the means of restoring peace. He also expects the people of Eritrea to co-operate with the Administration for the prevention of further crimes by refusing help of any kind to those who remain *shifita* and for helping the Administration to capture those who commit criminal acts hereafter." 10/

164. In order to deal more effectively with the security situation in Eritrea and to implement that section of the General Amnesty proclamation providing for rigorous action against *shifita* who failed to surrender or who committed offences following the proclamation announcement, the Chief Administrator, in a proclamation issued a few days before the General Amnesty, i.e. on 14 June 1951, established special courts to deal with armed bands or persons who sheltered or assisted armed bands. In addition, the proclamation provided for communal responsibility according to which collective fines could be imposed on a community if there was reason to believe that offences had been committed within the community area. Community bonds could also be demanded in order to secure public order. 11/ A number of *shifita*, who subsequently committed offences employing threats of armed force, were tried and convicted under the provisions of the proclamation and executed by hanging.

#### *Steps taken by the Commissioner following the proclamation of a General Amnesty*

165. Simultaneously with the proclamation of a General Amnesty by the British Administration, the United Nations Commissioner made the following announcement:

"I have been informed by the Chief Administrator that His Britannic Majesty's Government has approved the granting of a general amnesty to all *shifita*, irrespective of their past activities. As I have already stated publicly on many occasions, in my capacity of United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea, I have been, and am, deeply concerned about the *shifita* outrages on human life and property and *shifita* terrorism which has seriously affected the economic activities of Eritrea and divided its people amongst themselves, causing strife and bloodshed between them at a time when, under the auspices of the United Nations, a dramatic evolution in Eritrean history is in the course of preparation. As I have said before, the General Assembly resolution on the future of Eritrea, which is destined to conciliate the

9/ Annex 13.

10/ *Ibid.*

11/ The full text of proclamation No. 104 is contained in A/C.44/L.1.

aspirations of the people of Eritrea and to provide peace and progress in this part of Africa must, before it can be realized, have the solid support of all Eritreans, united in faith, in the achievement of a common destiny.

"I have made every effort to understand the genesis of the problem and to acquaint myself with the thoughts of the leaders of Eritrean public opinion and I am in complete agreement with His Britannic Majesty's Government in affirming that almost all organs of public opinion and almost all sections of the population are united in recommending the re-establishment of peace in Eritrea through traditional methods of clemency and mercy. Nevertheless, the adoption of these methods pre-supposes unanimity and solidarity in reaching these high objectives, and must not in any event be allowed to lead to anarchy and disturbances.

"I consider that the duty given to me by the General Assembly of the United Nations—that of preparing a constitution and assisting and advising in its consideration—is not merely an academic exercise but a matter of political importance. This political mission must have the backing of the people of Eritrea, acting together in the interests of liberty and order, free from fear, and protected by principles established by a civilized world for the preservation of human life and property. In this spirit and to this end, I, the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea, believe it my duty strongly to support the measures of clemency and mercy granted by His Britannic Majesty's Government for the purpose of restoring an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity in which to give effect to the resolution of the United Nations concerning the federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

"I hope that in such an atmosphere it will be possible to lay the foundations on which the Eritrean constitution must be based, and I sincerely hope, therefore, that the objectives behind these constructive measures will be fully realized. To this end I offer the moral weight of the United Nations and invoke the principles of the Charter in making a strong appeal to *shifita* to take advantage of the general amnesty and to become loyal and peaceful citizens of their country, playing their part and shouldering responsibility in the development of their common future. I also call upon the inhabitants of Eritrea to co-operate with the British Administration in putting into effect this great enterprise which I hope will open up a new era of peace in Eritrea." 12/

166. At a conference held in Asmara on 29 June 1951 at which prominent personalities and members of the Press were present, the Commissioner announced his intention to proceed with his plan for consulting the inhabitants of Eritrea concerning the preparation of a draft of the Eritrean constitution.

#### *Results of the General Amnesty and the present security situation*

167. On 21 July 1951, the British Administration issued the following communication:

"On 19th June 1951, the Chief Administrator of Eritrea published a notice approving an amnesty to all bandits who surrendered with their arms within a month. At the same time a new public security proclamation was promulgated giving the Chief Administrator greater powers for the repression and prevention of banditry.

"As a result of tribal and inter-communal strife in which armed bandits were participating an area in Eastern Eritrea was put under military authority on 23 June. Police action against recalcitrant bandits was taken throughout the country.

"During the period of the amnesty 1,086 13/ bandits have surrendered and 93 arrests were made under the public security proclamation. Measures have also been taken by the British Administration to assist the return of the surrendered bandits to normal life and to settle outstanding tribal and individual feuds. Measures are being taken for the apprehension of bandits who have not surrendered and the prevention of banditry in the future."

168. In addition to those *shifita* who surrendered to the British Administration, many crossed the border in order to surrender to the Ethiopian authorities in accordance with an arrangement between the two administrations. The majority of known *shifita* leaders have surrendered, either to the British Administration or to the Ethiopian authorities, and the number at present at large is considered to be negligible.

169. The success of the general amnesty programme and the new security measures put into effect may be gauged by the fact that the movement of all road transport throughout Eritrea, with two minor exceptions, 14/ was finally decontrolled as of 3 August 1951, and rail transport now proceeds unescorted by police.

12/ A/C.44/L.1.

13/ The final number of surrenders, including many allowed after 19 July 1951, amounted to 1,330.

14/ From Adi Quala to the Ethiopian border, a distance of 18 miles, and from Senafe to the Ethiopian border, a distance of 16 miles.

The number of *shifita* incidents since the termination of the period of amnesty have been insignificant, consisting principally of cattle thefts and individual hold-ups involving the stealing of small amounts of money and clothing. Active communal and tribal disputes have also diminished in number and in importance.

170. However, since the beginning of October there has been some evidence of new *shifita* activity. As a result the Chief Administrator, on 11 October 1951, issued the following warning to all heads of Districts, Tribes and Villages:

"During the past month there has been peace in Eritrea to an extent that the country has not known for a long time. Ninety-nine persons out of every hundred in the country are thankful for this. But the hundredth man still thinks that he can make an easy living by being a *shifita* and committing crimes of violence and intimidation. Recently there have been signs that *shifita* may again become active and I wish it to be known that the strong measures taken in the past against the *shifita* and those who help them will continue. If necessary they will be made stronger still.

"*Shifita* cannot operate in Eritrea without the knowledge and help of the people. Many people have contributed to the restoring of security by resisting the *shifita* and helping the forces of law and order. I again call on all law-abiding people to prevent the *shifita* from causing further trouble. It is entirely to their advantage that they should do so because otherwise they may suffer more from the security measures of the Administration than from the *shifita*.

"The *shifita* now in action are few in number: are the people of Eritrea going to allow themselves to be intimidated by them?"

171. This notice was widely distributed in leaflet form throughout the territory and also published in the local Press.

172. Despite these few recent instances of *shifita* activity which, it is hoped, will be successfully checked, the measures taken by the British Administration to combat *shifita* terrorism have brought about the desired results, namely, the restoration of normal conditions throughout the greater part of the territory, wherein security of life and property are now reasonably well assured. The continued maintenance of security depends largely upon the effectiveness of punitive measures for combating banditry and terrorism, upon the effectiveness of rehabilitation schemes for returning *shifita* to a normal mode of life, and upon the continued co-operation of the inhabitants with the authorities to the extent that *shifita* are given no form of assistance.

#### Political trends up to 2 December 1950

173. Prior to the adoption of the General Assembly's resolution of 2 December 1950 the groupings and major policies of the political parties in Eritrea were briefly as follows:

174. The Unionist Party, concentrated predominantly in the highlands, advocated the unconditional union of Eritrea with Ethiopia. The Liberal Unionist Party and the Independent Eritrea United to Ethiopia Party, both having a relatively small following, supported conditional union with Ethiopia, while the Independent Moslem League, with headquarters in Massawa, also supported union with Ethiopia under conditions designed to protect Moslem interests. The Independent Moslem League derived its chief support from among the Moslems of the Red Sea and Hamasiem.

175. The independent Bloc was formed in 1949 by coalition of the Moslem League in Eritrea, the Liberal Progressive Party, the Nationalist Party of Massawa, the New Eritrea Party, the Italo-Eritrean Association and the Veterans Association. The Bloc was joined later by two new organizations, the Independent Eritrea Party and the Intellectual Association of Eritreans. All of these parties, united as a bloc, demanded immediate independence for Eritrea.

176. Finally, the Moslem League of the Western Province advocated a separate solution for the Western Province, namely, a ten-year trusteeship under British Administration followed by independence, leaving the rest of the territory to decide its future for itself. Qualified support was belatedly received from the Unionist and allied parties, which signified that if the majority of the inhabitants of the Western Province opposed union with Ethiopia, they would agree to a separate solution for the Western Province, provided that the rest of the territory were united with Ethiopia.

#### The situation subsequent to 2 December 1950

177. It is unnecessary in this brief review of the political situation to enter into details regarding the views of the political parties on constitutional questions, since these are covered fully in the section devoted to consultations with the inhabitants (chapter II, section 6(d)). It will be sufficient to refer to the main political developments which have taken place up to the time of completion of this report.

178. Pursuant to adoption of the General Assembly's resolution of 2 December 1950 and to the appointment of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea, a "Peace Congress" was held in Asmara on 31 December

179. by all Eritrean political parties as follows:

"All political parties of Eritrea, in view of the necessity to bring about general pacification, in the light of what has been decided on the future political status of Eritrea, have decided:

"(1) To respect in all its parts the decision to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia in conformity with the principles, the intentions and the recommendations approved by the General Assembly, and its practical implementations;

"(2) To give the best possible co-operation to the Commissioner of the United Nations with a view to drafting the constitution of Eritrea;

"(3) To facilitate the task of the British Administration with regard to the maintenance of public order and to co-operate with it to this end;

"(4) To pledge themselves that all united forces of the Eritreans will be mobilised to ensure, at the earliest possible date, the progress and prosperity of the Eritrean people."

179. Further, it was announced on 16 February 1951 15/ that a General Assembly of the "Patriotic Association, Union of Eritrea with Ethiopia" (the Unionist Party) held at Asmara on 14 February, had unanimously approved a motion expressing *inter alia* the Party's "firm intention" "fully to implement the decision of the General Assembly" and to this end to work in a spirit of harmony and goodwill with the British Administration and the United Nations Commissioner.

180. In a letter dated 17 February 1951, addressed to the United Nations Commissioner and published in "Il Quotidiano Eritrea" on 22 February 1951, it was pointed out that the "Eritrean Bloc for Independence", at a meeting of the component parties held at Decemere on 28 December 1950, had decided *inter alia* "to change its name to the 'Eritrean Democratic Front' in order to adapt it to the new situation", to respect and implement the decision to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia in conformity with the principles, intentions and recommendations approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations, if all the other interested parties did the same, and to collaborate fully with the Commissioner and the British Administration.

181. The Moslem League of the Western Province was also prepared to respect the plan for federation, although it subsequently advocated the regional division of Eritrea into two areas, one Christian and the other Moslem.

the Palace, Asmara, on 7 July 1951, the Unionist Party, by letter dated 7 July 1951, suggested that "to avoid... polemics", the Commissioner should "consult the political parties and the leaders of the political parties locally, through their representatives and spokesmen, by going, as... you did in the past, to the various districts of Eritrea, where the political groups will make known their views." It was further stated that once the consultations with the people were finished, the "heads and leaders" of the Unionist Party would make known their views on all problems.

183. The United Nations Commissioner, by letter dated 13 July 1951, accepted the procedure suggested so far as the Unionist Party was concerned.

184. A schism within the ranks of the Unionist Party, Massawa branch, took place in July and dissidents claiming to represent the Unionist Party in Massawa visited the Commissioner in Asmara, on 21 July 1951 16/ in order to express their views on constitutional issues, views which differed substantially from those expressed by Unionist Party representatives elsewhere.

185. By letter of 19 July 1951, the President of the Red Sea Province branch of the Unionist Party in Massawa informed the Commissioner that the dissident group referred to above represented no-one but themselves.

186. In April 1951 the National Party of Massawa, up to that time a member of the Eritrean Democratic Front, announced that it no longer associated itself with the Front, and shortly thereafter entered into a working partnership with the Independent Moslem League and the Moslem League of the Western Province.

187. These three parties, during the Commissioner's formal consultations at Asmara with the political parties, submitted identical documents asking for the establishment of two separate administrations in Eritrea, respectively based on the predominantly Moslem-(Western and Eastern lowlands)-and Coptic-(the Highlands) areas.

188. However, on being confronted with the "canonisation" plan 17/ by the Moslem League of the Western Province, the Commissioner, at the 10th meeting, stated that he did not feel able to take it seriously into consideration since the United Nations resolution was based on the fact that Eritrea would be an autonomous unit and the proposal appeared, therefore, to be against the spirit of the resolution. 18/

15/ "Il Quotidiano Eritrea", Asmara, 16 February 1951

16/ NAC.44/R.31

17/ NAC.44/R.22

18/ NAC.44/SR.10, pp.2 and 3

189. Following the Commissioner's disagreement with this scheme, the Moslem parties appeared to change their position. As a result, the Moslem League of the Western Province, although still advocating two separate Assemblies for the Christians and Moslems, concentrated on such constitutional issues as the Emperor's representative, the Eritrean flag and Eritrea's languages. Since these topics assumed religious or symbolic significance and involved no subject on which supporters of the country's unity differed, a new political alignment became noticeable during the Commissioner's formal consultations in the Western Province.

190. In contrast with past political differences between the Eritrean Democratic Front and, in particular, the Moslem League on the one hand and the Moslem League of the Western Province on the other, virtual identity of respective views on the main constitutional issues brought about outward signs of mutual agreement.

191. At the 48th meeting, held at Keren, a statement was handed to the Commissioner which, it was pointed out, "contained the views of the Eritrean Democratic Front, the Moslem League in Eritrea, and the Moslem League of the Western Province and which showed that they were not divided".<sup>19/</sup>

192. Again at the same meeting, a representative stressed the identity of the tenets of the Moslem League of the Western Province with the Eritrean Democratic Front's views on language, the flag and the Emperor's representative.<sup>20/</sup> While the analysis of replies given during the consultations will be found in another section, it should be noted that such claims as Friday observance or the assignment of Moslem officials to predominantly Moslem areas, lent themselves to a manifestation of Moslem solidarity.

193. It is to be noted, however, that wide differences on constitutional issues continue to be evident between the Unionist and allied parties on the one hand and the predominantly Moslem parties on the other. At this stage the situation belies the expressions of unity and faithful adherence to the provisions of the resolution made at the "Peace Congress" in Asmara on 31 December 1950 and on subsequent occasions before the Commissioner.

194. The Commissioner has viewed this development with considerable misgiving. At a press conference held at the Palace, Asmara, on 17 October 1951, the Commissioner expressed himself in the following terms:

"Although various political parties appeared to be determined to maintain their former differences of view and have not shown the expected spirit of conciliation, the inhabitants whom the Commissioner met during the course of his consultations displayed a spirit of brotherhood and tolerance and

helped to establish his great faith and hope in the future destiny of the country. It is in this spirit that the Commissioner has found a renewed stimulus which enables him to carry on his work with a feeling of optimism, of faith in the resolution of the United Nations, and with confidence in the future of Eritrea.<sup>21/</sup>

"Confident that existing differences offer no serious basis of disagreement which cannot be settled by conciliation and collaboration, I do not consider it necessary to ask the General Assembly of the United Nations to re-examine the question of Eritrea. It is, however, my intention to present a progress report for circulation among the Member nations of the United Nations at the coming meeting of the Assembly to be held in Paris."

(Signed) Eduardo ANZE MATIENZO  
United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea

#### Supplementary paragraphs to the progress report

195. Subsequent to the completion on 24 October 1951 of the progress report of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea, the Commissioner held in Asmara one formal meeting on 31 October 1951 with the Administering Authority, represented by the Chief Administrator, Eritrea and the Special Adviser, and two formal meetings on 25 October and 6 November 1951 respectively, with the Government of Ethiopia, represented by the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Ato Zaude Gabre Heywor, on the subject of the draft Eritrean constitution.

#### Consultation with the Administering Authority

196. On 31 October 1951, the Commissioner had a formal meeting<sup>22/</sup> with the Administering Authority when he gave the Chief Administrator and the Special Adviser an account of his impressions of the consultations which he had recently concluded with the inhabitants of Eritrea on the subject of the draft constitution and discussed ways of resolving the controversies which had arisen over such questions as the flag, the official languages and the representatives of the Emperor.

197. He also briefly outlined provisional ideas for the establishment of a number of organs or councils to deal with certain specific matters, ideas which would be further explored with the group of legal experts in Geneva. The Chief Administrator was in general agreement

<sup>19/</sup> A/AC.44/SR.48, p.3

<sup>20/</sup> A/AC.44/SR.48, p.4

<sup>21/</sup> Full text in Annex 7 (b) [not reproduced here].

<sup>22/</sup> A/AC.44/SR.71.

with the Commissioner's plans but stated that he would like to give further thought to the matters raised.

#### Consultations with the Government of Ethiopia

198. At a meeting<sup>23/</sup> on 25 October 1951 with the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Zaude Gabre Heywor, the Commissioner, with the purpose of making his position on certain controversial matters clear to the Government of Ethiopia, presented his point of view on the legal, political and psychological aspects of the General Assembly's resolution. The Commissioner stressed the fact that in the implementation of the resolution, he intended to abide by the letter and spirit of its provisions, taking into account, however, the realities of the problem as well as the interests and responsibilities of the Government of His Imperial Majesty.

199. At a meeting<sup>24/</sup> with the Commissioner on 6 November 1951, Mr. Zaude Gabre Heywor, Ethiopian Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, replied to some of the points raised by the Commissioner in his expose of 25 October 1951. The Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs again re-affirmed the position of the Government of Ethiopia concerning the necessity for a strong link between the Ethiopian Crown and the Eritrean executive and expressed the readiness of the Government of Ethiopia to co-operate fully at all times with the Commissioner in the execution of his task.

[Note: Annexes 1-13 and Addendum A/1959/Add.1 of 20 December 1951, concerning further consultations and statements of the United Nations Commissioner, are not reproduced here.]

<sup>23/</sup> A/AC.44/SR.70.

<sup>24/</sup> A/AC.44/SR.72.

## Document 8

### General Assembly resolution on economic and financial provisions relating to Eritrea

A/RES/530 (VI), 29 January 1952

Whereas, in accordance with the provisions of article 23 and paragraph 3 of annex XI of the Treaty of Peace with Italy,<sup>1/</sup> the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies was submitted on 15 September 1948 to the General Assembly by the Governments of France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America,

Whereas, by virtue of the above-mentioned provisions, the four Powers have agreed to accept the recommendation of the General Assembly and to take appropriate measures for giving effect to it,

Whereas the General Assembly, by resolution 390 A (V) of 2 December 1950, recommended that Eritrea be constituted an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown not later than 15 September 1952, and laid down the necessary provisions for effecting the federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia, and left for settlement by the United Nations only the problem referred to in paragraph 19 of annex XIV of the Treaty of Peace with Italy, while taking into account, *inter alia*, the importance of assuring the continuing collaboration of the foreign communities in the economic development of Eritrea,

Whereas paragraph 19 of annex XIV of the Treaty of Peace with Italy, which contains the economic and

financial provisions relating to ceded territories, states that "The provisions of this Annex shall not apply to the former Italian Colonies. The economic and financial provisions to be applied therein will form part of the arrangements for the final disposal of these territories pursuant to article 23 of the present Treaty",

Whereas it is desirable that the economic and financial provisions relating to Eritrea should be determined before Eritrea is constituted an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown in order that they may be applied as soon as possible,

#### The General Assembly

Approves the following articles:

#### Article 1

1. Subject to the provisions of paragraphs 4 and 5 of this article Eritrea<sup>2/</sup> shall receive, without payment, the movable and immovable property located in Eritrea

<sup>1/</sup> See Treaty Series, Treaties and international agreements registered or filed and recorded with the Secretariat of the United Nations, volume 49, 1950 I, No. 747.

<sup>2/</sup> The term "Eritrea" as used in the present resolution is to be interpreted in conformity with paragraph 3 of resolution 390 (V) where the jurisdiction and responsibilities of the Federal Government and the Eritrean Government are set out.



owned by the Italian State, either in its own name or in the name of the Italian administration in Eritrea, and such property shall be transferred to Eritrea not later than the effective date of the final transfer of power from the Administering Power to the appropriate authorities referred to in paragraph 14 of resolution 390 (V) of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

2. The property referred to in paragraph 1 shall be taken as comprising:

(a) The public property of the State (*demanio pubblico*);

(b) The inalienable property of the State (*patrimonio indisponibile*);

(c) The property of the Fascist Party and its organizations as listed in article 10 of the Italian Royal Decree No. 513 of 28 April 1938;

(d) The alienable property of the State (*patrimonio disponibile*);

(e) The property belonging to the autonomous agencies (*aziende autonome*) of the State which are:

*Ferrovie dell'Eritrea*

*Azienda Speciale Approvvigionamenti*

*Azienda Miniere Africa Orientale (AMAO)*

*Azienda Autonoma Strade Statali (AASS)*;

(f) The rights of the Italian State in the form of shares and similar rights in the capital of institutions, companies and associations of a public character which have their *siège social* in Eritrea. Where the operations of such institutions, companies and associations extend to Italy or to countries other than Eritrea, Eritrea shall receive only those rights of the Italian State of the Italian administration of Eritrea which appertain to the operations in Eritrea. In cases where the Italian State or the Italian administration of Eritrea exercised only managerial control over such institutions, companies and associations, Eritrea shall have no claim to any rights in those institutions, companies and associations.

3. Properties, institutions, companies and associations referred to in paragraph 2 of this article shall be transferred as they stand at the date of transfer and Eritrea will take over all commitments and liabilities outstanding at that date in connexion with those concerns.

4. Italy shall retain the ownership of the following property listed in paragraph 2 of this article, that is to say:

(a) The immovable property necessary for the functioning of Italian government representation in Eritrea; 3/

(b) The immovable and movable property as at the date of the present resolution used for the functioning of the schools and hospitals of the Italian community in Eritrea.

5. The following property listed in paragraph 2 of this article, that is to say, buildings used for worship (including the land on which they are built and their appurtenances) shall be transferred by Italy to the religious communities concerned.

6. Italian cemeteries, monuments and ossuaries in Eritrea shall be respected. Arrangements for their preservation and maintenance shall be made between Italy and, after Eritrea becomes an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia, the appropriate authority under the Federal Act.

7. Subject to the provisions of paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of this article, nothing in paragraph 1 of this article shall be taken as in any way restricting the right of the Administering Power to make, during the period of its administration, such dispositions of property referred to in paragraph 2 of this article, whether limited to that period or otherwise, as may be required by law or may be appropriate for the good government of the territory, or may be necessary for the implementation of the present resolution.

#### Article II

1. Subject to the provisions of this article, the Administering Power shall continue to have the custody of all public archives and documents located in Eritrea which relate to administrative or technical matters in Eritrea or to property which is to be transferred by Italy under article I of the present resolution or are otherwise required in connexion with the administration of the territory.

2. Italy shall hand over to the Administering Power, on request, the originals or copies of any such public archives or documents located in Italy.

3. The Administering Power shall hand over to Italy, on request, the originals or copies of any such public archives or documents located in Eritrea which are of interest to Italy or concern Italian nationals or juridical persons, especially those who or which have transferred or hereafter transfer their residence to Italy.

4. The rights and obligations of the Administering Power under the preceding provisions of this article shall, when Eritrea is constituted an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia, devolve upon the appropriate authority under the Federal Act to which the Administering Power shall hand over such public archives and documents as have been received from Italy.

5. The handing over of the above-mentioned archives and documents or copies thereof shall be exempt

3/ The nature of Italian Government representation remains for settlement between the future Federal Government and the Italian Government in accordance with international law and practice.

from payment of dues and taxes, and the cost of transport thereof shall be borne by the government requesting them.

#### Article III

The Italian social insurance organizations now operating in Eritrea shall remain wholly responsible for fulfilling all their respective obligations towards insured persons as is provided for under present social insurance legislation, and the present legal rights and obligations of the said organizations shall be respected. These obligations may be extended to include other categories of insured persons by agreement between the appropriate authority under the Federal Act and the said organizations.

#### Article IV

1. Italy shall continue to be liable for the payment of civil and military pensions or other retirement benefits earned as at the date of coming into force of the Treaty of Peace with Italy and owed by it at that date.

2. The amount of these pensions or retirement benefits shall be determined in accordance with the law which was in force in Eritrea immediately prior to the cessation of Italian administration of the territory and shall be paid directly by Italy to the persons entitled in the currency in which they were earned.

#### Article V

Eritrea shall be exempt from the payment of any portion of the Italian public debt.

#### Article VI

Italy shall return to their owners, in the shortest possible time, all ships in its possession or that of its nationals or juridical persons which are proved to have been the property of its former Eritrean subjects or to have been registered in Eritrea, except in cases in which the ships have been acquired in good faith.

#### Article VII

1. The property, rights and interests of Italian nationals, including Italian juridical persons, in Eritrea shall, provided they have been acquired in accordance with the laws prevailing at the time of acquisition, be respected. They shall not be treated less favourably than the property, rights and interests of other foreign nationals, including foreign juridical persons.

2. Italian nationals in Eritrea who have left or who leave Eritrea to settle elsewhere shall be permitted freely to sell their movable and immovable property, realize and dispose of their assets and, after settlement of any debts and taxes due from them in Eritrea, transfer their mov-

able property and the funds they possess, including the proceeds of the above-mentioned transactions, unless such property or funds were unlawfully acquired. Such transfers of property or funds shall not be subject to any export duty.

The procedure for the transfer from Eritrea of such property or funds and the times within which they may be transferred shall be determined by agreement between the Administering Power, or after Eritrea becomes an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia the appropriate authority under the Federal Act, on the one hand, and Italy on the other hand. No such agreement shall be restrict the right of transfer provided for in the paragraph above.

3. Companies incorporated under Italian law and having their *siège social* in Italy shall be dealt with under the provisions of paragraph 2 above.

Companies incorporated under Italian law and having their *siège social* in Eritrea and which wish to remove their *siège social* elsewhere shall likewise be dealt with under the provisions of paragraph 2 above, provided that more than 50 per cent of the capital of the company is owned by persons usually resident outside Eritrea and provided also that the greater part of the activity of the company is carried on outside Eritrea.

4. The property, rights and interests in Italy of former Italian nationals belonging to Eritrea and of companies previously incorporated under Italian law and having their *siège social* in Eritrea shall be respected by Italy to the same extent as the property, rights and interests of foreign nationals and of foreign companies generally.

Such persons and companies are authorized to effect the transfer and liquidation of their property, rights and interests under the same conditions as may be established under paragraph 2 above.

5. Debts owed by persons in Italy to persons in Eritrea or by persons in Eritrea to persons in Italy shall not be affected by the transfer of sovereignty. The Administering Power, Italy and, after Eritrea becomes an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia, the appropriate authority under the Federal Act, shall facilitate the settlement of such obligations. As used in this paragraph the term "persons" includes juridical persons.

#### Article VIII

1. Property, rights and interests in Eritrea which, as a result of the war, are still subject to measures of seizure, compulsory administration or sequestration, shall be restored to their owners.

2. Nothing in this article shall apply to any compulsory acquisition or requisition by the Administering

Power for public purposes in Eritrea which is valid under the civil law of Eritrea.

#### Article IX

1. The former Italian nationals belonging to Eritrea shall continue to enjoy all the rights in industrial, literary and artistic property in Italy to which they were entitled under the legislation in force at the time of the coming into force of the Treaty of Peace.

2. Until the relevant international conventions are applicable to Eritrea the rights in industrial, literary and artistic property which existed in Eritrea under Italian law shall remain in force for the period for which they would have remained in force under that law.

#### Article X

1. In this article:

(a) "Concession" means a grant by the former Italian administration or by the Administering Power or by a municipal authority of the enjoyment in Eritrea of specific rights and assets in exchange for specific obligations undertaken by the concessionaire with regard to the use and improvement of such assets, such grant being made in accordance with the laws, regulations and rules in force in Eritrea at the time of such grant;

(b) "Contract in the nature of a concession" means a lease for a period of years by the former Italian administration or by the Administering Power or by a municipal authority of land in Eritrea by the terms of which lease the tenant undertakes obligations similar to those of a concessionaire in the case of a concession, such lease not being made under any specific law, regulation or rule containing provisions for such leases.

2. Concessions granted during the period of the former Italian administration shall be recognized as valid for all purposes and shall be respected accordingly.

3. Where a concessionaire satisfies the appropriate authorities that a document of title perfecting his concession should have been issued to him but, owing to conditions created by the state of war or to *force majeure*, was not so issued, and that his concession, if it had been perfected by the issue of the document, would not be liable to revocation, the appropriate authorities shall issue a document of title to the concessionaire which shall have the same validity as the document which should have been issued originally.

4. Where the period of lease, in the case of a contract in the nature of a concession granted during the period of the former Italian administration, has expired during the period of administration by the Administering Power and has been renewed on a temporary basis by the Administering Power, or where any lease of such nature has been initially granted by the

Administering Power, such Power may, if satisfied that the tenant has fulfilled the obligations undertaken by him and that it is in the interests of the economy of Eritrea so to do, grant to the tenant a concession for such period as is appropriate having regard to the nature of the land in question.

5. A concession or contract in the nature of a concession granted during the period of the former Italian administration shall not be liable to revocation by reason of the failure by the concessionaire or tenant to fulfil any obligation of the concession or contract if the appropriate authorities are satisfied that such failure was due solely to conditions created by the state of war or to *force majeure*.

6. Where a concessionaire or tenant satisfies the appropriate authorities that any document of title evidencing his concession or contract in the nature of a concession has been lost or destroyed and the appropriate authorities are able to ascertain the terms of the document and are satisfied that the concession or contract in the nature of a concession is not liable to revocation, they shall issue to the concessionaire or tenant a new document of title which shall have the same validity as the one which has been lost or destroyed.

#### Article XI

1. A United Nations Tribunal shall be set up, composed of three persons selected by the Secretary-General for their legal qualifications from the nationals of three different States not directly interested. All or any of such persons may be members of the Tribunal provided for in article X of resolution 388 (V) of the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Tribunal, whose decisions shall be based on law, shall have the two following functions:

(a) It shall give to Italy and the Administering Power, or when Eritrea becomes an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia the appropriate authority under the Federal Act, upon request by any of those authorities, such instructions as may be required for the purpose of giving effect to the present resolution;

(b) It shall decide all disputes arising between the said authorities concerning the interpretation and application of the present resolution. The Tribunal shall be seized of any such disputes upon the unilateral request of any of those authorities.

2. The Tribunal shall have exclusive competence on matters falling within its functions in accordance with paragraph 1 of this article. In the event of any matter in dispute being referred to the Tribunal, any action pending in civil courts shall be suspended.

3. Italy, the Administering Power and, when Eritrea becomes an autonomous unit federated with

Ethiopia the appropriate authority under the Federal Act, shall supply the Tribunal as soon as possible with all the information and assistance it may need for the performance of its functions.

4. The seat of the Tribunal shall be in Eritrea. The Tribunal shall determine its own procedure. All requests referred to in paragraph 1 of this article shall be presented to the Tribunal not later than 31 December 1953 and the Tribunal shall pronounce its decision on each such request within a delay not exceeding two years from the date of its presentation to the Tribunal. As soon as its

decisions have been pronounced on all such requests pursuant to the foregoing, the Tribunal shall terminate. It shall afford to the interested parties an opportunity to present their views, and shall be entitled to request information and evidence which it may require from any authority or person whom it considers to be in a position to furnish it. In the absence of unanimity the Tribunal shall take decisions by a majority vote. Its decisions shall be final and binding.

366th plenary meeting,  
29 January 1952

## Document 9

### Final report of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea (excerpt)

A/2188, 17 October 1952

I have the honour to transmit herewith the final report on my mission for consideration by the General Assembly at its seventh regular session.

The report is submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 of resolution 390 A (V) of 2 December 1950, 1/ which lays down that the United Nations Commissioner shall make appropriate reports to the General Assembly of the United Nations concerning the discharge of his functions and that when the transfer of authority has been completed, he shall so report to the General Assembly and submit to it the text of the Eritrean Constitution.

This report, which contains a general account of the mission's work, supplements the report submitted to the General Assembly at its sixth regular session in documents A/1959 and A/1959/Add.1. Since the latter report was submitted, the following general developments have taken place.

The main item of the Commissioner's terms of reference under the resolution was the preparation of a draft Constitution to be submitted to a representative assembly of Eritreans chosen by the people.

After discussing the interpretation of the terms of resolution 390 A (V) with a panel of legal consultants, a first draft Constitution was drawn up at Geneva. In a revised form, it was then transmitted to the Administering Authority and to the Government of Ethiopia, as provided in the resolution.

The consultations took the form of veritable negotiations and resulted in the drafting of a text which was acceptable to the parties concerned. That text was submitted to the Eritrean Assembly elected by the people and convened and arranged through the good offices of the Administering Authority in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 11 of the resolution.

Some amendments were made to the draft constitution and the final text as a whole was adopted unanimously by the Eritrean Assembly on 10 July 1952. The Constitution was approved by the Commissioner on 6 August 1952 and ratified by the Emperor on 11 August 1952. It could not enter into force, however, until ratification of the Federal Act, which took place on 11 September 1952 in Addis Ababa.

Thus all the action provided for in the General Assembly resolution with respect to the Constitution has been carried out and the attached report gives a detailed account of all the relevant events; it also contains, in annex, the final text of the Constitution.

The other terms of reference under which the Commissioner was acting, not in these instances personally and in consultation with other authorities, but as an authority consulted by the Administering Authority, are also dealt with in the report.

I should like to say how much I appreciated the consistently co-operative spirit of the Administering Power and Administering Authority and to emphasize the cordial relations which prevailed throughout the consultations with the Ethiopian Government and the parties concerned. I should also like to mention the high quality of the work accomplished by the Assembly and the conciliatory spirit shown by the representatives and by the people. I also wish to thank you most warmly for your co-operation and unstinted assistance and for the competence and hard work of the members of the United Nations Secretariat whom you assigned to help me in the

1/ The text of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 390 A (V) is annexed to the report. [The resolution is reproduced here as Document 6.]

performance of my mission, and to pay a tribute to the learning of the legal experts who assisted me in the drafting the Constitution.

I have the honour to be, Sir...

E. ANZE MATIENZO  
United Nations Commissioner  
in Eritrea

## INTRODUCTION

### Section 1: Historical and Political

1. The General Assembly of the United Nations, at its fifth regular session, recommended that Eritrea should constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown. The relevant resolution, 390 A (V), of 2 December 1950, the text of which is annexed to the present report, was the culmination of four years' endeavour by the Council of the Foreign Ministers, the Paris Conference and, finally, the United Nations, to decide on the disposal of this former Italian colony, administered by the United Kingdom since 1941.

2. Eritrea lies between the Red Sea to the east, the Sudan to the north and west and Ethiopia to the south, and has an area of 117,248 sq. km. (45,800 sq. miles). From Massawa on the Red Sea to the frontier town of Sabderat in the west, the distance is almost the same as from the Sudanese frontier in the north to the Serit and Mareb rivers in the south (about 500 km). But the Red Sea Division is wedged between Ethiopia and the coast from north-west to south-east, having a length of some 600 km. and a breadth of a little more than 100 km. at certain points.

3. Although there are no accurate census figures, the British Administration estimated the population at about one million. It is made up of Christians and Moslems in roughly equal numbers, the plateau being inhabited mainly by Christians and the lowlands by Moslems.

4. The populations of the plateau (the Hamasien, Serae and Akele Guzi divisions), as well as of the "Abyssinian Districts" of the Keren region, all have practically the same social structure. The basic unit is the village community made up of kinship groups of families, among which only the settlers and their families have rights in the surrounding lands. The villages were administered in the past by a chief, assisted by elders.

5. The nomad tribes of the north and west (Sahel, Beni Amer, Mensa, etc.) comprise nobles and serfs who owed them services and tribute now for the most part abolished; class distinctions have not completely disappeared, however.

6. Thirdly, the Red Sea coast area is inhabited by the Danakils, the semi-nomadic Saho-speaking tribes and the Samhar people. Under Italian rule, tribal chieftains were added to the democratically-organized kinship groups, which had their own chiefs.

7. Finally, the peoples of the south-west (Baria and Kunama) living in semi-permanent villages, are organized in family and tribal groups, each family group having its council of elders.

8. Among the foreign communities, whose economic activity is important to the country, the Italian, Arab, Indian, Greek, Jewish and Sudanese have official organizations. The largest communities are the Italian, numbering approximately 17,000, and those coming originally from Asia, mainly Arab and Indian.

9. The Italian Administration, facilitated by the acquisition of the Bay of Assab by the Rubattino Company, began with the foundation of the colony of Eritrea (January 1890). The Italian population in Eritrea, besides being large in number, has played a big part in the development of the country (communications network, ports, town planning) and in its progress in agriculture (concessions) and industry. The Italian Administration ended in 1941 with the entry of the Allied armed forces.

10. It is at this time, in 1941, that the Unionist Party claims to have begun its activities, though pointing out that a "movement" for union with Ethiopia had long existed in Eritrea. The Four Power Commission of Investigation, however, referring to the actual founding of the party, set the date at 1946. 2/ The party's aim was unconditional union with Ethiopia.

11. Towards the end of 1946, a Moslem League of Eritrea was founded at Keren, in the Western Province; it demanded the independence of Eritrea or, if that were not considered possible, "an international trusteeship for ten years with internal independence under the control of the British Government". 3/ In 1949, this Moslem League joined with a number of less important parties to form an Independence Bloc, and changed its programme, demanding immediate independence for Eritrea.

12. Finally, the Moslem League of the Western Province, consisting of former members of the Moslem League of Eritrea and founded at the beginning of 1950, advocated a separate solution for the Western Province, namely, a period of British Administration followed by independence, the rest of the territory to be left free to decide its own future.

13. Since the Council of Foreign Ministers had not been able to reach agreement in spite of the dispatch of a Commission of Enquiry (November 1947 to January

2/ Four Powers Commission of Investigation for the former Italian colonies, vol. I, *Report on Eritrea*, p. 13.

3/ *Ibid.*, vol. I, app. 20, p. 3.

1948), the question was submitted to the United Nations General Assembly, in accordance with annex XI, paragraph 3 of the Treaty of Peace with Italy which states:

"If with respect to any of these territories the Four Powers are unable to agree upon their disposal within one year from the coming into force of the Treaty of Peace with Italy, the matter shall be referred to the General Assembly of the United Nations for a recommendation, and the Four Powers agree to accept the recommendation and to take appropriate measures for giving effect to it."

14. At its third regular session, the General Assembly, after discussion, postponed the question of the disposal of the former Italian colonies until the fourth regular session.

15. The United Nations Commission for Eritrea, established at the fourth regular session by resolution 289 A (IV), Section C, of 21 November 1949, to "ascertain all the relevant facts" and submit proposals "appropriate for the solution of the problem of Eritrea", concentrated its attention on the two following factors:

- (1) The rights and claims of Ethiopia based on geographical, historical, ethnic or economic reasons;
- (2) The need to find an acceptable compromise between the solutions recommended by the population, which ranged from independence to union with Ethiopia. 4/

16. The solution of Federation, adopted by the General Assembly by 46 votes to 10, with 4 abstentions, (resolution 390 A (V)); on the basis of proposals by the representatives of Burma and the Union of South Africa on the United Nations Commission for Eritrea, and of a draft resolution submitted by a number of delegations, 5/ took into account the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea, the interests of peace and security in East Africa and the rights and claims of Ethiopia. It was essentially a middle-of-the-road formula, and the Commissioner, having acquainted himself with the facts in Eritrea, stated on many occasions that in his view it appeared to be the best possible "compromise". 6/

Section 2: Resolutions 390 A (V) and 390 B (V) of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Terms of Reference and Election of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea

17. The text of resolution 390 A (V) of 2 December 1950, the first seven paragraphs of which form the Federal Act, is reproduced as annex I to the present report.

18. Paragraph 10 of the resolution provided for the appointment by the General Assembly of a United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea. By resolution 390 B (V),

adopted at the same meeting on 2 December 1950, it was decided to establish a Committee to assist in making the appointment. When the report of the Committee was received, the General Assembly, at its 325th plenary meeting on 14 December 1950, by secret ballot elected Mr. Eduardo Anze Matienzo to the office of United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea. 7/

19. The duties of the Commissioner and the powers conferred upon him were set out in paragraphs 12, 13 and 15 of section A of the resolution. Thanks to the co-operation and goodwill which he received from the other interested parties and from the Eritreans themselves, the Commissioner did not find it necessary to exercise the power of consultation with the Interim Committee conferred by paragraph 15 of the resolution.

20. The main duties and powers of the Commissioner are summarized below in chronological order (subject to overlapping) and in order in which they are dealt with in this report.

- (1) The duty, in consultation with:
  - (a) The Administering Authority;
  - (b) The Government of Ethiopia; and
  - (c) The inhabitants of Eritrea,of preparing a draft of the Eritrean Constitution, which shall:
  - (a) Be based on the principles of democratic government;
  - (b) Include the guarantees contained in paragraph 7 of the Federal Act; and
  - (c) Contain provisions adopting and ratifying the Federal Act on behalf of the people of Eritrea.
- (2) The duty of submitting the draft Constitution to the Eritrean Assembly.
- (3) The duty of advising and assisting the Eritrean Assembly in its consideration of the draft Constitution.
- (4) The power and, if in the Commissioner's opinion it conformed to the principles of the resolution, the duty of approving the Constitution as adopted by the Eritrean Assembly.
- (5) The duty of making appropriate reports to the General Assembly of the United Nations concerning the discharge of his functions and, having maintained his headquarters in Eritrea until the transfer of power had been completed; the duty of so reporting to the General Assembly and submitting to it the text of the Eritrean Constitution.

4/ Report of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifth Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/1285)*.

5/ Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Canada, Denmark, Ecuador, Greece, Liberia, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Turkey, United States of America (AJAC.38/L.37 and Corr. 1.).

6/ See document AJAC.44/R.55, p. 4.

7/ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifth Session, Supplement No. 8 (A/1285)*.

21. Moreover, under the provisions of paragraph 11, the Administering Authority was required to consult the United Nations Commissioner on certain matters assigned to it, namely the organization of an Eritrean administration, the induction of Eritreans into all levels of the administration and the convocation of a representative assembly of Eritreans chosen by the people. The Administering Authority was also authorized, in agreement with the Commissioner, to negotiate on behalf of the Eritreans a temporary customs union with Ethiopia.

22. The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was responsible for the transfer of power to the appropriate authorities as soon as the Eritrean Constitution and the Federal Act had entered into effect. Although not required to do so, the Administration consulted or notified the Commissioner informally at each stage of its preparations for the transfer of power. 8/

23. The difficulty of the Commissioner's task is evident from a glance at the legal framework of the resolution and the circumstances in which he was called upon to act.

24. So far as the legal framework is concerned, it may be said that the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution A (V), not only drafted the Federal Act, but laid down the principles on which the Constitution of Eritrea was to be based.

25. Within this framework, the Commissioner was himself a "subsidiary organ" of the United Nations, for the resolution made no provision for him to have a council. His mandate was of a dual nature. In the first place, he was required to act as counsel by preparing a draft Constitution, in the consideration of which he was to advise and assist the Eritrean Assembly. Secondly, the resolution gave him real powers of decision, since he was called upon to agree to any negotiation of a temporary customs union between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and to approve the Constitution of Eritrea.

26. To confer power on a United Nations Commissioner to take decisions concerning the preparation of a constitution for a political unit is a new departure.

27. The legal questions to be settled were complex:

(1) First, the Commissioner had the duty of preparing legal texts compatible with the principles and rules formally laid down by the General Assembly of the United Nations, in conformity with the wishes of the inhabitants and—since it was for the Emperor to approve the Constitution by ratification—acceptable to the Ethiopian Government. Moreover, provision for consultation with the Administering Authority was expressly made in the resolution of 2 December 1950.

(2) Secondly—a new departure in constitutional history—the Commissioner had to prepare a Constitu-

tion for an autonomous unit—Eritrea—which was a member of a Federation whose organs had not yet been fully created. The Federal Act, incorporated in the resolution of 2 December 1950, determined only the principles of the future Federation; the resolution did not stipulate how they should be put into effect by creating the necessary organs, as it did in the case of the Eritrean Constitution.

28. Beside these legal features of the resolution there was also an extremely complicated de facto situation, hardly susceptible of rapid change owing to the traditions and rights established or perpetuated during the successive phases of the country's history.

29. The main task of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea was the preparation of a constitution which in conformity with resolution 390 A (VI) would firmly establish for the future the foundations of autonomy for Eritrea federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown.

30. In accordance with paragraph 15 of the resolution, which provided that the Commissioner should make appropriate reports to the General Assembly concerning the discharge of his functions, the Commissioner submitted a Progress Report 9/ to the General Assembly at its fifth regular session.

31. The present report covers the whole of his mission and describes first the work leading up to the entry into effect of the Constitution and the enactment of the organic laws:

*Chapter I.* Preparatory work and consultations for the preparation of a draft Constitution.

*Chapter II.* Drafting of the Constitution.

*Chapter III.* Convening by the Administering Authority of a representative Assembly of Eritreans chosen by the people.

*Chapter IV.* Submission of the draft Constitution to the Eritrean Assembly. Discussions. Adoption of the amended text.

*Chapter V.* Approval of the Constitution by the Commissioner. Ratification of the Constitution and of the Federal Act by the Emperor of Ethiopia.

*Chapter VI.* Characteristic features and the legal basis of the Eritrean Constitution of 10 July 1952.

*Chapter VII.* Organic laws complementary to the Constitution.

32. Furthermore, in accordance with paragraph 11 of the resolution, the Administering Authority consulted

8/ The steps taken by the Administering Authority to implement the provisions of the resolution concerning it are the subject of a separate report to the General Assembly on the administration of Eritrea from December 1950 to September 1952 submitted by the Administering Authority and reproduced as a United Nations document (A/2233). 9/ AJ1959 and Add.1.

the Commissioner on matters coming within its competence. These consultations form the subject of:

*Chapter VIII.* Consultations with regard to a temporary customs union and the organization of an Eritrean Administration.

33. In accordance with paragraph 15 of the resolution, the Commissioner maintained his headquarters at Asmara until 15 September 1952, the date on which the transfer of power took place.

34. Paragraph 15 also required the Commissioner to submit the text of the Eritrean Constitution to the General Assembly. The final chapters therefore deal with the following matters:

*Chapter IX.* Transfer of power.

*Chapter X.* Submission of the Eritrean Constitution to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

There is also a concluding chapter containing general observations.

### CHAPTER III CONVENING BY THE ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY OF A REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ERITREANS CHOSEN BY THE PEOPLE

#### Section 1. Arrangements for the elections

406. One of the tasks which the British Administration was required to carry out in consultation with the United Nations Commissioner was to "make arrangements for and convoke a representative assembly of Eritreans chosen by the people" (resolution 390 (V), paragraph 11).

407. In accordance with its mandate, the British Administration, by Proclamation No. 121, dated 28 January 1952, adopted the procedure which, taking into account local conditions—social, geographical and political—as well as the time and means available to the officials responsible for the arrangements, it considered most appropriate. In a letter to the British Administration dated 4 February 1952, the Commissioner stated that the proclamation "shows great experience of the problem and a deep knowledge of the traditions of the country".

408. Direct elections, in a single stage, by secret ballot, were held in the towns of Asmara and Massawa only. In all other constituencies the elections were carried out in two stages, in the following way:

(1) The various districts (settled population) or tribes (nomads) elected delegates to the electoral colleges. Generally speaking, this first stage was conducted in accordance with local custom;

(2) At the second stage, the electoral college elected the members of the Assembly by secret ballot.

409. The participation of Eritreans in the primary stage in the case of indirect elections was governed, however, not by custom, but by rules established for the purpose. The qualifications required, the same as in the case of the direct elections, were as follows:

A person shall be qualified to vote if he:

1. Is an inhabitant of Eritrea; and
2. Is not a person who possesses foreign nationality and who is not descended from a parent or grandparent wholly of blood indigenous to Eritrea; and
3. Is a male; and
4. Is not less than 21 years of age; and
5. Has been ordinarily resident in the constituency for a period of not less than one year; and
6. Is of sound mind; and
7. Is not serving a term of imprisonment.

410. With regard to eligibility for election to the Assembly, the first three conditions laid down for the electorate were repeated in Proclamation No. 121; certain other requirements, such as those of age (30 instead of 21 years) and residence (not less than two years in the constituency during the last ten years), were raised; conditions were added which disqualified undischarged bankrupts or persons whose property was subject to certain measures or who were party to a subsisting contract with the Administration (unless they had disclosed the existence and nature of such contract); as regards officials employed by the Administration, they could apply for a leave of absence without pay for the purpose of furthering their candidature.

#### Section 2. Election and composition of the Eritrean Assembly

411. The various Eritrean parties had been founded and, prior to the United Nations resolution of 2 December 1950, had pursued their activities along the lines of the different solution proposed for the future of Eritrea.

412. As soon as he arrived in Eritrea, the Commissioner was obliged to emphasize the fact that from the day on which the United Nations General Assembly had adopted the recommendation regarding Federation the problem had completely changed in character. The various parties, in their replies to the Commissioner's questions on the Constitution were, no doubt, still able to attempt to steer the Federation towards a pattern differing as little as possible from their previous ideas. The very fact, however, that during the official consultations with the Commissioner the political parties were under the necessity of stating their views on the basic aspects of the Constitution gave the electorate, in full knowledge of the facts, freedom of choice among the views of the candi-

dates from the different parties. It seems certain, moreover, that the actual influence of the political parties as such was considerably stronger in the direct than in the indirect ballot constituencies, for in the latter a number of traditional considerations played a part.

413. It seems clear that, although the way in which the Administration had divided up the territory into electoral constituencies aroused some protests, mainly from the Moslems, in most cases it was impossible to please everyone. For instance, whereas the towns in the Western Province which asked to be represented in the Assembly had far too small a population—less than 9,000 in Keren and less than 6,000 in Agordat and Tessenet, the proportion having been fixed at one representative for about 15,000 people—the complaints about tribal grouping in the constituencies generally arose because the population had different views on the subject of division. In those circumstances, any concession to one point of view would have aroused discontent among those of the opposite opinion.

414. In other cases, the claims of the Moslems raised a question of principle. In point of fact the Moslems who are geographically dispersed throughout the Hamasi and Serac divisions—unlike the Christians of the Western Province who are centred in the "Abyssinian districts"—could not have voluntarily accepted a representative except on the basis of religion, which would have been anomalous in the system of territorial constituencies adopted.

415. Taking into account the fact that there were two ballots, the direct elections on 25 and 26 March 1952, and the second stage of the indirect elections on 26 March 1952, produced, in so far as it has been possible to determine precisely the political complexion of those elected, the following results:

Unionists and Liberal Unionists	32
Democratic and Independent Front (Moslem League and other parties of the Front)	18
Moslem League of the Western Province	14
National Party	1
Independent Moslem League	1
Total	66

416. In addition, a representative from the Democratic Front and a member of the Moslem League of the Western Province were elected by second ballot (indirect election) on 12 May 1952, thus amending the foregoing figures to nineteen for the Democratic Front and fifteen for the Moslem League of the Western Province.

417. At the first meeting of the Eritrean Assembly, which was inaugurated with due ceremony on 28 April 1952, the Chief Administrator in his opening address, stated that the convocation of the Assembly by the British Administration marked the beginning of democratic institutions in Eritrea as well as a step towards the Federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown. He referred to the sympathy with which the Government of the United Kingdom and the British people were following this process of development and trusted that the Assembly would discharge its task speedily so that the transfer of power could take place not later than 15 September 1952.

418. The Commissioner then made a statement in which he paid tribute to the successful holding of the elections rendered possible by the co-operative spirit displayed by the Eritrean people and the organizing ability of the British Administration. That comment was equally true of the indirect elections, but the way in which the population had adapted itself to the entirely new method of direct and secret ballot was naturally even more remarkable than the normal working of the traditional tribal and district meetings.

419. Contrasting the atmosphere of peace and brotherly feeling with the unhappy days of banditry and tribal feuds, the Commissioner exhorted the members to prove themselves worthy of the sense of responsibility and patriotism already shown by their electors.

420. He stated that the draft Constitution he would shortly be submitting to the Assembly was based strictly on the principles of the resolution, the interests of the parties concerned and the wishes of the Eritrean people. Nevertheless, since the General Assembly had adopted a compromise solution, party strife in the Assembly would be all the more dangerous, for it might destroy the balance set up by the resolution of 2 December 1950.

421. In conclusion, the Commissioner stressed the fact that Eritrea was fortunate in acquiring at the same time autonomy and a Constitution based on democratic principles. He pointed out, however, that the belief of the people in their institutions was an indispensable factor for the success of an undertaking in which, in accordance with his mandate from the General Assembly, he would do his utmost to co-operate.

422. Finally, the Representative of the Emperor of Ethiopia, bringing to the Assembly the good wishes of the Emperor, emphasized the importance and urgency of the task to be carried out. There had been a long period of waiting before it had been possible, thanks to the efforts of Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, the United States and many other Members of the United Nations, to bring about a settlement of the Eritrean question, on the basis

423. The Emperor was convinced of the sincerity and perspicacity with which the Commissioner had applied himself to drafting a Constitution, and of the need for the Assembly to succeed quickly in its task, since the future of the population, as well as peace and security in East Africa, depended upon it. The Emperor therefore exhorted the members of the Assembly to set aside all party strife, and assured Eritreans that he would regard them as his sons just as he did their Ethiopian brothers.

424. On 29 April 1952, 10/ by secret ballot, the Assembly elected Ato Tedla Bairu as President—by 49 votes to 11, with 2 abstentions, and 4 spoiled papers—and Sheikh Ali Mohamed Mussa Redai as Vice-President by 48 votes to 17 with one abstention.

425. The two who were elected had, in common, youth—both being under 40 years of age—and a knowledge of languages; they also represented different religions, the President being a Christian and the Vice-President a Moslem. A spirit of mutual tolerance among Eritreans was thus evident, which augured well for the subsequent work of the Assembly.

426. The Assembly had before it draft Standing Orders drawn up by the British Administration. The draft, while stating that the proceedings of the Assembly would be conducted in English, Arabic and Tigrinya (article 9) made provision in the same article for members to speak in Italian if they wished, in which case the speech would be interpreted into the other languages of the Assembly. The latter provision was rejected by the Assembly which, on 30 April 1952, 11/ adopted the draft Standing Orders without further amendment by 56 votes to none, with 9 abstentions.

## CHAPTER VI CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES AND LEGAL BASIS OF THE ERITREAN CONSTITUTION OF 10 JULY 1952

### Section 1. Provisions of the Eritrean Constitution deriving from the establishment of the Federation

#### A. Approval and ratification of the Federal Act

506. Since Eritrea forms part of a Federation, the legal basis of the Eritrean Constitution must first be considered within the framework of that Federation.

507. Under the terms of paragraph 12 of the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Constitution of Eritrea must contain provisions adopting and ratifying the Federal Act on behalf of the people of Eritrea. Under the terms of paragraph 8 of the resolution, the Federal Act must also be submitted to the Emperor

508. The conditions laid down in the resolution have been duly fulfilled, since the Assembly, by unanimously adopting article 1 of the Eritrean Constitution—by which the Federal Act is adopted and ratified—has confirmed the adherence to the principle of federation noted by the Commissioner during his consultations throughout the country.

#### B. Status of Eritrea

509. The Federal Act establishes the main elements of the Federal Constitution. These are as follows:

(1) The organs of the Federation, which comprise the Emperor of Ethiopia, the Imperial Federal Council, and the Federal executive, legislative and judicial branches (paragraphs 1 and 5);

(2) The respective jurisdictions of the Federation and of Eritrea (paragraphs 2, 3 and 4);

(3) The nationality of the Federation (paragraph 6).

510. Implementation measures are clearly essential to complete the structure of the Federation. They must provide, in particular, for the appointment of the Imperial Federal Council and the establishment of the Federal executive and legislative branches. Just before the transfer of powers, the Federal Government was represented solely by the Emperor of Ethiopia, who is the sovereign of the Federation. It was the duty of the Emperor to enact the constitutional and other laws required to supplement the main foundations and establish the Federal institutions in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Act. 12/

511. In view of their importance for Eritrea, the provisions of the Federal Act establishing federal institutions, defining the jurisdiction of Eritrea and determining its financial obligations and rights have been incorporated in the Constitution.

512. Thus the constitutional status of Eritrea within the Federation is restated in articles 3, 4 and 5 of the Constitution which reproduce paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of the Federal Act almost word for word.

513. The list of matters within the jurisdiction of Eritrea given in article 5, paragraph 2 of the Constitution, is not exhaustive. It is clearly stated in paragraph 1 of that article that the jurisdiction of Eritrea extends to all matters not reserved to the Federal Government.

514. Article 6 of the Constitution reproduces the provisions of paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Federal Act. It is

10/ A/AC.44/R.112.

11/ A/AC.44/R.114.

12/ These implementation measures have been initiated. They were announced by the Emperor in his speech on the ratification of the Federal Act, cf. chapter V, paragraph 497.

obvious that the effect of these provisions can in no way be modified by their incorporation in the Constitution of Eritrea. Article 6 of the Constitution should be interpreted in the same way as the corresponding provisions of the Federal Act.

515. Nevertheless the Federation certainly does not possess a unilateral power of decision as regards the application of these provisions and the matter was raised during the discussions of the Representative Assembly. Any difficulties which may arise in this connexion will have to be settled by a federal tribunal appointed for the purpose by the Federal Government and consisting of both Ethiopian and Eritrean judges.

516. Finally, the provisions of paragraph 5 of the Federal Act are incorporated in article 7 of the Constitution. Article 7, paragraph 2, merely reproduces the second part of paragraph 5 of the Federal Act. Paragraph 1 of this article supplements the first part of paragraph 5 by stipulating that Eritrean representatives in the Imperial Federal Council shall be appointed by the Chief Executive with the approval of the Assembly. The supplementary provision does not encroach upon federal powers. It is natural for the Eritrean representatives in the Imperial Federal Council to be appointed by a procedure fixed by Eritrean law. 13/

517. It is not unusual for provisions laid down in the Constitution of a Federal State to be incorporated in the Constitution of a member State. Many examples are to be found in the constitutions of the member States of the American Union. 14/

518. During its discussions, the Representative Assembly even considered the possibility of including all the provisions of the Federal Act in the Constitution. 15/ All the provisions of the Federal Act, in fact, are to be found in the Constitution whether the actual wording of the Federal Act has been reproduced or its substance retained. Under one form or another these provisions are therefore binding on Eritrea, Ethiopia and the Federation simultaneously.

#### C. Federal nationality and Eritrean citizenship

519. Article 8 of the Constitution refers to the provisions of paragraph 6 of the Federal Act concerning nationality in the Federation. It recognizes the existence of a single nationality throughout the Federation. The regulations of nationality rights is clearly a function of the Federal legislature.

520. Article 8 of the Constitution also refers to the Eritrean citizenship expressly mentioned in paragraph 6 (c) of the Federal Act. It leaves the conditions for acquiring Eritrean citizenship to be fixed by law.

521. Federations frequently recognize citizenship of their member States, apart from the nationality of the

Federation. This is true for instance of Switzerland. 16/ Conditions for the acquisition of such citizenship are laid down sometimes in the Constitution, sometimes by law and sometimes by the Constitution and the laws giving effect to it. 17/ In the organic law which amplifies clauses of the Constitution relating to the election of the Assembly, Eritrean citizens are defined as follows: "Any person who has acquired Federal nationality in Eritrea under the provisions of paragraph 6 of the Federal Act or who has acquired Eritrean citizenship under any other law for the time being in force".

522. Article 9 of the Constitution of Eritrea provides that on the basis of reciprocity, Federal nationals who are not Eritrean citizens shall enjoy the same rights as Eritreans. The two paragraphs of article 9 are complementary, not contradictory. The exercise of political rights in Eritrea by nationals of the Federation and by Eritreans is governed by the Constitution and the laws in force.

523. The equality of rights thus accorded in Eritrea to nationals of the Federation is subject to the grant, in Ethiopia, of the same privileges to nationals of the Federation who are not Ethiopian citizens. This is the sense of the reciprocity clause.

524. Similar provisions are to be found in most Federal Constitutions. 18/ The only difference is that the reciprocity clause is not included; it is not required, since the provisions of a federal constitution are equally applicable to all member groups, and reciprocity is thus compulsory. But since the Constitution of Eritrea is not law in the other part of the Federation, it is understandable that the reciprocity clause in article 9 had to be included. It guards against any violation of equality of rights to the detriment of Eritrean citizens. Moreover in the absence of any provision in the Federal Act, the provisions of

13/ *A/C.44/S.1/R.1*, page 26.

14/ Thus, article VI, 2 of the Federal Constitution is reproduced in whole or in part in the constitutions of Arizona (II.3), California (I.3), Georgia (XII.1), Idaho (I.3), Maryland (2), New Mexico (I.1), Oklahoma (I.1), South Dakota (VII.27), Utah (I.3), West Virginia (I.1), Washington State (I.2), Wyoming (I.2), Amendment X to the Federal Constitution is reproduced in the constitutions of Maryland (3), New Hampshire (I.7), and West Virginia. The provisions of amendment XIV (I) to the Federal Constitution are to be found in the constitutions of nearly all the States.

15/ *A/C.44/R.56*, page 3.

16/ Constitution of Switzerland, Article 43 of paragraph 1.

17/ The Constitution of the Canton of Appenzell, Switzerland, provides at the end of article 4 that "Detailed provisions for acquiring the status of citizen of the Canton shall be fixed by law". Cf. Constitution of Geneva, articles 18-20.

18/ Article IV, section 2, paragraph 1 of the United States Constitution provides that: "The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States". Article 43 of the Constitution of Switzerland provides that: "A Swiss national having an established domicile shall, in the place of such domicile, enjoy full rights as a citizen of the Canton and as a burgess of the commune". Article 45 guarantees the right to establish domicile.

article 9 could not have been unilaterally enacted as Federal law without the agreement of Eritrea. This agreement is given by the Constitution.

525. The reciprocity clause establishes equality of treatment of nationals of the Federation, whether they are resident in Eritrea or in Ethiopia. It does not require persons possessing federal nationality to be guaranteed the same rights in both parts of the Federation. It provides that equality of treatment shall be reciprocal and this is sufficient. 19/

#### D. Representation of the Emperor of Ethiopia in Eritrea

526. Article 10 of the Constitution provides that there shall be a representative in Eritrea of the Emperor of Ethiopia. The legal justification and effect of such representation must now be considered.

527. The problem was to give the Emperor's Representative constitutional status by including this office in the Eritrean constitutional system without impairing the autonomy of Eritrea, and thus to establish a link between the Crown, at the head of the Federation, and the democratic institutions of Eritrea. On this, as on various other questions, the Federal Act contains no express provision. The Federation it establishes is, however, a monarchy under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown.

528. In federal monarchies, the Sovereign and the Crown are the symbol of federation. They are represented in the different parts of the federation. 20/

529. In his capacity as Sovereign of the Federation, the Emperor may constitutionally instal a representative in Eritrea with the duty of co-ordinating 21/ Federal services in that country, providing liaison with the Eritrean Government and receiving the petitions to the Emperor provided for in paragraph 7 (i) of the Federal Act. Such an appointment would be compatible with the provisions of the Federal Act and would in no way encroach on Eritrean jurisdiction.

530. Thus, there was no legal reason why provisions concerning the representation of the Emperor should not be included in the Eritrean Constitution, provided that the autonomy of Eritrea and the democratic character of its institutions were not directly or indirectly impaired. It will be observed that as regards Eritrean affairs the functions assigned to the Emperor's Representative by the articles of chapter II are purely formal.

531. Article 10 does not prescribe the procedure for appointing the Emperor's Representative. This appointment rests with the Emperor; but the usual practice would be for the Imperial Government unofficially to consult the Chief of the Eritrean Executive. 22/

532. Articles 12 and 72 of the Constitution concerning the investiture and swearing-in of the Chief Executive, article 73 concerning the swearing-in of Secretaries of Executive Departments, article 13 concerning the speech from the throne and the opening and closing of sessions of the Assembly and articles 15 and 58 concerning the promulgation of legislation assign only formal duties to the Emperor's Representative.

533. The Emperor's Representative invests the Chief Executive, but plays no part in his appointment. The Chief Executive is elected by the Assembly, and it is the duty of the President of the Assembly to proclaim the election of the candidate obtaining the necessary number of votes, in accordance with article 68 of the Constitution. The President of the Assembly will officially inform the Emperor's Representative of the name of the candidate elected. The Emperor's Representative is obliged to carry out the investiture but has no right to supervise or investigate the election of the Chief Executive. Under the terms of article 12 of the Constitution, the investiture is a mere formality. It marks the formal assumption of office by the Chief Executive.

534. The same legal interpretation should be placed upon the swearing-in prescribed in articles 12, 72 and 73 of the Constitution. The wording of the oath is prescribed in the Eritrean Constitution. The oath is sworn to the Assembly before the Emperor's Representative. The latter cannot, by his abstention, prevent the Chief Executive or the Secretaries of Executive Departments from taking office.

535. The speech from the throne provided for in article 13 of the Constitution enables the Emperor, through his Representative, to deal with affairs of common interest to the Federation and to Eritrea. The speech may not deal with the domestic affairs or internal policy of Eritrea and may not be followed by any discussion or vote of the Assembly, whether favourable or unfavourable.

19/ This is the interpretation placed upon article IV, section 2, paragraph 1 of the Constitution by the Supreme Court of the United States. (See W. W. Willoughby, *The Constitutional Law of the United States*, New York, 1929, Vol. I, section 160, page 287.)

20/ This is true of the Federal States of the Commonwealth (Canada and Australia). There are representatives of the Crown in the Provinces of Canada and in the member states: Constitution of Canada (British North American Act of 1867 and subsequent amendments), articles 58 to 60; Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia (article 110) and Constitutions of the various member states.

21/ The appointment of co-ordinators for federal services in the member states, i.e., of true representatives of the President, has often been considered in a republican federal State such as the United States of America. The constitutional nature of such an appointment has never been called in question. Moreover, the President of the United States takes precedence at official ceremonies of member states.

22/ With regard to the States of the Commonwealth, the Imperial Conference of 1930 (Cmd. 3717, HMSO, London, 1930) stated that: "The parties interested in the appointment of a Governor-General of a Dominion are His Majesty the King, whose representative he is, and the Dominion concerned".

able. The speech does not bind the Chief Executive or the Eritrean Assembly in any way. 23/

536. Promulgation by the Emperor's Representative, as provided in article 15 and article 58, paragraphs 4 and 5, of legislation adopted by the Assembly, is a mere formality. The Emperor's Representative is required to promulgate such legislation within the time limits prescribed in the above-mentioned provisions.

537. In order that a law may not be prevented from coming into effect by failure to promulgate, the Constitution provides (article 58, paragraph 6) that if it is not promulgated within the time limit laid down, a law shall come into effect after publication by the Chief Executive. 24/

538. Article 14 and article 58, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Constitution give the Emperor's Representative the right to request that legislation adopted by the Assembly be reconsidered.

539. This provision does not give the Emperor's Representative the power to intervene in the domestic affairs of Eritrea. It establishes a political procedure for settling conflicts of jurisdiction which may arise between the Federation and Eritrea.

540. The Constitution of Eritrea provides certain safeguards for this procedure. A request for reconsideration is only admissible if it relates to a law which "encroaches upon Federal jurisdiction, or involves the international responsibility of the Federation". The reasons for the request must be stated and it must be transmitted to the Chief Executive within twenty days after the voting of the law by the Assembly.

541. During its second debate, the Assembly must consider whether the law complained of is in conformity with the Federal Act or not. It merely verifies the constitutionality of the law adopted, taking the observations of the Emperor's Representative into consideration.

542. This procedure is clearly incomplete and limited. It only applies to Eritrean and not to Federal laws. It does not necessarily result in a final decision on the constitutionality of the law complained of, for the Assembly can nevertheless proceed to adopt the law alleged to be unconstitutional by a two-thirds majority vote.

543. The existence of the Imperial Federal Council will allow the representatives of Eritrea to express their opinion on federal laws which they might regard as encroaching on Eritrean jurisdiction.

544. The existence of this procedure does not, however, remove the need to establish appeal procedure with the necessary safeguards.

545. These safeguards can only be provided by the setting up of an impartial Supreme Court with powers to settle conflicts of jurisdiction between the Federation and Eritrea in the final instance. 25/

#### E. Ratification by the Emperor of Ethiopia of amendments which might be made to the Constitution

546. Article 93, paragraph 3 of the Constitution provides that any amendments thereto will enter into effect after ratification by the Emperor of Ethiopia. The resolution of the United Nations General Assembly provides (paragraph 13) that the Constitution of Eritrea shall enter into effect following ratification of the Federal Act and the Constitution by the Emperor of Ethiopia. The Constitution follows up this provision by giving permanence to the intervention of the Sovereign of the Federation.

547. From a strictly legal standpoint the intervention of the Emperor of Ethiopia appeared essential. The Constitution could not enter into force without ratification by the Emperor. His ratification was given to a particular text and any modification or amendment of that text must therefore be ratified by him. This is the application of a traditional principle of law, namely the principle of the converse act or identity of procedure. 26/ Against this principle of the converse act it could, however, be objected that ratification by the Emperor of Ethiopia is not prescribed in the Federal Act. Such ratification is required by the General Assembly's resolution, together with approval by the United Nations Commis-

23/ It would be in conformity with parliamentary practice for the speech from the throne to be communicated in advance to the President of the Assembly and to the Chief Executive.

24/ It is the duty of the Chief Executive to publish any laws not promulgated by the Emperor's Representative within the constitutional time limit. Failure to discharge this duty would be a serious violation of the Constitution coming within the scope of article 75 concerning removal from office of the Chief Executive.

25/ Report of the Panel of Legal Consultants, A/AC.44/SC.1/R.1. Generally speaking, comparative constitutional law shows that the constitutionality of laws is tested both by court procedure and by political machinery. The President of the United States of America who, under article 1, section 7, paragraph 2 of the Constitution, has power to ask for reconsideration of laws adopted by Congress, makes frequent use of this power to return, for reconsideration, laws he considers to be unconstitutional. President Taft's message to Congress on 28 February 1913, alleging the unconstitutional nature of the Webb-Kenyon Act concerning the transportation of spirituous liquors in inter-State commerce, clearly showed up the effect of this political safeguard as compared with judicial safeguards. (W. W. Willoughby, *The Constitutional Law of the United States*, Vol. 2, page 974). Under article 36, paragraph 2 of the Constitution, the President of the French Republic, acting on the advice of the President of the Council, may ask Parliament to reconsider a law. This procedure also enables him to request the Assemblies to reconsider laws regarded as unconstitutional (Message of 1 August, 1949, J.O.R.F. Deb. Parl. Ass. Nat., 14 October 1949). Under the Constitution of the USSR, the constitutionality of laws of the Federated Republics is tested by political procedure; authority for this purpose is vested in the Supreme Soviet of the Union by article 14(d) of the Constitution of 1936.

26/ The same legal principle was applied by the Panel of Legal Consultants when considering amendment of the Federal Act. The principle is defined by Professor Ch. Rousseau as follows: "Rules of law, whether derived from treaties or laws, remain legally binding so long as they have not been duly abrogated by the procedure used for their formulation" (*Principes généraux du Droit international public*, Vol. I, No. 234).

tioner, as a condition for the entry into force of the new Constitution. It is not prescribed for the future.

548. The main legal basis of article 93, paragraph 3 of the Constitution is to be found in the practice of Federal States. The Constitutions of the member States are directly or indirectly subject to examination by the federal State. The purpose of such examination is to ensure that local constitutions respect the principles laid down in the Federal Constitution. 27/

549. Thus the provision contained in article 93, paragraph 3, might appear in the Federal Constitutional Laws enacted to implement the Federal Act. In order to avoid any difficulty of interpretation, however, it seemed advisable to insert this provision in the Constitution as well. The Assembly supported this view unanimously, except for four abstentions. 28/

550. Ratification of amendments to the Constitution by the Emperor of Ethiopia is all the more necessary because paragraph 7 of the Federal Act requires the Federal Government to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental liberties in Eritrea. The Federal Government must therefore be in a position to prevent suppression or restriction of these rights and freedoms by the Eritrean Constitution.

551. The purpose of federal ratification, however, defines its scope. Refusal of ratification will only be possible in respect of amendments at variance with the provisions of the Federal Act, and in such a case ratification must be refused.

#### Section 2. Provisions of the Eritrean Constitution concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms

552. Paragraph 7 of the Federal Act contains a declaration of the human rights and fundamental freedoms established in Eritrea. These rights and freedoms must be guaranteed by the Federal Government.

553. These guarantees appear in paragraph 7 in a twofold form. First, the general principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is laid down. Secondly, these rights and freedoms are enumerated in a non-restrictive list. Article 22 of the Constitution reproduces paragraph 7 of the Federal Act in full and the succeeding articles explain and amplify its provisions.

554. In principle, these provisions concerning fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Federal Act and the Eritrean Constitution, have the force of imperative legal rules with immediate effect, applicable by the Supreme Court. By way of exception certain provisions of paragraph 7 of the Federal Act and chapter IV of the Eritrean Constitution must be put into effect by legislation before they can be applied. Examples are paragraph 7 (e) of the Federal Act, articles 22 (e) and 31, paragraph 1, of the Constitution concerning the right to

education and freedom to teach and article 33, paragraph 1 of the Constitution concerning the protection of working conditions. 29/ It will be for the judicial branch to recognize any such exceptional cases.

555. The fundamental rights and freedoms directly guaranteed by the Constitution may be amplified and defined by ordinary laws. The final sub-paragraph of paragraph 7 of the Federal Act lays down that no limitations may be applied to these rights unless they are justified by respect for the rights and freedoms of others or by the requirements of public order and the general welfare. This provision is reproduced in article 34 of the Constitution, which stipulates, in a second paragraph, that the law may in no case impede the normal enjoyment of fundamental rights and liberties. Finally, article 77 of the Constitution prohibits legislation by the Chief Executive in this field, in which the Assembly has sole competence.

556. Thus the Constitution provides for the protection of rights and freedoms. In case the other organs of the State, the Assembly and the Executive, should fail in their duties, it gives the Supreme Court the means of exercising effective control over legislation concerning these rights. For it affirms that liberty is the rule; any restrictive provision of the law must be justified, must come within the scope of the exceptions expressly prescribed and may not suppress the rights guaranteed. The judicial branch is therefore the guardian of individual rights and fundamental freedom. It can only perform this task if it is completely independent, as prescribed in

27/ Article 6 of the Federal Constitution of Switzerland provides that "The Cantons must request the Confederation to guarantee their Constitutions".

The Constitution of the USSR provides as follows:

"Article 14. The jurisdiction of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as represented by its higher organs of State power and organs of State administration, embraces: (d) Control over the observance of the Constitution of the USSR and ensuring conformity of the Constitutions of the Republics of the Union with the Constitution of the USSR."

"Article 16. Each Republic of the Union has its own Constitution, which takes account of the specific features of the Republic and is drawn up in full conformity with the Constitution of the USSR."

Article IV, section 4, of the Constitution of the United States of America provides that:

"The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government".

The Constitution of Libya contains the following provision:

"Article 177. Each province shall formulate its own Organic Law provided that its provisions are not contrary to the provisions of this Constitution."

All these provisions are designed to ensure conformity of the Constitutions of member States with the Federal Constitution.

28/ A/AC.44/R.136, page 2.

29/ Such provisions may be compared with certain constitutional texts in force which are recognized as guiding principles in social policy: Constitution of Ireland, article 45; Constitution of India, part IV.

article 86, paragraph 3, of the Constitution. The function thus assigned to the judicial branch is in conformity with constitutional practice in many modern States. 30/

557. It will also be the duty of the Federal Government to ensure that Eritrean laws respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. This duty is expressly laid upon it by paragraph 7 of the Federal Act. Among the means by which the Federal Government may discharge this duty is the power given to the Emperor's Representative to request reconsideration of Eritrean laws. 31/

558. If the Federal Government should fail to provide the guarantees prescribed in paragraph 7, the Federation may be held responsible internationally.

559. The content and sources of the rights and freedoms guaranteed have already been analysed. It is sufficient to point out that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the direct source of the corresponding articles of the Federal Act and the Eritrean Constitution. 32/

560. From a legal standpoint, it is necessary to consider what persons enjoy these rights and freedoms. Paragraph 7 of the Federal Act begins as follows: "The Federal Government, as well as Eritrea, shall ensure to residents in Eritrea..." 33/ In principal Human Rights are guaranteed to all persons in Eritrea. In certain respects, however, the status of persons who reside in Eritrea differs from that of those who are merely transients. Certain restrictions may be applied to the latter in keeping with a practice which is widespread in democratic States especially as regards public freedoms.

561. Article 36 of the Constitution provides that nationals of the Federation as well as foreign nationals shall have the right to respect for their personal status. This provision was particularly necessary in a country embracing communities with wide social and religious differences. It applies the principles laid down in the last paragraph of the preamble to the United Nations General Assembly's resolution and guarantees respect for the traditions and religions of the inhabitants. 34/ Moreover, article 36 of the Eritrean Constitution permits the development of personal status.

562. With regard to foreign nationals, the terms of the article imply that their own national law will be applied to their personal status. This rule is recognized by the private international law of many modern States and is traditionally accepted in Ethiopia. 35/

### Section 3. Provisions of the Eritrean Constitution embodying the principles of democratic government

563. The United Nations General Assembly's resolution instructs the Commissioner that "the Constitution

of Eritrea shall be based on the principles of democratic government" (paragraph 12).

564. The classical forms of democratic government are direct government, semi-direct government and representative government. The first two forms obviously had to be rejected in Eritrea as far as the central government is concerned. Representative democracy requires all political institutions to be directly or indirectly based on election by the people, i.e., on the franchise. It requires that the franchise shall not be limited for reasons of birth, means or education. These fundamental requirements may be satisfied, from a legal standpoint, by a wide variety of political systems, the commonest of which are the parliamentary system, the presidential and directorial systems and the intermediate types partaking of both these systems. 36/

565. In the present instance, the choice was suggested by the social structure of the country. The aim was to establish stable government institutions exercising mutual restraint on one another and based on a free vote. A parliamentary system without deep historical roots dangerously weakens the executive power. A presidential system in a new democracy might facilitate autocratic schemes. The Constitution adopted in Eritrea endeavours, as far as legal technique permits, to avoid both these dangers. It establishes a what may be called a semi-presidential system.

566. The Eritrean Constitution creates a strong Executive having wide powers, but elected for a fixed term by the Assembly. It strengthens the electorate, and hence the Assembly, by entrusting the supervision of electoral rolls and proceedings to an organ independent of the Executive, namely the Electoral High Commission. It limits the powers of the Executive by placing the Civil

30/ Examples are provided by the United States of America, Eire, Canada, Australia, India, many South American Republics, Italy and Switzerland (Cantonal legislation). Moreover, in countries where it is left mainly to the ordinary law to define the scope of liberties, the judicial branch always plays an important part in protecting individual liberties against arbitrary regulations and acts of the executive authorities.

31/ Articles 14 and 58 of the Constitution.

32/ See Chapter IV, section 3 of this report.

33/ The French translation states: "à toutes les personnes qui résident en Erythrie".

34/ The Declaration of Constitutional Principles adopted by the United Nations General Assembly for Somaliland lays down a similar rule. Article 9, paragraph 1 guarantees to the inhabitants "The preservation of their personal and successional status with due regard to its evolutionary development." (A/1294) Similarly, article 193 of the Constitution of Libya provides that: "The State shall guarantee respect for the systems of personal status of non-Moslems." (A/C.32/Council/R.174).

35/ M. Marein, General Adviser to the Imperial Ethiopian Government: The Judicial System and the Laws of Ethiopia (Rotterdam, 1951) pp. 113-114, 116-117, 119-121.

36/ English writers use the terms parliamentary (or executive) government and non-parliamentary (or fixed) government.

Service and the corps of public officials under the authority of an independent Civil Service Commission.

567. The analysis of the provisions of the Constitution concerning government organs and functions will show how the desired balance between the powers has been achieved.

#### A. The electorate

568. Under the Eritrean Constitution the composition and organization of the electorate and electoral proceedings are outside the control of the Executive.

569. The composition of the electorate is based on the principle of universal suffrage. Under the terms of article 20 of the Constitution all men are entitled to vote provided that they possess Eritrean citizenship, have attained the age of twenty-one years and are under no legal disability. 37/ The only limitation of the principle of universal suffrage is the exclusion of women from the electorate, but this merely means that it is not yet possible in Eritrea to achieve the common ideal proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

570. The independence of the electorate and the effectiveness of its action depend to a large extent on a complete and accurate census of all voters.

571. In order to ensure that the electoral rolls are accurately drawn up, the Constitution establishes, in article 45, an Electoral High Commission consisting of three persons appointed by the Supreme Court. This method of appointment ensures its independence and impartiality, thus providing the electorate with all the desirable guarantees; the High Commission is responsible not only for compiling the electoral rolls, but also for supervising all electoral proceedings and for preventing or putting a stop to irregularities.

572. The whole machinery of the electoral system is described in chapter VII on the organic laws, in the analysis of the Electoral Act. 38/

#### B. Representative organs

573. The Constitution establishes two organs representing the Eritrean people at different stages, the Assembly and the Chief Executive. The Assembly, which is elected by the electorate, in turn elects the Chief Executive.

##### (1) The Assembly

574. The Constitution establishes a uni-cameral system (article 39). There are many reasons for this choice. 39/ On financial grounds it was necessary to avoid overloading the political structure of a country with limited resources. It was advisable to take account of the number of qualified persons available to perform parliamentary, governmental and administrative duties. 40/

575. Articles 42, 53-55 and 70 define the status of members of the Assembly.

576. In accordance with a traditional constitutional rule, eligibility to the Assembly presupposes firstly qualification for being registered as a member of the electorate. Such qualification is sufficient without inscription on an electoral roll. In other words the Constitution requires possession of the right to vote but not its exercise. In addition to possession of the right to vote there are other conditions (article 42). The age for eligibility is fixed at 30 years; officials of the Eritrean or Federal Government are not eligible unless they have resigned at the time of presenting their candidature; candidates for election to the Assembly must prove that they have been resident in Eritrea for three years and have resided in their constituency for two years during the last ten years. Members of the Assembly are eligible for re-election (article 47, paragraph 2).

577. The incompatibility of the office of a public official with membership of the Assembly is especially important in Eritrea, where it is necessary to protect from political influences the new corps of officials on whose integrity and efficiency the sound administration of the autonomous unit will depend.

578. The meaning of the term "official" will have to be accurately defined by law. The Constitution refers, in principle, to persons having the status of public official and coming under the authority of the Civil Service Commission provided for in article 82. 41/

579. The Chief Executive and the Secretaries of Executive Departments are also officials of the Eritrean Government. They are ineligible unless they have resigned at the time of presenting their candidature. Ineligibility of the Chief Executive and the Secretaries of Executive Departments and the incompatibility of their functions with membership of the Assembly also follow from articles 69 (1), 70 and 75 of the Constitution. The Chief Executive and Secretaries of Executive Departments are not responsible to the Assembly. Hence parliamentary status and discipline could not be applied to them. Their functions are therefore incompatible with membership of the Assembly.

37/ The Commissioner, in collaboration with the British Administration, has prepared a draft electoral law which defines such disabilities. See chapter VII, section 3 C (b) below.

38/ The draft Organic Law jointly prepared by the Commissioner and the British Administration laid down conditions for establishing and revising the electoral rolls, the rules applicable to electoral proceedings and the legislative, administrative and judicial powers of the Electoral High Commission.

39/ See above, chapter I, section 2 C and D.2, (d)(1).

40/ AJAC.44/R.69 page 3 and R.70.

41/ This principle is followed in the organic law drafted jointly by the Commissioner and the British Administration. See chapter VII, section 3 G below.



580. Again, other grounds of incompatibility may be established by law.

581. The Constitution confers on members of the Assembly those immunities (irresponsibility and inviolability) that are essential to the free exercise of their functions (article 54). It ensures their material independence by according them a remuneration fixed by law (article 55).

582. The Constitution fixes the term of office of the Assembly at four years (article 47, paragraph 1). But the Assembly does not sit continuously during that period. The provisions governing its sessions are laid down in the Constitution (articles 48, 49, paragraph 4, and 78, paragraph 3).

583. In accordance with regular constitutional practice, the Assembly is granted wide powers of self-organization. These powers it exercises in adopting its own rules of procedure (article 51). The Constitution merely stipulates that a quorum shall comprise two-thirds of the members of the Assembly (article 50). It provides for the election of officers at the opening of the first regular session of each year (article 52) and grants such officers the right, when the Assembly is not in session, to raise the immunity of members of the Assembly (article 54, paragraph 2, second sub-paragraph).

584. Article 60, paragraph 1, refers to a Finance Committee. In addition, the Constitution implicitly contemplates the creation of other committees by empowering the Chief Executive, whose right of access to the Assembly is recognized, to be represented in the Assembly and its Committees by the Secretaries of Executive Departments (article 76, paragraph 7). These provisions, in conjunction with the Chief Executive's right to intervene during debates and again before the closure, limit the Assembly's powers of self-organization.

#### (2) The Chief Executive

585. The executive power is vested in a single person, the Chief Executive (article 67). The Constitution rules out the collegial or directorial system. Such is the contemporary tendency. Even in parliamentary governments the reins of government are left more and more in the hands of the Prime Minister or the President of the Council. His ministers are associates, not equals.

586. The Chief Executive is assisted by Secretaries of Executive Departments.

587. The appointment of the Chief Executive rests with the Assembly. He is appointed by election at the opening of each new legislature (article 68, paragraph 3). The intention in making the duration of the legislature and the term of office of the Chief Executive identical was to establish a constant link of mutual confidence between the two powers.

588. Eritrean citizens having attained the age of thirty-five years and in possession of their political rights are eligible for the office of Chief Executive (article 68, paragraph 2). 42/ Members of the Assembly, public officials and judges are eligible. But in the event of a candidate who performs one of these functions being elected to the office of Chief Executive he must choose between his new and his former post, the office of Chief Executive being incompatible with any other public office or legislative function.

589. The election procedure is governed by article 68, paragraph 1 of the Constitution. Election is by secret ballot, a two-thirds majority of the votes cast being required. Votes must be cast by at least two-thirds of the members of the Assembly in office, that is to say, the constitutional quorum (article 50). If no candidate obtains the required majority at the first ballot, another ballot is held among all the candidates, except the candidate receiving the least number of votes, and so on until a candidate obtains the required majority.

590. It should be pointed out that the Constitution does not forbid the introduction of new candidates after each ballot. But if any such new candidate receives the least number of votes he is eliminated from the next ballot. No candidate thus eliminated can stand again, at least not in the next ballot. 43/

591. The Constitution provides no solution should this procedure fail after several ballots. The Chief Executive can be elected only by a two-thirds majority; a simple majority was regarded as insufficient by the constituent Assembly, which has thus made it necessary for future Eritrean Assemblies to display a spirit of conciliation and compromise. 44/ But if no candidate obtains the constitutional majority the Chief Executive in office will retain his post provisionally.

592. Should the office of Chief Executive fall vacant during the term of office of a legislature, a new election is held by the same procedure. This election must be held within fifteen days of the office falling vacant (article 68, paragraph 4, and article 75, paragraph 3).

42/ The Chief Executive is eligible for re-election (article 68, paragraph 5).

43/ This question should be carefully settled, within the framework of the constitutional provisions, in the Assembly's rules of procedure.

44/ This system is not exceptional. It is found in parliamentary constitutions. The appointment of the President of the Council in France requires an absolute majority of the members comprising the Assembly (article 45 of the French Constitution). A similar system is applied, under the Italian Constitution, for the election of the President of the Republic (article 83). The Basic Law of Western Germany for the election of the Chancellor (article 63) and the Korean Constitution for the election of the President of the Republic (article 53) provide that a simple majority shall finally suffice, if no candidate would otherwise be elected.

593. The designation of an acting Chief Executive lies with the Chief Executive in office, who designates one of the Secretaries of Executive Departments to act for him if he is temporarily prevented from discharging his duties or if his post falls vacant, until such time as a new Chief Executive is elected (article 71). The Chief Executive has practically a free choice. He has merely to give the person he selects a post as Secretary of an Executive Department, if he does not already hold one. But it is essential that such designation should take place as soon as the Chief Executive has been elected. Furthermore, the Chief Executive may modify his choice at any time during his period of office. 45/

594. The Chief Executive may cease to hold his office for various reasons.

595. The Chief Executive's term of office normally comes to an end on the election of a new Chief Executive, which takes place, in accordance with the Constitution, at the opening of each new legislature (article 66, paragraph 3). It may also be terminated during the legislature by the death, resignation or removal from office of the Chief Executive. The exceptional procedure governing removal from office is described in detail in article 75 of the Constitution. It is based on the classic traditional provisions with regard to disqualification. The Assembly may only decide to impeach the Chief Executive before the Supreme Court by a two-thirds majority of its members.

596. On the other hand, the Assembly may in no case dismiss the Chief Executive. The latter is not responsible to the Assembly. He is independent of the Assembly throughout the whole of his term of office. In other words, in relation to the Assembly he is in the same position as members of the Assembly in relation to the electorate. The Chief Executive represents the Assembly as the latter represents the electorate. This situation is characteristic of a non-parliamentary system.

597. The Constitution defines the organizational principles of the Executive. It leaves to the law the task of applying these principles. 46/

598. The Secretaries of Executive Departments are appointed and dismissed by the Chief Executive. They assist, and are responsible to, him (article 69). They may be periodically convened in council by the Chief Executive. This council has no power of decision (article 74).

#### C. Legislative functions and constituent power

##### (1) Functions of the Assembly

599. The Assembly votes the laws (article 56). It constitutes the supreme legislative authority. The procedure for the drafting and adoption of laws is laid down in the Assembly's rules of procedure (article 57, paragraph 2). Nevertheless, the Constitution provides that the

initiative in submitting laws lies with the individual members of the Assembly and the Chief Executive (article 57, paragraph 1).

600. The laws adopted by the Assembly are immediately transmitted by the President of the Assembly to the Chief Executive. The date on which a law is voted is of considerable importance, since it initiates a period of twenty days within which the Emperor's Representative may, on the grounds already stated, request reconsideration of the law and the Chief Executive himself may also request reconsideration (article 58, paragraphs 3 and 4). This right conferred on the Chief Executive is met with in other Constitutions. 47/

601. Where no request for consideration has been submitted before the expiry of this time-limit of twenty days, the law must be promulgated and published in accordance with the procedure set forth in article 58, paragraphs 4, 5 and 6, and article 76, paragraph 5. The same applies where, after reconsideration has been requested, the law has been adopted by the Assembly by a two-thirds majority.

602. The law which has been promulgated and published may be challenged as unconstitutional before the Supreme Court (article 90, paragraph 3). Should the law conflict with the Constitution, the latter shall prevail.

603. Among the legislative functions of the Assembly, special mention must be made of its competence in budgetary matters. The Constitution of Eritrea lays down principles and rules governing the drafting and adoption of the budget, its implementation and the supervision of its implementation. Provision is made for laws to be enacted embodying those principles and rules. 48/

604. In accordance with a practice constantly encountered in comparative budgetary law, the budget is drafted by the government (article 59). The Chief Executive's draft budget is examined by the Assembly Finance Committee, a general debate on it being held in the Assembly, at the beginning of the second regular session (article 60, paragraphs 1 and 2). Following this general debate, the Chief Executive must submit to the Assembly a revised draft budget including any suggestions made by it which he may see fit to incorporate. It thus rests with

45/ The acting Chief Executive, on assuming office after the resignation or death of the Chief Executive, must also designate an acting Chief Executive.

46/ Thus article 69, paragraph 4, leaves the number and functions of Secretaries of Executive Departments to be prescribed by law. The Commissioner has prepared a draft law on this point in conjunction with the British Administration. See chapter VII, section 3 B below.

47/ For example, in varying forms, in the Constitutions of Czechoslovakia (article 58 and 59), Finland (article 19), France (article 36), Iceland (article 26), Italy (article 74), Norway (articles 78 and 79) and the United States of America (article 7, section F).

48/ The organic law on the Budget drafted jointly by the Commissioner and the British Administration is examined in chapter VII, section 3 D of this report.

the Assembly to adopt suggested amendments to the budget, in the form of resolutions, during the debate. At this stage in the debate, the Assembly may propose to the Chief Executive that the expenditure estimates in the draft budget be either reduced or increased, subject in the latter case to the stipulation regarding the balancing of income and expenditure contained in article 60, paragraph 3, which will be considered later.

605. During the second phase, the Assembly takes a decision on the various items of the revised budget (article 60, paragraph 3). In other words, it votes appropriations for each Executive Department in turn.

606. It may reduce the expenditure estimates, except those included in the budget to cover national debt payments.

607. It may not increase the expenditure estimates in the draft budget without the consent of the Chief Executive and unless it votes an equivalent increase in the revenue estimates. On this particular point, then, the right of amendment of members of the Assembly is limited. The expenditure estimates submitted by the Executive represent a maximum, and the Assembly is thus invited to play the role of moderator in public expenditure (article 60, paragraph 3 (a)). Similar provisions are to be found in a number of Constitutions. 49/

608. The budget must be adopted before the beginning of the financial year; otherwise, the Constitution stipulates that the draft budget, amended by the Chief Executive, "shall be deemed to be adopted" (article 60, paragraph 4). The object of this provision is to prevent governmental action being paralysed for lack of funds through delay by the Assembly in voting the budget. It is thus incumbent on the Assembly to carry out its examination of the budget promptly enough to forestall adoption of the Chief Executive's draft budget by tacit consent. 50/

609. When the delay in adopting the budget is due to the failure of the Chief Executive to observe the time-limit laid down in the Constitution 51/ for submission of the draft budget, adoption by tacit consent is ruled out. In such a case, if the budget has not been adopted before the beginning of the financial year, the Chief Executive must request the Assembly to grant him, by extension of the previous budget, provisional appropriations for a limited period (e.g., one month).

610. The estimates for the expenses of the Assembly must be included in the budget. In accordance with parliamentary usage, proposals for such expenditure must be drafted by a committee of the Assembly and handed by the President of that body to the Chief Executive for inclusion in his draft budget. 52/

611. The Executive is responsible for implementation of the budget. Taxes may be levied only under the

conditions fixed by the Assembly. Appropriations may not be exceeded or diverted from the purpose assigned to them in the budget law (article 61).

612. To enable the Executive to meet urgent expenditure, the Constitution authorizes the Assembly to include in the budget a special credit not to exceed 10 per cent of the total expenditure estimates authorized by the budget law (article 63).

613. In case of emergency, entailing commitments in excess of this special credit, it would be possible for the Chief Executive to submit a supplementary draft budget to the Assembly.

614. In addition to the control exercised by the Executive's finance and accounting services, a check on the implementation of the budget is kept by an Auditor-General elected by the Assembly (article 64 of the Constitution).

615. Final approval of the accounts for each financial year is given by the Assembly on the basis of a report submitted by the Chief Executive with the assistance of the Auditor-General (article 64, paragraphs 1 and 3).

616. Apart from its functions in the sphere of ordinary legislation, the Assembly has constituent power, since this is not vested in an ad hoc body, such as an Assembly elected for the purpose. The Constitution confers on the Eritrean Legislative Assembly the power to amend the Constitution, but the manner in which this action can be taken differs from ordinary legislative procedure.

617. The initiative as regards amendments to the Constitution lies with the Chief Executive and the members of the Assembly. A proposed amendment emanating from the members of the Assembly is inadmissible unless submitted by at least one quarter of the actual number of members (article 92, paragraph 1).

618. The proposed amendment cannot be discussed by the Assembly until twenty days at least after it has been submitted. This time allowed for reflection is designed to obviate the adoption of any amendment under pressure of extraneous circumstances.

619. Amendment procedure varies according to the majority obtained by the proposal in the Assembly.

49/ Western Germany (article 113); Bavaria (article 78); Rhineland-Palatinate (article 118); France (article 17); Ireland (article 17, para. 1); the Sarre (article 110).

50/ A number of Constitutions provide for an analogous system, in the same eventuality, in the form of a prolongation of the previous year's budget; Western Germany (article 11); Bavaria (article 78(4)); Rhineland-Palatinate (article 116, last paragraph); Saxony (article 81); Denmark (article 47, second paragraph); the Sarre (article 107).

51/ The draft budget must be submitted to the Assembly at least one month before the opening of the second regular session of the Assembly (article 59, para. 1), and the revised draft budget within ten days following the closure of the debate in the Assembly.

52/ The rules of procedure of the Assembly will have to lay down the conditions under which this section of the budget must be drafted.

620. If the Assembly adopts the proposal by a majority of three-quarters of the members in office, this decision is final and the proposed amendment is approved.

621. If an amendment is approved by an absolute majority of the members in office or by a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting, it must be debated again.

622. This second debate can only take place after the next legislature has been elected. Thus the amendment is indirectly put to the electorate. 53/

623. The maximum period that may elapse between the two debates is slightly over four years if the amendment is first adopted at the beginning of a legislative period, and the minimum period a few months if it is first adopted at the end of a legislative period.

624. The majorities required are the same for the second vote as for the first (article 93, paragraph 2).

625. A similar revision procedure is to be found in many Constitutions. In view of the fact that a single Assembly has power to carry out revision, the conditions laid down in the Eritrean Constitution are not excessive. 54/ The Eritrean Assembly did not by any means consider the revision procedure laid down in the Commissioner's Draft to be too inflexible, but would have preferred to see amendment of the Constitution made more difficult.

626. In exercising its power to revise the Constitution, the Assembly may not amend the Federal Act. This restriction is stated in article 91, paragraph 1.

627. Moreover, article 16 of the Constitution may be amended (article 91, paragraph 2). This provision gives the authority of constitutional law to the rule laid down in the United Nations resolution (paragraph 12): "the Constitution of Eritrea shall be based on the principles of democratic government".

#### (2) Powers of the Chief Executive

628. The Constitution confers wide powers on the Chief Executive in the matter of legislation and issuing of regulations. 55/ In the first place, the Chief Executive is empowered to issue the regulations required to implement the laws (article 76, paragraphs 2 and 8). Secondly, the Chief Executive is authorized to fill in any gaps in the laws in force (article 77). This power can be exercised only in the interval between sessions of the Assembly. The Chief Executive must submit any orders thus issued to the Assembly, which may repeal them. Such orders may not relate to any of the matters dealt with in chapter IV of part I of the Constitution, and must be compatible with the Constitution and the laws in force.

629. Finally, articles 78 and 79 of the Constitution endow the Chief Executive with emergency legislative powers, subject to supervision by the Assembly.

#### D. Powers of the Executive

630. The Constitution makes the Chief Executive responsible for the direction of the administrative departments and public services (article 76). He also possesses power of decision, within the limits set by the Constitution and the laws of the Assembly.

631. However, to prevent the Chief Executive from having unlimited powers, the Civil Service is placed under the authority of an independent Commission (article 82). This Commission is under the chairmanship of the Chief Executive or his representative, but its composition and the conditions under which it is to function are determined by law. The Civil Service Commission is responsible for the appointment, promotion, transfer and discharge of officials and for taking disciplinary action. Such a system, which tends to discourage favouritism and

53/ In some Constitutions it is expressly provided that Assemblies undertaking to amend the Constitution must be re-elected. After the elections, a final decision on the proposed revision is taken. (Constitution of Belgium, article 131; Constitution of the Netherlands, article 204; Constitution of Denmark, article 94; Constitution of Norway, article 119; Constitution of Colombia, article 190). The Constitution of Honduras lays down procedure similar to that adopted for Eritrea in this instance (article 200).

54/ The basic law in Western Germany requires a two-thirds majority of both Assemblies for revision (article 79); the Constitution of Bavaria requires a two-thirds majority of the members of the Diet and a public referendum (article 75); the Constitutions of the Rhineland-Palatinate (article 129) and of Saxony (article 96) require either a two-thirds majority of the members of the Assembly or a public referendum; the Constitution of France requires, first, the adoption of a resolution by an absolute majority of the members of the National Assembly, then the adoption of a bill to revise the Constitution either by a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly, or by a three-fifths majority of both Assemblies or by a simple majority, in which case revision must be approved by a public referendum (article 90); the Italian Constitution requires a two-thirds majority of the members in office in both Chambers, failing which there may be a referendum; the Hungarian Constitution requires a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly (article 15-III); the Constitution of Norway requires a two-thirds majority of the Storting (article 119); the "Little Constitution" of Poland requires a majority of two-thirds of the statutory number of deputies; the Constitution of the Sarre requires a majority of three-quarters of the statutory number of members of the Assembly (article 103); the Constitution of Czechoslovakia requires a majority of three-fifths of the total number of deputies (article 54, paragraph 2); the Constitution of Turkey requires that a proposal for revision be submitted by at least one-third of the members of the Assembly and adopted by two-thirds of the members (article 102); the Constitution of the USSR requires a two-thirds majority vote in each Chamber of the Supreme Soviet. In the member States of the American Union a simple majority of members in each Chamber is sometimes required for the adoption of amendments (23 States); sometimes a majority of two-thirds is required (18 States) and sometimes a majority of three-fifths (7 States); in some States the amendment must be adopted again by a second legislature (14 States). Subject to approval by the States in certain cases, the Constitution of India requires a two-thirds majority in both Houses of Parliament, comprising at least half the members (article 368); the Constitution of Ceylon requires a majority of two-thirds of the members of the House of Representatives (article 29, paragraph 4). In most South American States more than a simple majority is also required for revision of the Constitution (cf. Bolivia, article 174; Brazil, article 217; Chile, article 108; Cuba, articles 285-286; El Salvador, article 171; Guatemala, article 206; Honduras, article 200; Mexico, article 135; Paraguay, article 94; Uruguay, article 281; Venezuela, article 248).

55/ The extension of the powers of the Executive with regard to legislation and issuing of regulations is a characteristic feature of the contemporary period.

the creation of a group of hangers-on, has been adopted by the legislation of a number of countries. 56/

632. Moreover, although the Assembly may not interfere in the exercise of executive functions, it enjoys the right of supervision under the Constitution. In accordance with article 66, it may submit questions orally or in writing and ask for a debate on the Government's policy.

633. In a semi-presidential system such as that adopted for the Constitution of Eritrea, relations between the Executive and the Assembly should naturally be strictly defined. Failure to include provisions to that end, or the introduction of different provisions, would have transformed the semi-presidential system into a parliamentary one. The limited intercourse provided for under article 66 of the Constitution is, however, sufficient to keep the Chief Executive in touch with public opinion and to enable the pressure of the latter to be adequately felt.

#### Section 4. The Judiciary

634. Article 85 of the Constitution of Eritrea provides that judicial power shall be exercised by a Supreme Court and by other courts which will apply the various systems of law in force in Eritrea. Article 86 provides that the judiciary shall be completely independent and free from all political influence and from any pressure or intervention on the part of the Assembly or the Executive.

635. The judges are appointed by the Chief Executive on the recommendation of the President of the Assembly to whom a list of at least three candidates for appointment must be supplied by a Committee composed of the President of the Supreme Court and two judges chosen by the members of the Supreme Court and of the court or courts immediately inferior thereto. The judges are appointed for a period of seven years, which term may be renewed.

636. It was left to the law to establish the status of the judges and the organization of the courts. A description of the measures taken in this law to ensure the independence of the judiciary, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, is given in chapter VII of this report.

637. Apart from its jurisdiction as a court of last resort, the Supreme Court has exclusive jurisdiction in the following matters forming an integral part of the Constitution on which action may be required to ensure the observance and application of its provisions:

- (1) Disputes concerning the constitutionality of laws and orders;
- (2) Conflicts of jurisdiction between Eritrean courts;
- (3) Actions based on administrative acts brought against the Government of Eritrea or the public services,

unless special courts have been established by law to try such cases;

(4) Criminal and disciplinary responsibility of judges; and

(5) Trial of the Chief Executive when impeached by the Assembly under article 75 of the Constitution.

#### Section 5. The Advisory Council of Eritrea

638. The Advisory Council of Eritrea, established by article 84 of the Constitution, is an institution designed to enable the necessary plans to be drawn up for economic and social progress in Eritrea, and to endow the country with the technical, economic, administrative and social resources commensurate with its new status.

639. By the very establishment of this Advisory Council, the Constitution of Eritrea stresses the importance of such problems for the country's future. 57/

640. It lays the foundations and formulates the guiding principles of an essential institution which it will be the task of the Assembly and the Chief Executive to organize, maintain and develop.

641. An organic law 58/ has been drawn up by the Commissioner, in collaboration with the British Administration, to develop the principles laid down by the Constitution and to indicate the manner in which the Advisory Council shall function. The main features of this law are described in chapter VII, section 3 of this report.

#### Section 6. Transitional provisions

642. Article 96 of the Constitution stipulates that the laws and regulations in force shall remain in force so long as they have not been repealed or amended—provided they do not conflict with the Constitution. A similar provision is to be found in a number of other constitutions. It embodies an indisputable principle of law. 59/

643. Article 99 extends the term of office of the Assembly responsible for adopting the Constitution of Eritrea. The Commissioner had proposed that the extension should not exceed two years. The Assembly, however, was of the opinion that this period would not be sufficient to enable it to establish the constitutional institutions and to examine and adopt the essential organic

56/ For instance, in the United States of America, the Republic of India and Ceylon.

57/ The Advisory Council of Eritrea may be compared to the economic councils set up, either under the constitution or by law, in many countries during the last thirty years. The Advisory Council of Eritrea, like these economic councils, is not a political organ but a technical adviser to the public authorities.

58/ A/JAC.44/L.16

59/ Cf. The Constitution of Ireland (article 73); Constitution of Korea (article 100); Draft Constitution of Israel (article 77); Constitution of Libya (article 210).

laws. It decided that, in view of Eritrea's special position, a period of at least four years would be necessary.

644. The other transitional provisions (articles 97 and 98) concern the Administering Authority in Eritrea, their object being to facilitate the transfer of the power vested in that Authority under paragraph 14 of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly.

#### CHAPTER IX THE TRANSFER OF POWER

760. Paragraph 15 of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly states that: "The United Nations Commissioner shall maintain his headquarters in Eritrea until the transfer of power has been completed", and upon completion "he shall so report to the General Assembly".

761. The opinions expressed during the discussions by several delegations and the traditions of the United Nations General Assembly, born of the experience of previous missions, showed that in the matter of the transfer of power the Commissioner was to be regarded more or less as an "observer".

762. Owing to some nervousness among certain sections of the population during the transition period, on 27 August 1952 the Commissioner issued a Press release covering the following main points:

(1) The transfer of services had been the subject of discussions between the Commissioner and the Chief Administrator, the Eritrean authorities and members of the representative Assembly, and Ethiopian and Italian officials;

(2) During these conversations, the Commissioner had made clear that the terms of the resolution laid upon him no direct responsibility with regard to federal matters or the transfer of power;

(3) Nevertheless, in so far as the application of paragraph 15 of the resolution was concerned, it was his duty, in his capacity as United Nations observer, to report to the General Assembly on the whole operation;

(4) The Federation, in the form recommended by the General Assembly and accepted by the Eritrean population, struck a balance between the Federal Government and the autonomous unit of Eritrea. It was the duty of all interested parties to co-operate in a spirit of mutual understanding in setting up this equilibrium, the possibility of which was clearly brought out by paragraphs 3 and 5 of the United Nations resolution in which the division of responsibility between the Federal Government and the Government of Eritrea was precisely defined, and which also provided for Eritrean participation in the setting up of an Imperial Federal Council and in the Federal Government;

(5) Recent conversations which the Commissioner had had gave evidence that all parties were equally animated by a spirit of goodwill.

763. This Press release undoubtedly had a soothing effect on those sections of opinion which were the most apprehensive, and the feeling of confidence was strengthened by the statement made by the Chief Administrator to the Eritrean Assembly on 4 September 1952.

764. The following are the main points of this statement:

(1) The British Administration was bound by the resolutions of 2 December 1950 and 29 January 1952, and had to take steps to set up the Federation and create federal services.

(2) It was the duty of the Administering Authority to decide which among the present public services in Eritrea should become federal and which should remain Eritrean. Although this decision lay with the United Kingdom Government, the United Nations Commissioner and the Government of Ethiopia had been consulted.

(3) The resolution of 29 January 1952 provided for the transfer of State property, with certain exceptions, by the British Administration to Eritrea, "Eritrea" being defined in the resolution as being either the Federal Government or the Government of Eritrea, according to the nature of the jurisdiction and responsibilities vested in the respective governments by the resolution of 2 December 1950.

(4) The provisions for the transfer made due allowance for the legitimate needs of the Federal and Eritrean authorities. The transfer was merely the transmission of a right of occupation and possession and of an administrative responsibility; there was no implication of right of ownership so called. That was a matter to be settled between the Federal Government and the Government of Eritrea after the setting up of the Federation.

(5) The Chief Administrator then gave particulars of the services already transferred to the Federal Authorities and emphasized the fact that the admission of the autonomous unit into a Federation with a sovereign State which was a Member of the United Nations had brought considerable benefit to Eritrea, and that in return the Federal Government was entitled to enjoy every facility in Eritrea to enable it to cope with the responsibilities devolving upon it under the resolution of 2 December 1950.

765. Moreover, the statement of the Emperor of Ethiopia on Eritrean participation in the machinery of federal government, made at the time of ratification of the Federal Act, 60/ strengthened the favourable psychological effect already produced by the assurances of the Commissioner and Chief Administrator.

60/ Chapter V of the present report, paragraph 497 (not reproduced here).

766. The ceremony of the transfer of power, held at 4.45 p.m. on 15 September 1952 at Government House, thus took place in an atmosphere of confidence.

767. After the signing of the Termination of Powers Proclamation by the Chief Administrator, copies were presented to the Emperor's representatives, to the Chief Executive of the Government of Eritrea and to the United Nations Commissioner.

768. After this ceremony, the Chief Administrator thanked all those who had assisted him in his work, and especially the United Nations Commissioner. He also offered his best wishes to the successors of the British Administration in Eritrea.

769. The following is the text of the Proclamation: 61/

#### TERMINATION OF POWERS PROCLAMATION (No. 136, 1952) BY THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION, ERITREA

Whereas by a resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations dated 2 December, 1950, Eritrea shall constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown as therein provided:

And whereas it is provided by the Eritrean (Termination of Administration) Order, 1952, that the Authority of Her Majesty in Eritrea shall determine as from such date as shall for the purpose of enabling the Federal Act and the Constitution of Eritrea to enter into effect be proclaimed therein by the Chief Administrator:

And whereas by the said resolution of 2 December, 1950, it is provided that the jurisdiction of the Federal Government in Eritrea shall extend to certain matters and that the jurisdiction of Eritrean Government shall extend to all other matters:

And whereas by the said resolution of 2 December, 1950, it is provided that the Administering Power shall make arrangements for the transfer of power to the appropriate authorities:

And whereas by a resolution of the United Nations dated 29 January, 1952, it is provided that Eritrea (which term for the purposes of the resolution is said to be interpreted in conformity with paragraph 3 of the said resolution of 2 December, 1950), shall receive without payment certain movable and immovable property located in Eritrea owned by the Italian State either in its own name or in the name of the Italian Administration in Eritrea and that such property shall be transferred to Eritrea not later than

the effective date of the final transfer of power from the Administering Power to the appropriate Authorities:

Now therefore, I, Duncan Cameron CUMMING, Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Commander of Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Chief Administrator of Eritrea, hereby proclaim as follows:

1. To the intent that Eritrea shall become an autonomous unit in the manner provided in the Resolution of the United Nations dated 2 December, 1950, and in order that the Federal Act and the Constitution of Eritrea shall enter into effect the authority of Her Majesty in Eritrea shall determine.

2. The powers and jurisdiction of the Administering Power are hereby transferred to the Federal Government and the Eritrean Government.

3. The property set out in the First Schedule hereto is hereby transferred to the Federal Government and the property set out in the Second Schedule hereto is hereby transferred to the Eritrean Government.

4. This Proclamation may be cited as the Termination of Powers Proclamation, 1952, and shall come into force at midnight on 15/16 September, 1952.

770. Thanks to the spirit of collaboration shown by the interested parties directly responsible, the Commissioner was thus able not only to take cognizance of the transfer of power but also, through the information with which he had been spontaneously provided, to testify to the faithful application, both of the spirit and of the letter of the resolution.

771. In concluding this chapter, mention must be made of the telegram sent by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Commissioner on the occasion of the transfer of power, which reads as follows:

"Please express to representatives of United Kingdom as Administering Power and to appropriate Federal and Eritrean Authorities my deep gratification on occasion transfer of power in Eritrea in compliance decisions of General Assembly within specified time limits stop This historic step has been made possible by the co-operation and high sense of responsibility of all the parties concerned working with the United Nations towards a common objective stop Please extend my congratulations to the

61/ As regards the plans drawn up for the transfer dealt with in the resolution, see the Administering Authority's Report (document A/2233).

Eritrean people on this achievement which your own devoted service in Eritrea has so greatly contributed to bring about stop

TRYGVE LIE  
Secretary-General"

772. The Commissioner communicated the contents of this message to the Chief Administrator, to the Emperor's Representative, and to the Chief Executive of the Government of Eritrea.

#### CHAPTER X SUBMISSION OF THE ERITREAN CONSTITUTION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

773. With the completion of the transfer of power, the Commissioner, acting under paragraph 15 of the resolution, submits to the General Assembly the text of the Eritrean Constitution. The document as approved by the Commissioner, adopted by the Eritrean Assembly and ratified by the Emperor of Ethiopia, constitutes annex II of the present report.

#### CONCLUSIONS

774. With the ratification of the Federal Act by the Emperor of Ethiopia on 11 September 1952, and the promulgation of the Termination of Powers Proclamation by the Administering Power on 15 September 1952, the General Assembly's resolution of 2 December 1950 was put into effect and the task entrusted to the Commissioner completed.

775. The foundations of the Federation of Ethiopia and of the autonomous unit of Eritrea have thus been laid. So far as Eritrea is concerned, the Constitution approved by the Commissioner, adopted by the Assembly and ratified by the Emperor, completes the structure. That Constitution, together with the organic laws passed by the Eritrean Assembly, faithfully reflects not only the letter, but also the spirit of the resolution; so far as any document can, it gives Eritrea a fair and promising start in its existence as an autonomous unit within the Federation. Much more than a mere document will be required, however, to ensure life and continuity for the institutions thus created. The Federation and Eritrea will have to learn to live side by side, each respecting the proper sphere of activity and jurisdiction of the other. As the first Panel of Legal Consultants pointed out, "the régime prescribed in the General Assembly's resolution ... can only operate satisfactorily if Ethiopia accepts it freely and without any unexpressed reservation, and intends to apply it in good faith".

776. My conversations with His Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia have convinced me that such good faith

exists and that it is the Emperor's sincere desire that the Federal Act should be implemented in accordance with both the letter and spirit of the resolution.

777. On the Eritrean side, the discussions I held with the people from the outset, and the spirit in which the Eritrean Representative Assembly adopted the Constitution have convinced me that there is a genuine readiness for full co-operation with the federal authorities and a real respect for the unity of the Federation under the sovereignty of the Emperor.

778. The procedure for setting up the necessary organs of the Federal Government is laid down in the resolution, except for the means whereby, if mediation fails, conflicts of jurisdiction can be satisfactorily settled by a tribunal whose impartiality is manifest in its proceedings and composition. For this purpose, a joint act by the two legislatures will be required; it is to be hoped that, with the goodwill of both parties, this final guarantee of faithful implementation of the resolution will soon be provided.

#### II. Constitution of Eritrea

(TEXT OF THE CONSTITUTION AS ADOPTED BY  
THE ERITREAN ASSEMBLY ON 10 JULY 1952)

#### PREAMBLE

*In the name of Almighty God,*

Trusting that He may grant Eritrea peace, concord and prosperity,

And that the Federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia may be harmonious and fruitful,

*We, the Eritrean Assembly,* acting on behalf of the Eritrean people,

*Grateful* to the United Nations for recommending that Eritrea shall constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown and that its Constitution be based on the principles of democratic government,

*Desirous* of satisfying the wishes and ensuring the welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea by close and economic association with Ethiopia and by respecting the rights and safeguarding the institutions, traditions, religions and languages of all the elements of the population.

*Resolved* to prevent any discrimination and to ensure, under a régime of freedom and equality, the brotherly collaboration of the various races and religions in Eritrea, and to promote economic and social progress, Trusting fully in God, the Master of the Universe.

Do hereby adopt this Constitution as the Constitution of Eritrea.

## Article 1

*Adoption and ratification of the Federal Act*

1. The Eritrean people, through their representatives, hereby adopt and ratify the Federal Act approved on 2 December 1950 by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

2. They undertake to observe faithfully the provisions of the said Act.

## CHAPTER I. STATUS OF ERITREA

## Article 2

*Territory of Eritrea*

The territory of Eritrea, including the islands, is that of the former Italian colony of Eritrea.

## Article 3

*Autonomy and federation*

Eritrea shall constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown.

## Article 4

*Legislative, executive and judicial powers*

The Government of Eritrea shall exercise legislative, executive and judicial powers with respect to matters within its jurisdiction.

## Article 5

*Matters coming within the jurisdiction of Eritrea*

1. The jurisdiction of the Government of Eritrea shall extend to all matters not vested in the Federal Government by the Federal Act.

2. This jurisdiction shall include:

- (a) The various branches of law (criminal law, civil law, commercial law, etc.);
- (b) The organization of the public services;
- (c) Internal police;
- (d) Health;
- (e) Education;
- (f) Public assistance and social security;
- (g) Protection of labour;
- (h) Exploitation of natural resources and regulation of industry, internal commerce, trades and professions;
- (i) Agriculture;
- (j) Internal communications;
- (k) The public utility services which are peculiar to Eritrea;

(l) The Eritrean budget and the establishment and collection of taxes designed to meet the expenses of Eritrean public functions and services.

## Article 6

*Contribution by Eritrea to the expenses of the Federal Government*

1. Eritrea shall bear its just and equitable share of the expenses of Federal functions and services.

Assessment and levying of Federal taxes

2. The Government of Eritrea shall assess and levy in Eritrea, by delegation from the Federal Government, such taxes as are established to that end for the benefit of the whole of the Federation.

Revenue from customs duties

3. Within the revenue which accrues to Eritrea shall be included the customs duties on goods entering or leaving the Federation which have their final destination or origin in Eritrea, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 4 of the resolution of 2 December 1950 of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

## Article 7

*Representation of Eritrea in the Imperial Federal Council*

1. The Eritrean representatives in the Imperial Federal Council, composed of equal numbers of Ethiopians and Eritreans, shall be appointed by the Chief Executive with the approval of the Assembly. They shall be formally invested in office by the Emperor.

Participation of Eritreans in the Federal Government

2. Eritreans shall participate in the executive and judicial branches and shall be represented in the legislative branch, of the Federal Government, in accordance with law and in the proportion that the population of Eritrea bears to the population of the Federation.

## Article 8

*Eritrean citizenship*

Persons who have acquired Federal nationality in Eritrea under the Federal Act (Section A, paragraph 6 of the General Assembly Resolution 390 A (V)) and have been granted Eritrean citizenship in accordance with the laws of Eritrea shall be citizens of Eritrea.

## Article 9

*Rights of Federal nationals who are not Eritrean citizens*

1. On the basis of reciprocity, Federal nationals who are not Eritrean citizens shall enjoy the same rights as Eritreans.

2. Federal nationals shall enjoy political rights in accordance with the Eritrean Constitution and laws on the basis of reciprocity.

## CHAPTER II. REPRESENTATION OF THE EMPEROR IN ERITREA

## Article 10

*The Emperor has a representative in Eritrea*

There shall be a representative in Eritrea of His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Ethiopia, Sovereign of the Federation.

## Article 11

*Rank of the Representative of the Emperor*

The Representative of the Emperor shall, on all occasions, have the place of precedence at official ceremonies in Eritrea.

## Article 12

*Administering of the oath of office to the Chief Executive before the Representative of the Emperor. Formal investment of the Chief Executive in office.*

The Chief Executive, elected by the Assembly in accordance with Article 68, shall take the oath of office in accordance with the provisions of Article 72. The Representative of the Emperor, having noted that the Chief Executive has been elected by the Assembly, shall formally invest him in office in the name of the Emperor, Sovereign of the Federation.

## Article 13

*Opening and closing of sessions of the Assembly*

At the opening and closing of sessions of the Assembly, the Representative of the Emperor may deliver the speech from the throne in which he will deal with affairs of common interest to the Federation and to Eritrea.

## Article 14

*Transmission of legislation to the representative of the Emperor*

1. When draft legislation has been voted by the Assembly, the Chief Executive will transmit it immediately to the Representative of the Emperor.

2. If the Representative of the Emperor considers that draft legislation voted by the Assembly encroaches upon Federal jurisdiction, or that it involves the international responsibility of the Federation, he may transmit a request to the Chief Executive within twenty days after the vote by the Assembly for reconsideration of the draft legislation by the Assembly, indicating his reasons for doing so.

## Article 15

*Promulgation of legislation*

The Representative of the Emperor will promulgate legislation in the manner laid down in Article 58.

## CHAPTER III. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN ERITREA

## Article 16

*The principles of democratic government*

The Constitution of Eritrea is based on the principles of democratic government.

## Article 17

*Respect for human rights*

The Constitutional guarantees to all persons the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

## Article 18

*Organs of government are provided for by the people and shall act in the interests of the people*

1. All organs of government are provided for by the people. They are chosen by means of periodic, free and fair elections, directly and indirectly.

2. The organs of government shall act in the interests of the people.

## Article 19

*Rule of law*

1. The organs of government and public officials shall have no further powers than those conferred on them by the Constitution and by the laws and regulations which give effect thereto.

2. Neither a group of the people nor an individual shall arbitrarily assume the exercise of any political power or of administrative functions.

3. Public officials shall perform their duties in strict conformity with the law and solely in the public interest.

4. Public officials shall be personally answerable for any unlawful acts or abuses they may commit.

## Article 20

*Franchise*

The electorate shall consist of those persons possessing Eritrean citizenship who:

- (a) Are of male sex;
- (b) Have attained the age of twenty-one years;
- (c) Are under no legal disability as defined by the law; and
- (d) Have been resident for one year preceding the election in the constituency where they shall vote.

Article 21  
Federal flag

1. The Federal flag shall be respected in Eritrea. Flag, seal and arms of Eritrea
2. There shall be a flag, seal and arms of Eritrea, details of which shall be decided upon by law.

CHAPTER IV. HUMAN RIGHTS AND  
FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Section I. Provisions reproduced from the Federal Act

Article 22

*Provisions reproduced from the Federal Act*

The following provisions of paragraph 7 of the Federal Act shall be an integral part of the Constitution of Eritrea:

"The Federal Government, as well as Eritrea, shall ensure to residents in Eritrea, without distinction of nationality, race, sex, language or religion, the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental liberties, including the following:

"(a) The right to equality before the law. No discrimination shall be made against foreign enterprises in existence in Eritrea engaged in industrial, commercial, agricultural, artisan, educational or charitable activities nor against banking institutions and insurance companies operating in Eritrea;

"(b) The right to life, liberty and security of person;

"(c) The right to own and dispose of property. No one shall be deprived of property, including contractual rights, without due process of law and without payment of just and effective compensation;

"(d) The right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right of adopting and practising any creed or religion;

"(e) The right to education;

"(f) The right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association;

"(g) The right to inviolability of correspondence and domicile subject to the requirements of the law;

"(h) The right to exercise any profession subject to the requirements of the law;

"(i) No one shall be subject to arrest or detention without an order of a competent authority, except in case of flagrant and serious violation of the law

in force. No one shall be deported except in accordance with the law;

"(j) The right to a fair and equitable trial, the right of petition to the Emperor and the right of appeal to the Emperor for commutation of death sentences;

"(k) Retroactivity of penal law shall be excluded."

Section II. Other provisions

Article 23

*Freedom and equality before the law. Everyone is a person before the law*

All persons are born free and are equal before the law without distinction of nationality, race, sex or religion and, as such shall enjoy civil rights and shall be subject to duties and obligations.

Article 24

*Prohibition of torture and certain punishments*

No one shall be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 25

*Right to freedom of movement*

Everyone resident in Eritrea has the right to freedom of movement and to the choice of place of residence in Eritrea subject to the provisions of Article 34.

Article 26

*Freedom of conscience and religion*

The right to freedom of conscience and religion shall include the right of everyone, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 27

*No discrimination to the detriment of any religion*

No economic, financial or political measure of a discriminatory nature shall be taken to the detriment of any religion practised in Eritrea.

Article 28

*Recognition of religious bodies as persons before the law*

Religious bodies of all kinds and religious orders shall be recognized as possessing juristic personality.

Consequently, any religious denomination or any group of citizens belonging to such denomination shall be entitled:

(a) To establish and maintain institutions for religious, educational and charitable purposes;

(b) To conduct its own affairs in matters of religion;

(c) To possess and acquire movable and immovable property;

(d) To administer its property and to enter into contracts.

Article 29

*Religious instruction and worship in public schools*

No pupil attending a public school shall be required to take part in any religious instruction at such school or attend any religious service at such school.

Article 30

*Freedom to express opinions*

Everyone resident in Eritrea shall have the right to express his opinion through any medium whatever (Press, speech, etc.) and to learn the opinions expressed by others.

Article 31

*Right to education and freedom to teach*

1. Everyone resident in Eritrea shall have the right to education. The Government shall make every effort to establish schools and to train teachers.

2. The Government shall encourage private persons and private associations and institutions, regardless of race, nationality, religion, sex or language, to open schools, provided that they give proof of the required standards of morality and competence.

3. The instruction in the schools shall conform to the spirit of the Constitution.

Article 32

*Associations and companies*

1. Everyone resident in Eritrea shall have the right to form associations or companies for lawful purposes.

2. Companies or associations shall enjoy fundamental freedoms in so far as their nature permits.

3. Such companies or associations shall be regarded as persons before the law.

Article 33

*Protection of working conditions*

1. Everyone resident in Eritrea, regardless of nationality, race, sex, or religion, shall have the right to opportunity of work, to equal pay for equal work, to regular holidays with pay, to payment of dependency allowances, to compensation for illness and accidents incurred through work and to a decent and healthy standard of life.

Trade unions

2. Everyone resident in Eritrea shall have the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 34

*Control by law of the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms*

1. The provisions in the last sub-paragraph of paragraph 7 of the Federal Act apply to the whole of Chapter IV of Part I of the Constitution. This sub-paragraph reads as follows:

"The respect for the rights and freedoms of others and the requirements of public order and the general welfare alone will justify any limitations to the above rights."

2. In applying the aforementioned provisions, the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms may be regulated by law provided that such regulation does not impede their normal enjoyment.

Article 35

*Duties of individuals*

Everyone shall have the duty to respect the Constitution and the laws, and to serve the community.

CHAPTER V. SPECIAL RIGHTS OF THE VARIOUS  
POPULATION GROUPS IN ERITREA

Article 36

*Property rights*

Nationals of the Federation, including those covered by sub-paragraphs (b) and (d) of paragraph 6 of the Federal Act, as well as foreign nationals, shall have the right to respect for their customs and their own legislation governing personal status and legal capacity, the law of the family and the law of succession.

Article 37

*Property rights*

Property rights and rights of real nature, including those on State lands, established by custom or law and exercised on Eritrea by the tribes, the various population groups and by natural or legal persons, shall not be impaired by any law of a discriminatory nature.

Article 38

*Languages*

1. Tigrinya and Arabic shall be the official languages of Eritrea.

2. In accordance with established practice in Eritrea, the languages spoken and written by the various

... shall be permitted to be used in dealing with the public authorities, as well as for religious or educational purposes and for all forms of expression of ideas.

## PART II. THE ASSEMBLY

### CHAPTER I. COMPOSITION AND ELECTION OF THE ASSEMBLY

#### Article 39

##### *Creation of an Assembly representing the Eritrean people*

1. Legislative power shall be exercised by an Assembly representing the Eritrean people.
2. Members of the Assembly shall represent the Eritrean people as a whole, and not only the constituency in which they are elected.

#### Article 40

##### *Number of members of the Assembly*

1. The Assembly shall be composed of not less than fifty and not more than seventy members.
2. Within the limits prescribed in the preceding paragraph, the number of members shall be fixed by law.

#### Article 41

##### *Constituencies*

1. The territory of Eritrea shall be divided into electoral constituencies, each electing one representative.
2. These constituencies shall be established in such a way that they will be approximately equal in population. The boundaries of the constituencies shall be fixed by law.

#### Article 42

##### *Eligibility*

All members of the electorate shall be eligible for election to the Assembly provided that:

- (a) They have reached the age of thirty;
- (b) They have been resident in Eritrea for three years and have been resided in the constituency for two years during the last ten years;
- (c) They are not disqualified for any reason laid down by law; and
- (d) They are not officials of the Eritrean or Federal Governments, unless they have resigned at the time of presenting their candidature.

#### Article 43

##### *The two voting systems*

1. The members of the Assembly shall be elected either by direct or indirect ballot.

2. The system of voting to be used in any given constituency shall be laid down by law.

3. Voting by direct ballot shall be personal, equal and secret.

For this purpose, a roll of qualified voters shall be drawn up, and revised from time to time.

The system for establishing electoral rolls shall be fixed by law.

4. The first stage of voting by indirect ballot shall be conducted in accordance with local custom. At the second stage, voting shall be personal, equal and secret.

#### Article 44

##### *Election by direct ballot and election at second stage in the case of indirect ballot*

1. If a candidate for the Assembly obtains an absolute majority of the votes cast he shall be declared elected.
2. If no candidate obtains an absolute majority, as defined in paragraph 1, a second ballot shall be held, and the candidate who then obtains the greatest number of votes shall be declared elected.

#### Article 45

##### *Electoral High Commission*

1. An electoral High Commission consisting of three persons appointed by the Supreme Court established under Article 85 shall be responsible for supervising all electoral proceedings (including the compiling of electoral rolls), and for preventing or putting a stop to irregularities.

2. The High Commission shall appoint, in each constituency, from among the electors of that constituency, a representative to act under its authority.

3. The said representative shall be assisted by an advisory election committee, consisting of members chosen by him from among the electors of that constituency.

As soon as an election period has been declared open in accordance with the law every candidate shall be entitled to be represented on the committee.

4. The implementation of the present article shall be prescribed by law.

#### Article 46

##### *Disputed elections to the Assembly*

1. At the opening of the session following an election, the Assembly shall confirm its members. All members whose elections are unchallenged shall be confirmed simultaneously.

2. In any case where an election is challenged, the Assembly shall decide, by a two-thirds majority of the members present, whether the challenged election is valid, provided that such two-thirds majority shall be not less than one half of the members of the Assembly in office.

3. In the event of a member's election not being confirmed, he may, within three days following the adoption of the decision by the Assembly, appeal to the Supreme Court established under Article 85, but shall not take his seat until the Supreme Court has given its decision.

#### Article 47

##### *Term of the Assembly*

1. The Assembly shall be elected for a term of four years.
2. Members shall be eligible for re-election.
3. If there is a vacancy during the term of an Assembly, a by-election shall take place. No by-election can, however, take place within six months of the election of a new Assembly.

### CHAPTER II. SESSIONS AND MEETINGS

#### Article 48

##### *Regular sessions*

1. The Assembly shall hold two regular sessions each year.

2. The Assembly shall meet in regular session on a date to be specified by law.

This session shall continue for at least one month.

3. The opening date of the second regular session shall be fixed by the Chief Executive after consulting the President of the Assembly.

This second session shall be devoted primarily to voting the budget and the Assembly shall consider no other matter until the budget has been voted. The session shall not close until the budget has been voted as prescribed in Article 60.

4. The closing date of regular sessions shall be fixed by the Chief Executive after consulting the President of the Assembly.

5. With the consent of the President of the Assembly, the Chief Executive may suspend a session for a period not exceeding twenty days.

#### Article 49

##### *Special sessions*

1. The Chief Executive may convene the Assembly to a special session.

2. The Chief Executive shall convene the Assembly to a special session whenever a written request is submitted by not less than one-third of the members.

3. When the Assembly is convened to a special session by the Chief Executive on his own initiative, only the questions set forth in the notice convening the Assembly shall be discussed. The Chief Executive shall fix the closing date of the session.

#### Article 50

##### *Quorum*

Two thirds of the members of the Assembly shall compose a quorum.

#### Article 51

##### *Rules of procedure*

The Assembly shall adopt its own rules of procedure.

#### Article 52

##### *Officers of the Assembly*

The Assembly shall elect its officers at the opening of the first regular session of each year or at the beginning of a new Legislature. The officers shall consist of a President, a Vice-President and, if the Assembly so desires, other officers.

### CHAPTER III. STATUS OF MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

#### Article 53

##### *Swearing-in of members*

Before taking up their duties, members of the Assembly who have not served in the previous Legislature shall take, in accordance with the faith and the customary practice of the individual concerned, the following oath before the President of the Assembly:

"I undertake before Almighty God" (or an invocation conforming to the faith and the customary practice of the member of the Assembly concerned) "to respect the Federation under the sovereignty of the Imperial Crown, loyally to serve Eritrea, to defend its Constitution and its laws, to seek no personal advantage from my office, and to perform all my duties conscientiously."

#### Article 54

##### *Parliamentary immunity*

1. Members of the Assembly shall not be liable to prosecution for opinions expressed or votes cast by them in performance of their duties.

2. Members of the Assembly shall not be arrested or prosecuted without the authorization of the Assembly; save that in case of flagrant delict they may be arrested, but the prosecution, even in this case, shall be authorized by the Assembly.

When the Assembly is not in session, such authorization may be given by its officers. The Assembly may subsequently decide that proceedings shall be discontinued.

*Article 55*  
*Remuneration of members of the Assembly*

1. Members of the Assembly shall receive a remuneration fixed by law.
2. No increase of remuneration shall take effect until the term of office of the Assembly voting it has expired.

CHAPTER IV. POWERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

*Article 56*  
*General powers of the Assembly*

The Assembly shall vote the laws and the budget, elect the Chief Executive and supervise the activities of the Executive.

Section I. Legislative functions

*Article 57*  
*Drafting and adoption of legislation*

1. Draft legislation may be introduced into the Assembly by members of the Assembly or submitted to the Assembly by the Chief Executive.
2. Such legislation shall be considered, discussed and put to the vote as provided in the Assembly's rules of procedure.

*Article 58*  
*Request for a reconsideration*

1. Draft legislation adopted by the Assembly shall be immediately transmitted by the President of the Assembly to the Chief Executive.

Approval of legislation by the Chief Executive

2. The Chief Executive will transmit it as soon as received to the Representative of the Emperor who may request, in accordance with the provisions of Article 14, that it be reconsidered by the Assembly.

Publication

3. If the Representative of the Emperor, exercising the prerogatives for which provision is made under Article 14, has transmitted a request to the Chief Executive for reconsideration, giving his reasons for doing so, the Assembly must take a further vote. The draft legislation must obtain a two-thirds majority vote to be adopted.
4. If the draft legislation has been adopted after reconsideration, as provided in the preceding paragraph, or if the Representative of the Emperor has not exercised

his prerogatives under Article 14, the Chief Executive must within twenty days after the vote taken by the Assembly, either approve the draft legislation and transmit it to the Representative of the Emperor for promulgation within five days of its receipt, or return it to the Assembly with his comments.

5. If the Chief Executive shall have returned the draft legislation to the Assembly, the Assembly shall reconsider the draft legislation and take a further vote on it. If the draft legislation is then adopted by a two-thirds majority, the Chief Executive shall transmit it to the Representative of the Emperor for promulgation within five days of its receipt.

6. All draft legislation adopted in accordance with the provisions of this article but not promulgated within the time limit laid down in paragraphs 4 and 5 of this Article, shall come into effect after publication by the Chief Executive.

Section II. Budget

*Article 59*  
*Submission of the draft budget by the Chief Executive*

1. At least one month before the opening of the second regular session of the Assembly, the Chief Executive shall submit a draft budget for the next financial year.
2. The draft budget shall cover the whole of the revenue and expenditures of the Government of Eritrea for the next financial year.

*Article 60*  
*Examination and adoption of the budget by the Assembly*

1. During the month preceding the second regular session of the Assembly, the Assembly Finance Committee shall examine the draft budget submitted by the Executive and report to the Assembly.

2. A general debate on the draft budget shall be held at the beginning of the second regular session of the Assembly.

Within ten days following the closure of the debate, the Executive shall submit a revised draft budget including the amendments it may decide to make to its first draft as a result of the observations made by the Assembly.

3. The Assembly shall then proceed to examine the various items of the budget:

(a) It shall first adopt the expenditure estimates, with or without amendments, only the total estimate for each Executive Department being put to the vote.

The Assembly may not increase the estimates proposed in the draft budget unless increase is balanced by corresponding estimates of revenue and has received the consent of the Executive.

(b) The Assembly shall then adopt, with or without amendments, the revenue estimates chapter by chapter, each of which shall be put to the vote separately.

4. The complete budget shall be adopted before the beginning of the financial year; otherwise, the amended draft budget submitted by the Executive as provided in paragraph 2 above shall be deemed to be adopted, provided the Executive has itself observed the time-limit laid down in Article 59 and in the present article.

*Article 61*  
*All taxation and expenditure must be authorized by law*

No tax shall be levied and no expenditure shall be incurred unless authorized by law.

*Article 62*  
*Form of the budget*

A law shall be enacted governing the form in which the budget is to be submitted and voted on each year.

*Article 63*  
*Credit for urgent expenditure*

1. When voting the budget, the Assembly shall include a credit for urgent expenditure.
2. The amount of this credit shall not exceed 10 per cent of the expenditure estimates.
3. At the beginning of the following session of the Assembly, the Chief Executive shall report on the use he has made of this credit. The Assembly shall take a vote on this report.

*Article 64*  
*Accounts for past financial years*

1. Within eighteen months following the close of each financial year, the Executive shall submit the accounts to the Assembly for approval.
2. An Auditor-General, independent of the Executive, shall be elected by the Assembly.
3. The principal function of the Auditor-General shall be to examine the annual accounts, and to make a report to the Assembly containing his observations on them at the time of their presentation to the Assembly.
4. The method of election and the matters within the competence of the Auditor-General shall be established by law.

Section III. Election and supervision of the Executive

*Article 65*  
*Election of the Chief Executive*

The Assembly shall elect the Chief Executive as provided in Article 68.

*Article 66*  
*Supervision of the Executive by the Assembly*

1. Members of the Assembly may submit questions in writing or short questions orally to the Executive, which shall reply.
2. At the request of ten members of the Assembly, a debate may be held on the Executive's policy. The Executive shall be entitled to intervene both in the course of the debate and before its closure.

PART III. THE EXECUTIVE

CHAPTER I. COMPOSITION AND APPOINTMENT

*Article 67*  
*Composition of the Executive*

The Executive shall consist of a Chief Executive assisted by Secretaries of Executive Departments.

*Article 68*  
*Election of the Chief Executive*

1. The Chief Executive shall be elected by the Assembly by secret ballot; if a candidate obtains two thirds of the votes he shall be declared elected. If no candidate obtains the requisite number of votes the candidate receiving the least number of votes shall be removed from the list and the Assembly shall vote again on the remainder repeating the process if necessary until a candidate obtains the required number of votes.
2. Only Eritrean citizens having attained the age of thirty-five years and in possession of their political rights shall be eligible for office of the Chief Executive.
3. The Assembly shall elect a Chief Executive at the opening of each new legislature.
4. In case of death or resignation of the Chief Executive, the Assembly shall elect a successor within fifteen days. If the Assembly is not in session, the President of the Assembly shall convene it to a special session. The newly elected Chief Executive shall remain in office until the expiry of his predecessor's term.
5. The Chief Executive shall be eligible for re-election.

*Article 69*  
*Appointment of Secretaries of Executive Departments*

1. The Chief Executive shall have power to appoint and dismiss Secretaries of Executive Departments, who shall be responsible to him.
2. Only persons qualified to be members of the Eritrean electorate shall be eligible to hold office as Secretaries of Executive Departments.
3. The Chief Executive shall select the Secretaries of Executive Departments in such a way as to ensure as far as possible a fair representation in his council of the



principal groups of the population and the various geographical areas of the territory.

4. The number and the functions of Secretaries of Executive Departments shall be prescribed by law.

#### Article 70 Incompatibility

The office of the Chief Executive or of Secretary of an Executive Department is incompatible with the holding of any other administrative or judicial office.

#### Article 71 Acting Chief Executive

The Chief Executive, on being elected, shall designate one of the Secretaries of Executive Departments to act for him if he is temporarily prevented from discharging his duties or, if his post fall vacant, until such time as a new Chief Executive is elected.

#### Article 72 Swearing-in of the Chief Executive

Before taking up his duties, the Chief Executive shall, according to his faith and customary practice, take the following oath in the Assembly before the Representative of the Emperor:

"I undertake before Almighty God" (or an invocation conforming to the faith and the customary practice of the Chief Executive) "to respect the Federation under the sovereignty of the Imperial Crown, loyally to serve Eritrea, to defend its Constitution and its laws, to seek the welfare of the Eritrean people in the unity of its inhabitants bound together by ties of brotherhood, whatever their race, religion or language, and to seek no personal advantage from office."

#### Article 73 Swearing-in of Secretaries of Executive Departments

Before taking up their duties, Secretaries of Executive Departments shall, according to their faith and their customary practices, take the following oath publicly in the Assembly before the Representative of the Emperor:

"I undertake before Almighty God" (or an invocation conforming to the faith and customary practice of the individual concerned) "loyally to respect the Federation under the Sovereignty of the Imperial Crown, loyally to serve Eritrea, to respect its Constitution and its laws, to seek no personal advantage from my office and to perform all my duties conscientiously."

#### Article 74 Council of the Executive

The Chief Executive shall from time to time summon a council of the Secretaries of Executive Departments. This Council shall advise the Chief Executive on matters of general policy and on any questions he may submit to it.

#### Article 75 Removal from office of the Chief Executive

1. The Chief Executive shall not be answerable for any act performed by him in the course of his duties except for a grave violation of the Constitution. He shall be answerable for failure to dismiss any Secretary of an Executive Department committing a grave violation of the Constitution.

2. In such circumstances, the Chief Executive may be impeached by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Assembly in office, and tried by the Supreme Court established under Article 85.

3. If the Supreme Court finds the charge to be proved, it shall order the removal from office of the Chief Executive. It may, furthermore, disqualify him from performing any executive function or legislative duty.

4. Removal from office shall be without prejudice to any proceedings which may be instituted if the acts committed by the Chief Executive constitute offences under criminal law.

### CHAPTER II. POWERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

#### Article 76 Enumeration of powers

1. The Chief Executive shall ensure that the Constitution and the laws are enforced. He shall have responsibility for the direction of the Executive and Administrative Departments and public services. He shall be Chairman of the Civil Service Commission, for which provision is made in Article 82, and shall make appointments in accordance with the Constitution and the laws.

2. He shall be responsible for the internal police of Eritrea and, to this end, he shall issue regulations conforming to the Constitution and the laws to ensure the maintenance of public order and security.

3. He shall convene the sessions of the Assembly as provided in Articles 48 and 49 of the Constitution.

4. Each year, at the opening of the first regular session, he shall give an account to the Assembly of his conduct of affairs and report on the general situation of Eritrea.

5. He shall have the power to propose legislation. He may request the Assembly to reconsider draft legislation. He shall publish the laws after their promulgation or under the provisions of Article 58.

6. He shall submit to the Assembly a draft annual budget and the accounts for the preceding financial year, as provided in Articles 59, 60 and 64.

7. He shall have access to and the right of addressing the Assembly. He may be represented in the Assembly and its Committees by the Secretaries of Executive Departments.

8. He shall issue the regulations required to implement the laws.

9. He shall issue orders as provided in Article 77.

10. He may temporarily limit certain provisions of the Constitution as provided in Article 78.

11. He shall take the necessary measures for the suppression of brigandage, as provided in Article 79.

12. Official documents issued by the Chief Executive must be counter-signed by the Secretaries of Executive Departments concerned.

#### Article 77 Power of the Chief Executive to issue orders when the Assembly is not in session

1. In the interval between sessions of the Assembly, the Chief Executive shall have authority to issue, when necessary, orders governing any matter within the jurisdiction of the Government of Eritrea except matters dealt with in Chapter IV of Part I of the Constitution, provided that such orders are compatible with the Constitution and the laws in force.

2. Such orders shall be submitted to the Assembly which must approve or repeal them within a period of two months from the opening of the session following their promulgation.

3. Failing a decision by the Assembly within the above-mentioned period, orders issued by the Chief Executive shall be deemed to be confirmed.

#### Article 78 Limitation in time of emergency of certain constitutional provisions

1. In the event of a serious emergency which endangers public order and security, the Assembly may, on the proposal of the Chief Executive, adopt a law authorizing him to impose, under the conditions provided for in Article 34, temporary limitations on the rights set forth in Chapter IV of Part I of this Constitution.

2. The authorization thus given by law shall be valid for a maximum period of two months. If necessary, it may be renewed under the same conditions.

3. During the interval between sessions, the Chief Executive may, if it is urgently necessary, issue an order prescribing the measures referred to in paragraph 1.

In such cases, a special session of the Assembly shall be convened, as soon as possible and, at the latest, within

twenty days following the promulgation of the order, to adopt a law approving, amending or repealing the said order.

#### Article 79 Suppression of brigandage

1. If public order and the security of persons and property in Eritrea are threatened by organized brigandage, the Chief Executive shall, after making a proclamation to the people, adopt the exceptional measures necessary to suppress such brigandage.

2. The Chief Executive shall inform the Assembly of the measures he has taken.

### CHAPTER III. THE ADMINISTRATION

#### Article 80 Conditions of appointment of officials

Officials shall be chosen for their ability and character; considerations of race, sex, religion or political opinion shall not influence the choice either to their advantage or to their disadvantage.

#### Article 81 Status of officials

1. The general status of administrative officials shall be fixed by law.

2. The special status of the various categories of administrative officials shall be fixed by regulations.

#### Article 82 Civil Service Commission

1. A Civil Service Commission, under the chairmanship of the Chief Executive or his representative, shall be created.

2. This Commission shall be responsible for the appointment, promotion, transfer and discharge of officials, and for taking disciplinary action against them.

3. The composition of this Commission, the procedure for the appointment of its members, and the conditions under which it will function will be determined by law.

#### Article 83 Local communities

1. The Constitution recognizes the existence of local communities.

2. Municipalities shall be accorded the management of their own affairs.

3. Officials responsible for the administration of village and tribal communities shall be selected from persons of those local communities.

4. The conditions for the application of the preceding provisions may be determined by law.

#### PART IV. THE ADVISORY COUNCIL OF ERITREA

##### Article 84

###### *Advisory Council of Eritrea*

1. An Advisory Council of Eritrea is hereby established.

2. The function of the Council shall be to assist the Chief Executive and the Assembly, with a view to achieving economic and social progress in Eritrea. To this end it may:

(a) Draw up plans for the development of the country's resources and for the improvement of public health and hygiene;

(b) Put forward proposals concerning finance and the budget and the organization of the administration and the public services;

(c) Give advice on draft laws submitted to the Assembly;

(d) On the request of the Chief Executive or of the Assembly, prepare drafts of laws, regulations or orders.

3. The composition and organization of the Council shall be fixed by law.

#### PART V. THE JUDICIARY

##### SOLE CHAPTER

##### Article 85

###### *Judicial power*

Judicial power shall be exercised by a Supreme Court and by other courts which will apply the various systems of law in force in Eritrea. The organization of these courts shall be established by law.

##### Article 86

###### *Qualifications required of judges*

1. Judges shall be chosen from persons of the highest moral reputation and known to be well versed in the customs and legislation peculiar to the various systems of law which they are required to apply.

###### Oath

2. Before taking up office, judges shall, according to their faith and their customary practice, take the following oath:

"I swear before Almighty God" (or an invocation conforming to the faith and the customary practice of the judge concerned) "to be a faithful guardian of the law and to administer it impartially and independently in order to ensure that justice shall reign supreme in Eritrea."

###### Independence of the judiciary

3. The judiciary shall be independent and must be free from all political influence. The Assembly and the Executive shall not give orders or injunctions to the judges, nor shall they bring any pressure to bear on them.

###### Status of judges

4. The status of judges shall be established by law.

##### Article 87

###### *Appointment of judges*

1. Judges shall be appointed by the Chief Executive on the recommendation of the President of the Assembly who shall be supplied with a list of candidates by a Committee composed of the President of the Supreme Court and two judges chosen by the members of the Supreme Court and of the court or courts immediately inferior thereto.

2. The President of the Assembly shall recommend to the Chief Executive two candidates for each appointment.

3. The list of candidates drawn up by the committee provided for in paragraph 1 must include at least three names for each appointment.

##### Article 88

###### *Responsibility of judges*

The Supreme Court provided for in Article 85 shall have jurisdiction in respect of criminal or disciplinary responsibility of judges for acts in connexion with the discharge of their duties.

##### Article 89

###### *Composition of the Supreme Court*

1. The Supreme Court shall consist of not less than three and not more than seven judges. On the proposal of the Court, the number of judges may be decreased or increased by law.

2. Judges shall be appointed for a period of seven years, which period may be renewed.

##### Article 90

###### *Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court*

The Supreme Court shall have jurisdiction in the following matters:

(1) As a court of last resort with respect to appeals from final judgments on points of law, and also to the extent provided by law with respect to appeals both on questions of law and fact.

(2) Conflicts of jurisdiction between courts.

In the event of a question involving conflicting jurisdiction, proceedings shall be suspended and the issue shall

be presented to the Supreme Court, which shall determine the competent jurisdiction.

(3) Disputes concerning the constitutionality of laws and orders.

If the constitutionality of a law or order is challenged before a Court, proceedings shall be suspended and the issue shall be presented to the Supreme Court, which shall decide whether such act is constitutional.

(4) Actions based on administrative acts brought against the Government of Eritrea or other public bodies, unless courts have been established by law to try such cases.

(5) Criminal and disciplinary responsibility of judges as provided in Article 88.

(6) Responsibility of the Chief Executive as provided in Article 75.

#### PART VI. AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION

##### SOLE CHAPTER

##### Article 91

###### *Compliance with the Federal Act and the principles of democratic government*

1. The Assembly may not, by means of an amendment, introduce into the Constitution any provision which would not be in conformity with the Federal Act.

2. Article 16 of the Constitution, by the terms of which the Constitution of Eritrea is based on the principles of democratic government, shall not be amended.

##### Article 92

###### *Amendments to the Constitution*

1. Any amendment to the Constitution must be submitted in writing either by the Chief Executive or by a number of members of the Assembly equal to one quarter of the actual number of members.

2. A period of twenty days must elapse between the submission of an amendment and the opening of the Assembly's discussion thereon.

##### Article 93

###### *Conditions governing the adoption of amendments*

1. If an amendment is approved by a majority of three quarters of the members of the Assembly in office, the amendment shall be declared adopted.

2. If an amendment is approved by two successive legislatures by a majority of two thirds of the members present and voting or by a majority of the members in office, the amendment shall be declared adopted.

###### *Entry into effect of amendments*

3. Any amendments to the Constitution adopted by the Assembly according to the provisions of the fore-

going paragraphs will enter into effect after ratification by the Emperor, Sovereign of the Federation.

#### PART VII. TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

##### Article 94

###### *Entry into force of the Constitution*

1. This Constitution shall enter into effect following ratification of the Federal Act by the Emperor of Ethiopia, and following approval by the United Nations Commissioner, adoption by the Eritrean Assembly and ratification by the Emperor of Ethiopia of the Eritrean Constitution.

2. The Administering Authority shall continue to conduct the affairs of Eritrea until the transfer of power to the Government of Eritrea has taken place.

##### Article 95

###### *Laws giving effect to the Constitution*

1. Any laws giving effect to the present Constitution adopted by the Eritrean Assembly convened by the Administering Authority, shall enter into effect simultaneously with the Constitution.

2. Such laws shall conform strictly to the principles and provisions of the Constitution.

##### Article 96

###### *Legislation remaining in force when the Constitution comes into effect*

1. Laws and regulations which were in force on 1 April 1941, and have not since been repealed by the Administering Authority and the laws and regulations enacted by that Authority, shall remain in force so long as they have not been repealed and to the extent that they have not been amended.

2. In the event of conflict between such laws and regulations and this Constitution, the Constitution shall prevail in accordance with Article 90 (3).

##### Article 97

###### *Respect for obligations contracted on behalf of Eritrea*

1. Obligations of any kind contracted by the authorities administering Eritrea up to the date on which the Constitution enters into force shall remain valid for the Government of Eritrea and must be respected provided that such obligations relate to matters within the jurisdiction of Eritrea.

2. As from the date of the entry into force of the Constitution any undertaking regularly concluded by the Executive Committee established by the Administering Authority before the date of the entry into force of the Constitution shall remain valid and must be respected.

3. The provisions contained in paragraph 1 shall not apply to obligations terminated by the Peace Treaty with Italy of 10 February 1947 or by the Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 29 January 1952.

#### Article 98

##### *Retention of officials in office.*

Administrative officials and judicial officials whether Federal nationals or not, holding office when the

Constitution enters into force, shall continue in office. They may be dismissed only on three months' notice.

#### Article 99

##### *Term of the first Assembly*

The Assembly responsible for adopting the Constitution shall exercise the powers of the Assembly as provided in the Constitution for a period of four years after the Constitution enters into force.

## Document 10

### *Report of the Government of the United Kingdom concerning the administration of Eritrea for the period from December 1950 to September 1952 (excerpt)*

A/2233, 27 October 1952

#### CHAPTER I

United Nations Resolution No. 390 (V) of  
2nd December, 1950

##### *Origin of the United Nations Resolution*

1. The United Nations Resolution No. 390 (V) of 2nd December, 1950, contained the recommendations of the General Assembly for the final disposal of the former Italian colony of Eritrea and so propounded a solution for a matter which had remained in suspense since the entry into force, on 15th September, 1947, of the Treaty of Peace with Italy.

2. Article 23 of that Treaty, after recording the abandonment by Italy of all right and title to her former African colonies, stipulated in its third paragraph that the final disposal of these territories should be determined jointly by the Governments of the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and France, within one year from the date of coming into force of the Treaty. The following additional provision was appended as paragraph 3 of Annex XI:

"If with respect to any of these territories the Four Powers are unable to agree upon their disposal within one year from the coming into force of the Treaty of Peace with Italy, the matter shall be referred to the General Assembly of the United Nations for a recommendation, and the Four Powers agree to accept the recommendation and to give effect to it."

3. After considerable enquiry and deliberation, which included the despatch to the territory of a fact-finding delegation, known as the Four-Power Commission of Investigation, the Governments concerned failed to reach agreement by the expiry of the term appointed. Accordingly, the Four Powers in a letter dated 15th September, 1948, referred the matter to the General Assembly of the United Nations for a recommendation.

4. By Resolution No. 289 A (IV) of 21st November, 1949, the General Assembly appointed a United Nations Commission for Eritrea composed of representatives of Burma, Guatemala, Norway, Pakistan and the Union of South Africa, the duties of which were to study and, by 15th June, 1950, to report on the problem of Eritrea, at the same time submitting a proposal or proposals appropriate for a solution of the problem. Having visited the territory and having consulted a number of interested Governments, the Commission on 8th June, 1950, approved a final report to the General Assembly which consisted of two separate and differing memoranda, furnished by the delegations of Burma, Norway and the Union of South Africa on the one hand and by the delegations of Guatemala and Pakistan on the other.

5. The submission of this report to the Interim Committee of the United Nations and later to the General Assembly at its Fifth Session gave rise to protracted discussion and negotiations which culminated, on 2nd December, 1950, in the adoption by 46 votes to 10 of Resolution No. 390 (V), the final implementation of which is the subject of this report. This Resolution provides for the federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia under the

sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown, local powers being granted to the Eritrean State in the field of domestic affairs, whilst giving the proposed Federal Government jurisdiction over defence, foreign affairs, currency and finance, foreign and interstate commerce and external and interstate communications, including ports. The Resolution provided that a constitution for Eritrea was to be drafted by a Commissioner appointed by the United Nations and submitted to a representative assembly of Eritreans, chosen by the people, to be convoked by the British Administration in consultation with the Commissioner.

6. During the transition period of preparation for federation, not to extend beyond 15th September, 1952, the Administering Authority was to continue to conduct the affairs of the territory. A number of other important duties, which are the subject of the ensuing chapters of this report, including in particular the organisation of an Eritrean Administration and the eventual transfer of power to the appropriate successor authorities, were placed upon the shoulders of the Administering Authority. The text of the Resolution, the first seven paragraphs of which comprise the Federal Act, forms Annex A to this report [not reproduced here].

##### *Nature of the United Nations Resolution*

7. In the course of the enquiries and deliberations, in Eritrea and elsewhere, outlined above the future status of Eritrea had become the subject of widely differing views and aspirations. Appraisal of the question by the various parties engaged in its study, and the strong local feelings, had resulted in proposals for every conceivable form of settlement, ranging from full union with Ethiopia to outright independence through intervening graduations of trusteeship or temporary administration, including a demand for partition of the territory. These differing conceptions had by December 1950 been resolved for practical purposes, into the two clear-cut and opposing demands, for independence, immediate or ultimate, on the one hand and complete union with Ethiopia on the other. In face of this fundamental division, which rent Eritrea politically from the top to the bottom, it became clear that only a compromise between these two extremes had any chance of success.

8. The project of federal union with Ethiopia with domestic autonomy for Eritrea formulated after protracted and delicate negotiations was the inevitable product of this realisation. It was essentially a middle-way solution, and in this quality lay both its strength and weakness. It was a well balanced compositum of those conflicting view-points which had hitherto resisted agreement, and it married the two fundamental principles of Ethiopian sovereignty and Eritrean autonomy. It had not

been proposed by any political party in Eritrea and did not thereby invite opposition solely on that account from the others. Its successful application in the country for which it was designed therefore would be dependent upon the circumspection, tact and technical efficiency with which its aims were pursued in practice by the United Nations Commissioner and by the Administering Authority, severally and jointly, in the fulfilment of their respective tasks.

##### *Special difficulties confronting the Administering Authority*

9. The greatest handicap in giving full effect to the Resolution was the shortness of the time allowed in which to do it. The deadline of 15th September, 1952, by which federation had to be effective, provided only twenty months in which to carry out a task of some magnitude. The work of the Administration was overshadowed throughout by this knowledge.

10. Politically it was an encouraging sign that the adoption of the Resolution was at once greeted in Eritrea by public expressions of approval, one of them taking the character of a formal pledge of unity by the leaders of all political parties at a public meeting, and co-operation in making federation effective. However, in the circumstances prevailing at the time, such manifestations were little more than demonstrations of satisfaction at the attainment at long last of a firm decision, the full implications of which were not then apparent.

11. The conflict of view referred to in paragraph 7 above had deep roots in Eritrea. The twin theses of independence and union were the articles of faith of contending political parties and had sown bitter political and racial dissension among the population. The demand from the Western Province for separation from the rest of Eritrea was still strong and would not be lightly abandoned. There was therefore the danger that although the notion of federation, new in itself, which went some way to satisfy all parties, would be accepted in principle, the old controversy of independence versus union would continue to be fought out within its scope. Moreover, the years of uncertainty as to the country's political future had produced unrest and partisan animosities which could not be expected to give way immediately to national harmony. It was evident that both the Commissioner and the Administering Power would have to concentrate in the discharge of their duties upon abating the political temper in the country by showing that federation was not only a workable compromise but a desirable and practicable conception in its own right.

12. The British Administration of Eritrea therefore had to play its part in creating conditions of administrative stability and political calm in which national unity,

or at least genuine co-operation, could take shape and a reasoned and genuine acceptance of the solution come into being. This was a formidable task, but it has come about. In its achievement the warm and close relationship and understanding which have existed throughout between the British Administration and the United Nations Commissioner have been a potent factor. The nature and extent of this co-operation will be described in the succeeding chapters. The tolerance and good sense of the major political leaders, and of the Eritrean people themselves, have also been essential contributions. Valuable co-operation in matters affecting Italian interests was received from the representatives of the Italian Government throughout.

13. In addition to the above considerations the Resolution, in keeping with its compromise nature, necessarily left several provisions on matters of practical importance in an imprecise state, and the exact definition of these, particularly with regard to the allocation of responsibility between Eritrean and federal services, has been a source of some difficulty.

#### *Specific duties laid upon the Administering Authority by the Resolution*

14. As mentioned above, the Resolution clearly defined the respective functions during the transition period of the United Nations Commissioner and the Administering Authority respectively. Those of them that fell upon the British Administration are set out below, the paragraphs mentioned referring to the resolution itself:

- (1) Conduct of the affairs of Eritrea (paragraph 11).
  - (2) Negotiation, if desirable, of a temporary Customs Union with Ethiopia (paragraph 11).
  - (3) Organisation of an Eritrean Administration (paragraph 11).
  - (4) Induction of Eritreans into all levels of the Administration (paragraph 11).
  - (5) Arrangements for and convocation of a representative assembly of Eritreans (paragraph 11).
  - (6) Arrangements for the transfer of powers to the appropriate authorities (paragraph 14).
- Items (3), (4) and (5) above were to be done in consultation with the United Nations Commissioner.

15. The subsequent chapters of this report are devoted to an account of the way in which these responsibilities were fulfilled.

16. In addition to the above, paragraph 12 of the Resolution placed upon the United Nations Commissioner the duty to consult with the Administering Authority on the preparation of a draft of the Eritrean Constitution.

17. The organisation of the Eritrean "Government", as distinct from the Eritrean "Administration", was prescribed by paragraph 9 of the Resolution, but was not specifically made the responsibility of the Administering Authority although this coping stone naturally evolved during the progress of constitutional procedure.

18. By paragraph 11 of the Resolution the Administering Authority was given the power to negotiate, in agreement with the Commissioner, a temporary customs union with Ethiopia to be put into effect as soon as practicable. In the result this power was not exercised for reasons which will be explained later.

19. In general, therefore, the Resolution prescribed that, apart from the direct responsibility laid upon the Commissioner for the preparation and adoption of the Eritrean Constitution, the initiative in all other matters during the transition period rested upon the Administering Authority. Close co-operation between the two authorities was, however, imperative, and the helpful and friendly advice of the Commissioner and his staff was welcomed and was readily forthcoming at all stages and in all matters affecting the working out of the resolution.

#### CHAPTER VII

##### Consultations with the United Nations Commissioner and the Ethiopian Government on the draft Constitution

188. Prior to the arrival of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea he had been invited by Her Majesty's Government to visit London so as to provide an opportunity for a general and informal survey of the work which lay ahead in giving effect to the Resolution. These discussions traversed the whole field of the several and mutual responsibilities of the Commissioner and the Administering Authority and it was found possible to reach agreement on the general policy to be followed in fulfilling those responsibilities. From then on, close and friendly collaboration between the Commissioner and the British Administration, and a mutual exchange of information, was maintained in Eritrea on all matters arising out of the Resolution, the extent of which ranged far beyond the obligation for formal consultation established by the Resolution. This full co-operation and mutual understanding had pleasing and fruitful results.

189. The continuous contact thus achieved made it unnecessary to engage in a series of set meetings, but it was deemed wise for the purpose of record for two formal meetings, one on 27th June, 1951, and the other on 3rd November, 1951, to be held concerning the general outline of the Constitution and to permit of a general exchange of views upon the principles involved. The points discussed and the views expressed are contained in docu-

ments Nos. A/AC.44/L.6 and A/AC.44/SR.1 published by the Commissioner and as they, and the other negotiations on the subject, will be epitomised in the report to be submitted to the General Assembly by him there is no need to say more in this report other than that no important conflict of ideas arose. Later, as the draft Constitution took shape, the Administration was given ample opportunity to comment upon it and to suggest amendments to it. Views thus expressed were taken into full consideration by the United Nations Commissioner at all stages.

190. There is no provision in the Resolution for formal consultations between the Administering Authority and the Government of Ethiopia concerning the draft Constitution and none was held, but the uninterrupted liaison between the two authorities on the subject of the federal aspects of the Resolution enabled frequent unofficial conversations to take place both in Asmara and Addis Ababa on the subject of the drafting of the Constitution. These discussions, and the general liaison with the United Nations Commissioner mentioned above, were helpful in the process of reconciling some divergencies of view which had been revealed during the long consultations between the United Nations Commissioner and the Government of Ethiopia, and contributed towards the full agreement which was ultimately reached on all points.

191. The final draft text of the Constitution prepared by the United Nations Commissioner and presented to the Representative Assembly had therefore been the subject of close consultation between the Commissioner and the Administering Authority, as provided for in the Resolution, and it was presented by the Commissioner with the agreement and support of the British Administration.

#### CHAPTER XI

##### Final Preparations for the Transfer of Power Federal Services

259. The massive preliminary work which the preceding chapters describe, and the successful completion of the Commissioner's labours in bringing into being an approved and ratified Constitution, had set the stage for the final transfer of powers to the successor authorities. In so far as the transfer of those responsibilities to the Federal Government was concerned, little more work remained to be accomplished. The necessary arrangements had been made in detail as already explained during the continuing series of technical discussions between the officials of the Administration and those sent from Addis Ababa for this purpose, on the basis of the transfer of the services as going concerns.

260. Practically the whole of the foreign and Eritrean staff employed in them were to be taken over by the federal authorities and suitable contracts for service were concluded between the latter and the key British officials whose retention was required and who were willing to stay.

261. The arrangements made provided for the transfer of all buildings, equipment and stores used by the services and the preparation of satisfactory inventories and transfer documents in respect of them. They enabled a satisfactory organisation to be set up so that the responsibility of administration and operation could pass with no break in continuity. The whole-hearted assistance and willing help extended by the Ethiopian Government and their officials throughout the transition period enabled these complicated questions to be settled in a manner satisfactory to all concerned.

#### *Eritrean Government: Executive Committee*

262. As a preliminary to the assumption of power by the Eritrean Government the work of the Executive Committee was vital. Under the able leadership of Sheikh Ali Mohammed Musa Radai, they devoted long hours and considerable concentration to the numerous and varied subjects which were referred to them for decision. Bearing in mind that the problems of government and administration with which they were called upon to deal were entirely new to most of them, considerable credit is due to them for the manner in which they handled their business. Detailed proposals for their examination were prepared by the Administration and responsible British officials attended their meetings, when required, to give explanations and guidance on technical matters.

263. Amongst the subjects which they successfully dealt with may be mentioned the following, which show the wide scope of their work:

- (1) Calling for tenders and placing of contracts for the continuance of local supplies of petrol, oil and lubricants, of stores for the Medical, Police and Public Works Departments and for the supply of electric power and water.
- (2) The detailed organisation of the District Administration (paragraph 121).
- (3) The organic law on the functions of Government (paragraph 122).
- (4) The complete establishment of staff, by grades, for all Departments of the Government, rates of pay, and the selection of officials to be retained for service (paragraph 141).
- (5) The future organisation and maintenance of Government transport.
- (6) The organisation and establishment of the Police Force and Prisons Service.

(7) The future of the Government Press and of the newspapers published by the British Information Services.

(8) The selection for employment and contracts for service of British staff whose services it was desired to retain (paragraph 144).

(9) Education policy.

(10) Formation of a separate Excise Department on its divorce from the Customs Department when the latter became a federal service.

(11) Conclusion of hiring agreements for private property still required by the Government (paragraph 91).

(12) The revision of the Judicial system in conformity with the Constitution (Chapter VIII).

(13) Procedure for the taking over of Government property on the transfer of power (paragraph 241).

(14) Draft budget estimates for the Eritrean Government for the period 11th September, 1952, to 10th September, 1953 (paragraph 75).

264. Some of the above items which have already been mentioned separately in this report were comprehensive in their scope, notably Nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, 12 and 14, and called for prolonged examination and deliberation. In all of the items, and many others not included in the above list, satisfactory interim decisions were taken which permitted the British Administration to complete the organisation of the Eritrean Administration and its plans for the transfer of power. Subjects on which they were not competent to take a final decision, some of which are not, in the interests of brevity, mentioned above, were referred to the Representative Assembly for action.

#### *Organic Laws*

265. The Eritrean Constitution, in order to be made effective, needed to be supplemented by certain laws, for which the Constitution provided, giving detailed application to some of the principles enshrined in it. Some of the laws were urgently necessary to enable the new Eritrean Government to function when the Constitution came into effect, and in particular:

(a) The Functions of Government Act (Article 69/4). (See paragraph 122.)

(b) The Administration of Justice Act (Article 61).

(c) The Budget Law (Article 64 (4)).

266. The following also called for by the Constitution, although of less pressing importance than the above, were also of an urgent nature:

(d) The Civil Service Act (Article 81).

(e) The Audit Act (Article 64 (4)).

(f) The Advisory Council Act (Article 84 (3)).

(g) The Electoral Act (Article 41).

267. Article 95 of the Constitution, which was especially drafted to deal with these "organic" laws, provided that laws giving effect to the Constitution adopted by the Eritrean Representative Assembly should enter into effect simultaneously with the Constitution. The reasons underlying this provision and the machinery for dealing with the laws had been agreed upon in discussion with the Commissioner, whose particular responsibility they were as being an essential projection of the Constitution itself. The Administration was closely concerned because the first named three at least were essential components of the fabric of the Eritrean Administration which it had to construct.

268. It was unavoidable for reasons which are given in Chapter VIII that item (b), which dealt with the Judicial régime, should be enacted and effective before the transfer of power. It was promulgated on 10th September, 1952, and entered into effect immediately.

269. Drafts of the other organic laws were prepared in agreement with the United Nations Commissioner, the bulk of the drafting, after the basic principles had been thrashed out in discussion, being undertaken by the Administration. They were drafted in strict conformity with the principles and provisions of the Constitution. An analysis of the laws themselves will be given in the report of the United Nations Commissioner, who himself addressed the Representative Assembly in general terms regarding them and the importance of their early enactment.

270. After the final drafts had received the approval of the Chief Administrator and the Commissioner they were submitted jointly on their behalf to the Executive Committee for examination, urgent approval and submission to the Assembly for adoption. Because of the pressure of work upon the Committee, the comprehensive nature of the laws, and the necessity of carefully translating them into Arabic and Tigrinya, only the most urgent of them, *i.e.*, the Eritrean Functions of Government Act, was actually adopted by the Assembly before, and thus became law when the Constitution came into force.

271. The remainder were however all transmitted by the Committee to the Assembly, which set up a special committee to examine them. There is every reason to suppose that they will become law without undue delay.

#### *Revision of existing legislation*

272. On 10th September, 1952, a Revision, Amendment, and Interpretation of Laws Proclamation was published which came into force at the same time as the Termination of Powers Proclamation. It was an important legal preliminary to the inception of the successor authorities and its objects were twofold:

(a) to repeal those laws relating to matters within the domestic jurisdiction of the Eritrean Government which either were unsuitable for continuance after the transfer of powers or would be inconsistent with the provisions of the Eritrean Constitution; and

(b) to amend provisions of such existing laws which were otherwise suitable for continuance after the transfer of power, so to adapt them both to the conditions that would then prevail and to the provisions of the Eritrean Constitution.

273. This process of revision was considerably simplified and facilitated, firstly by the fact that the Administration of Justice Proclamation, which was published simultaneously, itself revised all the relevant laws relating to the Courts and the administration of justice in general; secondly, by the fact that in March 1949 a comprehensive revision and consolidation of the laws in force at that date had already been carried out.

274. Under the 1949 revision, all laws in force in Eritrea at the commencement of the occupation on 1st April, 1941, which had neither been suspended by, nor were inconsistent with, the provisions of any Proclamation issued by the British Administration were continued in force. In conjunction with the enactment in the proclamation now enacted of a provision corresponding to Section 38 of the English Interpretation Act, it was not found necessary to alter this provision of law.

275. A special committee was therefore appointed by the Administration, which worked through the whole of the existing British Proclamations, Regulations and Orders and decided on their continuance, amendment, or repeal in accordance with the above-mentioned objects.

276. The process of revision was simplified by the correspondence in function and powers of the Chief Executive, under the semi-presidential form of government established by the Eritrean Constitution, to those previously exercised by the Chief Administrator under the British Administration and by the Governor-General and Governor respectively under the former Italian Administration. Thus, with the conception of judicial and legal powers which were dealt with under the Administration of Justice Proclamation, and of a few minor matters, it was possible to provide that the powers and duties reserved in the existing legislation to the Chief Administrator as such, and as successor to the Governor-General and Governor in the former Italian Administration, should, after the transfer of power, be exercised by the Chief Executive. Powers and duties exercisable under the existing legislation by other authorities were transferred to the appropriate authority under the Eritrean Constitution or under the relevant organic laws, already referred to, supplementary to that Constitution.

277. In accordance with international practice the revision and amendment of the existing laws relating to matters within the jurisdiction, after the transfer of power, of the Federal Government were left to be dealt with by Federal laws.

#### *Transfer of Power to the Successor Authorities and the departure of the British Administration*

278. On the formal ratification of the Federal Act by the Emperor of Ethiopia on 11th September, the second period of grace, of four days, referred to in paragraph 243 above came into effect. The prepared scheme for the transfer of administration, of movable and immovable properties, and all other relevant responsibilities to the Federal Authorities and the Eritrean Government respectively, was put into effect immediately and the whole process was punctually completed without hitch.

279. The British officials who were not retained for service in Eritrea by the successor authorities were progressively withdrawn and repatriated, and the British military forces, which were replaced by a contingent of Federal troops who had arrived in their stead, left Eritrea, save for a small rear party to deal with the removal of British military transport and equipment, on 16th September.

280. On the evening of 15th September at a small formal ceremony attended by the Representative of the Emperor, the Chief Executive, Federal representatives, foreign representatives and senior officials of the Administration, the Chief Administrator signed the "Termination of Powers" proclamation (see Annex K [not reproduced here]), which ended British powers and responsibilities in Eritrea at midnight on 15th September, 1952. This was the date laid down in the United Nations Resolution by which it was to be accomplished.

281. At sunset an impressive and moving military ceremony was held, in the presence of representatives of all the authorities concerned in the implementation of the processes which have been described above, and of the largest crowd which had ever assembled in Asmara. The Federal flag was raised, and the British flag was lowered for the last time and handed over to the Chief Administrator for safe keeping. The tasks laid upon the Administering Authority had thus been fulfilled, and satisfactorily completed, within the time limit laid down by the United Nations: the federation was in being, the Eritrean Government was effectively organised and installed, the Federal Authorities had assumed their responsibilities and the powers were in the hands of the successor authorities.

282. Thus ended the period of eleven and a half years of British Administration in Eritrea, during which,

and not without credit. It had been the policy of Her Majesty's Government and the United Kingdom to administer the territory in the best interests of the country and of the people, whilst their political future was being decided and arranged.

283. The contents of this report explain how the comparatively short transition period was utilised. It remains only to add an expression of appreciation and gratitude for the unwavering co-operation and support of the distinguished Commissioner of the United Nations, the goodwill, help and friendship which at all times characterised the attitude towards the Administration of the Ethiopian Government, and the tolerance, good sense and statesmanship of the Eritrean leaders and the people whom they ably represent. The almost entire disappearance of the factional strife and political rivalry which had in the past marred the development and life of Eritrea was a heartening manifestation of a growing national harmony, the credit for which redounds almost entirely to the good sense of, and the innate desire for peace among, the Eritrean people themselves.

284. The federation and the new autonomous unit of Eritrea have thus taken shape in a gratifying atmosphere of friendship and goodwill which augurs well for the consolidation of the new arrangements in the testing days ahead.

#### Conclusion

285. The establishment of Eritrea as an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown, and possessing legislative, executive and judicial powers in the field of domestic affairs, is a notable development and marks the beginning of a new era for the territory. Its newly-won possessions of a properly elected Government and legislature, an adequate administration, and a sound and workable Consti-

tuition, are valuable foundations on which, however much careful building remains to be done.

286. The remarkable feature of the Eritrean settlement is that, in adopting and welcoming a compromise proposed from outside, the people have, at least for the present, bridged the racial and religious chasms which recently barred their progress. This is an achievement which all concerned must welcome and which we must hope will be preserved in the future.

287. Eritrea in itself remains economically and financially weak and has little prospect of becoming a viable State, but her integration with the Ethiopian Empire and the promise of financial assistance from that source should enable her eventually to improve her position.

288. The future of Eritrea will rest upon a sympathetic and ready understanding of her economic and political weakness, and upon the provision of wise guidance and material assistance by her larger and more happily endowed partner in the federation. The future of the federation will be affected by the degree of mutual respect between them for the rights, jurisdiction and traditions of each other. Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom share the belief of the United Nations Commissioner that federation has been entered into in the best of faith on both sides. They are conscious of the desire of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia to bring peace and prosperity to his new people and to foreigners resident in the Empire, and of the intention of his Government scrupulously to observe the principles on which the new order has been constructed.

289. In severing their close connection with the Eritrean people over the past eleven and a half years Her Majesty's Government desire to end this report by wishing them success and happiness in the future in the new conditions in which they now find themselves.

Having noted the adoption and ratification of the Eritrean Constitution and the ratification of the Federal Act embodying the provisions contained in paragraphs 1-7 inclusive of that resolution,

Having noted that the conditions laid down in paragraph 13 of resolution 390 A (V) of 2 December

1952 have been fulfilled, and that on 11 September 1952 the Federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia was proclaimed.

Noting further the final report 1/ of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea of 17 October 1952 and report 2/ of the Administering Authority of 27 October 1952,

Noting with appreciation the part played by the United Nations Commissioner and the former Administering Authority in Eritrea in preparing Eritrea to take its place in the Federation,

Noting also with satisfaction the contribution made by Ethiopia to the establishment of the Federation and

Ethiopia's expression of determination scrupulously to execute the provisions of the Federal Act.

1. Welcomes the establishment of the Federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown:

2. Congratulates the people and governmental authorities of the Federation for their effective and loyal fulfilment of resolution 390 A (V) of the General Assembly of 2 December 1950.

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventh Session, Supplement No. 15.  
2/ See document A/2233.

## Document 12

### Urgent appeal to the forty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights submitted by several non-governmental organizations

E/CN.4/1990/NGO/75, 7 March 1990

Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world, with particular reference to colonial and other dependent countries and territories

Written statement submitted by the following: World Confederation of Labour, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category I), American Association of Jurists, Anti-Slavery Society, Arab Lawyers Union, Arab Organization for Human Rights, Human Rights Advocates, Human Rights Internet, International Association of Penal Law, International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty, International Association of Educators for World Peace, International Commission of Jurists, International Commission of Health Professionals for Health and Human Rights, International Federation of Human Rights, International Fellowship of Reconciliation, International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Pax Christi International, Pax Romana, Service for Peace and Justice in Latin America and the Union of Arab Jurists, non-governmental organizations in consultative status (category II), Centre Europe - Tiers Monde, Defence for Children International, International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements, International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, International Peace Bureau, International Pen and World Union for Progressive Judaism, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

#### Urgent appeal to the forty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights

1. Eritrea was an Italian colony between 1889 and 1941 and was then placed under provisional British administration. In 1950, it was federated with Ethiopia on the basis of General Assembly resolution 390 (V) of 1950, contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and against the will of the Eritrean people.

2. It is an established fact that during the federation, the Ethiopian feudal rulers dismantled all democratic institutions. Among other things, they banned and abolished freedom of the press, association and trade unions and imposed Amharic, the Ethiopian language, to be the official language of Eritrea. Finally, they annexed Eritrea unilaterally and incorporated it into Ethiopia in 1962.

3. The United Nations, being the author and sole guarantor of the federation, remained silent and passive when the Ethiopian rulers violated the resolution despite the appeal and outcry of the Eritrean people.

4. During the last 29 years of conflict, the successive Ethiopian régimes have pursued a coercive policy to crush the struggle of the Eritrean people for its basic and legitimate right to self-determination.

5. In the process, they have committed colossal human rights violations, ranging from arbitrary arrests,

## Document 11

### General Assembly resolution concerning the report of the United Nations Commissioner in Eritrea

A/RES/617 (VII), 17 December 1952

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 390 A (V) of 2 December 1950, providing that Eritrea be constituted an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown,

detention, torture, extrajudicial execution, blanket bombardment using napalm and cluster bombs, and the destruction of whole villages including churches, mosques, schools and farms. As a result, close to 900,000 people have taken refuge in foreign countries and tens of thousands have been internally displaced in their home land.

6. The Eritrean people are again confronted with the heavy burden and challenge not only of the on-going

war but also of famine. Currently, there are 1.9 million people in need of urgent emergency food aid and a delay could bring about a catastrophic situation.

7. Therefore, we solemnly appeal to the Commission on Human Rights to remind the United Nations that it has the moral and legal responsibility to use its good offices to find a just and peaceful settlement to the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict.

## Document 13

*Letter dated 13 December 1991 from the President of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia to the Secretary-General of the United Nations concerning the results of the Conference on Peace and Democracy held in Ethiopia in July 1991*

A/C.3/47/5, Annex II, 29 October 1992

As Your Excellency is well aware, the transitional period in Ethiopia highlights the task of redressing the causes of the 30-year civil war in Eritrea and of establishing the basis of permanent peace and stability.

It is to be recalled that the Conference on Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia, held at Addis Ababa from 1 to 5 July 1991, adopted a Charter affirming that freedom, equal rights and self-determination of all peoples are the cardinal principles governing State affairs in the new Ethiopia. In the light of this, the Conference formally recognized that the people of Eritrea have the right to determine their own future by themselves, and accepted that the future status of Eritrea should be decided by the Eritrean people in a referendum to be conducted in the presence of international observers. The Provisional Government of Eritrea set up by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), on its part, decided to defer the referendum for two years which, we believe, contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability in our subregion. At the same time, agreement was reached on the modalities of the relationship between the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and the Provisional Government of Eritrea for the interim period.

Both the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and the Provisional Government of Eritrea have registered their commitment to respect the results of the referendum in Eritrea as the genuine choice of the people concerned, expressed in an exercise of self-determination.

The Transitional Government of Ethiopia, as an interested party in the outcome of the referendum, has the firm conviction that the referendum will be free and fair, and believes that the United Nations should play an active role in verifying that the referendum is, indeed, free and fair.

In this regard, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia wishes to bring to the attention of Your Excellency the need to initiate appropriate measures to enable the United Nations to play this role and make the necessary arrangements with the Provisional Government of Eritrea to facilitate the ways and means for United Nations supervision of the referendum. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia also wishes to point out that the time available for preparation in this regard is very short.

(Signed) Meles ZENAWI  
President of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia

## Document 14

*Letter dated 15 January 1992 from the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the President of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia concerning United Nations involvement in the referendum process in Eritrea*

Not issued as a United Nations document

I have the honour to refer to Your Excellency's letter dated 13 December 1991 addressed to my predecessor, Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, regarding United Nations involvement in the referendum to be held in Eritrea.

In this connection, I wish to inform your Excellency that the Secretariat is currently considering the appropriate role for the United Nations in the referendum with a view to facilitating the initiation of necessary measures by the United Nations. Under-Secretary-General James O. C. Jonah has had preliminary discussions on the

matter with officials of your Government and those of the Provisional Government of Eritrea. We will continue these consultations in order to clarify further the role of the United Nations in the referendum and to help expedite the process.

Accept, Mr. President, the assurances of my highest consideration and my warmest regards.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI

## Document 15

*Letter dated 19 February 1992 from the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the President of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia concerning United Nations involvement in the referendum process in Eritrea*

Not issued as a United Nations document

I wish to refer to my letter of 15 January 1992 addressed to your Excellency regarding the request of your Government for United Nations involvement in the referendum to be held in Eritrea. I had informed your Excellency at that time that the Secretariat was considering the appropriate role for the United Nations in the referendum, and continuing its consultations with all concerned to seek further clarification on the matter. Following these consultations, I would like as the next step to bring to your attention certain considerations, including the options which could be pursued in regard to your request.

As your Excellency is aware, the involvement of the United Nations in national referenda depends on a number of prerequisites. Above all, there must be a clear mandate by the competent organ and an international dimension to the referendum. There must also be proper financing and the agreement of all concerned, in particular the country which represents in the United Nations the region where the referendum is to be held.

United Nations involvement in a referendum could include a broad range of tasks and responsibilities, from providing only technical assistance without assessment of

the referendum process, to the organization and conduct of the entire referendum, including the drafting of laws and regulations.

Several other options fall in between those two categories. They include passive observation which will not involve investigation of complaints and public pronouncements; active observation which implies interaction with the electoral authorities and the public; observation with independent verification of the results; and organization of the electoral process in cooperation with the appropriate authorities.

All these options, which by no means are exhaustive, require the appropriate authorities to assume corresponding responsibilities—organizational, financial and otherwise—to augment the particular role that the United Nations may be called upon to undertake in the referendum.

The operation could be designed, in consultation with your Government, to fit the particular circumstances of the referendum. Such an approach would take into account your needs as assessed by your Government and the United Nations; the political and financial support of

Member States; the principles governing United Nations involvement in the referendum; and the commitment of the appropriate authorities to ensure a free and democratic referendum.

These and related issues need to be fully addressed in order to agree upon the appropriate role of the United Nations in the referendum in the context of the corresponding responsibilities and obligations that will be assumed by your Government and the Provisional Government of Eritrea. As stated earlier, the appropriate mandate authorizing United Nations involvement in the referendum would be required from the United Nations legislative organ concerned.

Under-Secretary-General James Jonah will be in Addis Ababa to represent me at the forthcoming session of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African

Unity. His presence in Addis Ababa will provide an opportunity to meet with representatives of your Government and those of the Provisional Government of Eritrea to exchange views on the options your Government might wish to pursue in cooperation with the United Nations for the organization and conduct of the referendum, and on the corresponding responsibilities that your Government might be expected to assume.

Detailed technical discussion could be arranged as a follow-up to Mr. Jonah's meetings with representatives of your Government and those of the Provisional Government of Eritrea.

Accept, Mr. President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI

## Document 16

### *Eritrean Nationality Proclamation, issued on 6 April 1992 in Asmara*

Not issued as a United Nations document

#### 1. Short Title

This proclamation may be cited as "The Eritrean Nationality Proclamation No. 21/1992."

#### 2. Nationality by Birth

1. Any person born to a father or a mother of Eritrean origin in Eritrea or abroad is an Eritrean national by birth.

2. A person who has "Eritrean origin" is any person who was resident in Eritrea in 1933.

3. A person born in Eritrea to unknown parents shall be considered an Eritrean national by birth until proven otherwise.

4. Any person who is an Eritrean by origin or by birth shall, upon application be given a certificate of nationality by the Department of Internal Affairs.

5. Any person who is Eritrean by birth, resides abroad and possesses foreign nationality shall apply to the Department of Internal Affairs if he wishes to officially renounce his foreign nationality and acquire Eritrean nationality or wishes, after providing adequate justification, to have his Eritrean nationality accepted while maintaining his foreign nationality.

#### 3. Nationality by Naturalization (1934-1951)

1. Eritrean nationality is hereby granted to any person who is not of Eritrean origin and who entered,

and resided in, Eritrea between the beginning of 1934 and the end of 1951, provided that he has not committed anti-people acts during the liberation struggle of the Eritrean people. He shall, upon application, be given a certificate of nationality by the Department of Internal Affairs, provided that he has not rejected Eritrean nationality. The provisions of article 2 (5) of this Proclamation shall apply when such a person possesses the nationality of another country.

2. A person born to a person mentioned in sub-article 1 of this Article is Eritrean by birth. The Department of Internal Affairs shall, upon his application, issue him a certificate of nationality.

3. The Department of Internal Affairs shall revoke the nationality of any person mentioned in sub-article 1 of this Article where it determines that he had acquired Eritrean nationality or the certificate of Eritrean nationality by fraud, deceit or concealment of decisive facts.

#### 4. Nationality by Naturalization (1952 and after)

1. Any person who is not of Eritrean origin and has entered, and resided in, Eritrea in 1952 or after shall apply for Eritrean nationality to the Secretary of Internal Affairs.

2. The Secretary of Internal Affairs shall grant Nationality by Naturalization to the person mentioned in sub-article 1 of this Article provided that the person:

a. has entered Eritrea legally and has been domiciled in Eritrea for a period of ten (10) years before 1974 or has been domiciled in Eritrea for a period of twenty (20) years while making periodic visits abroad;

b. possesses high integrity and has not been convicted of any crime;

c. understands and speaks one of the languages of Eritrea;

d. is free of any of the mental or physical handicaps mentioned in Article 339-340 of the Transitory Civil Code of Eritrea, will not become a burden to Eritrean society and can provide for his own and his family's needs;

e. has renounced the nationality of another country, pursuant to the legislation of that country;

f. has decided to be permanently domiciled in Eritrea upon the granting of his Eritrean nationality;

g. has not committed anti-people acts during the liberation struggle of the Eritrean people.

3. A person shall be granted Eritrean Nationality by Naturalization and given a certificate of nationality pursuant to sub-article 2 of the Article only after he signs the oath of allegiance attached to, and is part of, this Proclamation before the Secretary of Internal Affairs or any other official designated by him. Eritrean nationality granted pursuant to Article 4 of this Proclamation shall be proclaimed in the Gazette of Eritrean Laws.

4. A person given a certificate of Eritrean nationality pursuant to sub-article 2 of this Article shall acquire the status of a Naturalized Eritrean national as of the date of receipt of the certificate.

5. The Secretary of Internal Affairs may cause the name any offspring on whose behalf an application has been made by a person responsible for him under the law and who has included in the certificate of nationality of the applying person. [sic] The minor offspring shall acquire the status of a naturalized national as of the date of the inclusion of his name.

6. Any person born to a naturalized Eritrean national pursuant to Article 4 of this Proclamation after the person has been granted the status of a Naturalized National becomes an Eritrean by birth.

#### 5. Nationality by Adoption

The Secretary of Internal Affairs shall grant Eritrean Nationality by Naturalization and issue a certificate of nationality to a person adopted legally by, and upon the application of, an Eritrean national by birth or by naturalization or by the adopted person himself.

6. Nationality by Adoption

1. Any person of non-Eritrean origin who is legally married to an Eritrean national by birth or to a person granted Eritrean Nationality by Naturalization shall be granted Eritrean Nationality by Naturalization when such a person applies to the Secretary of Internal Affairs, provided the person:

a. has lived in Eritrea with the spouse for at least three (3) years;

b. has renounced his foreign nationality and is prepared to acquire Eritrean nationality; and

c. signs an oath of allegiance pursuant to Article 4(3).

2. A person who had been granted Eritrean nationality by reason of marriage shall be deprived of his nationality by the Secretary of Internal Affairs where such a person chooses to re-acquire his original nationality upon the death of the spouse or by divorce or when the marriage is declared null and void by a court of law.

#### 7. Time and Application Relative to the Exercise of Eritrean Nationality Rights

A person granted Eritrean Nationality by Naturalization pursuant to Articles 4 to 6 of this Proclamation may, as of the date of the issuance to him of a certificate of Eritrean nationality, exercise the rights of an Eritrean national relative to the status of naturalization.

#### 8. Deprivation of Nationality

1. A committee composed of the Secretaries of Justice, Internal Affairs and Public Administration may deprive of his nationality an Eritrean national by birth or an Eritrean granted Nationality by naturalization pursuant to Article 4 hereof, who has attained the age of eighteen and has capacity under the law where such a person:

a. voluntarily acquires a foreign nationality after the publication of this Proclamation; or

b. officially renounces his Eritrean nationality; or

c. signs an oath of allegiance of another country after the publication of this Proclamation; or

d. in violation of an explicit provision of Eritrean law, serves or continues to serve another country; or

e. is condemned for treason by a court of law.

2. A committee composed of the Secretaries of Justice, Internal Affairs and Public Administration may deprive of his nationality a person who has been granted Eritrean Nationality by Naturalization (Articles 4 to 6) where such a person:

a. acquires Eritrean nationality or a certificate of nationality by fraud, deceit or concealment of decisive facts; or



b. is confirmed, that he has, by illegally contacting external powers, committed acts which aided and abetted an enemy;

c. has committed treason outside Eritrea;

d. has been indicted for a crime and sentenced to more than five years imprisonment;

e. has committed any one of the acts enumerated in sub-article (1) hereof.

3. A person shall be deprived of his nationality pursuant to sub-articles (1) and (2) hereof only after the necessary investigation has been conducted and after such a person has been given an opportunity to defend himself.

#### 9. Penalties

Whosoever:

1. intentionally and knowingly makes false statements, commits fraud or forges documents in matters relating to this Proclamation; or

2. attempts to use, or uses, the certificate of nationality of another person; or

3. permits another person to use his certificate of nationality; or

4. upon deprivation of his Eritrean nationality, refuses to return his certificate of nationality;

shall, upon conviction, be punished with imprisonment not exceeding three years, or a fine not exceeding Birr 5,000 or with both.

#### 10. Powers to Issue Regulations

The Secretary of Internal Affairs is empowered to issue regulations to facilitate the implementation of the provi-

sions of this Proclamation and in particular, to issue regulations relative to:

1. forms and registers designated to be used pursuant to the Proclamation;

2. the formalities and registration of the oath of allegiance to be performed pursuant to this Proclamation; and

3. the fees payable in relation to registration, statements to be issued, certificates to be given or the taking of an oath of allegiance, pursuant to this Proclamation.

#### 11. Appeal

1. Any person who disagrees with the decision made by the Secretary of Internal Affairs regarding the application related to nationality or with a decision of the committee composed of the Secretaries of Justice, Internal Affairs and Public Administration regarding the deprivation of nationality, may appeal to the High Court, within one month after receipt of a written decision;

2. The decision of the High Court shall be final.

#### 12. Repealed Laws

All hitherto enacted laws governing nationality have been repealed and replaced by this Proclamation.

#### 13. Entry into Force

This Proclamation shall enter into force on the date of its publication in the Gazette of Eritrean Laws.

Done at Asmara, this 6th day of April, 1992.

The Provisional Government of Eritrea.

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**TABLE DES MATIERES**

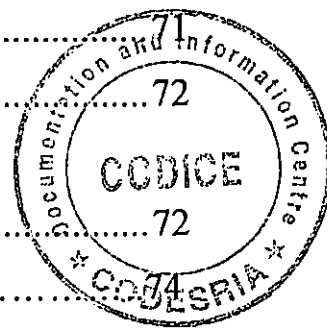
## Table des matières

	Pages
DEDICACE.....	i
REMERCIEMENTS.....	iii
AVANT-PROPOS.....	vii
LISTE DES ABREVIATIONS.....	x
LISTE DES CARTES.....	xiii
LISTE DES TABLEAUX.....	xv
LISTE DES DOCUMENTS ANNEXES.....	xvii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
I- Le choix ou l'intérêt du sujet.....	11
II- La délimitation du sujet.....	12
A- Délimitation spatiale .....	12
B- Délimitation temporelle .....	18
III- L'état de la question .....	19
IV- La problématique .....	20
V- Le corps d'hypothèses .....	21
VI- L'approche méthodologique .....	22
A- Les méthodes .....	24
1- L'approche historique .....	25
2- L'approche sociologique .....	26
3- L'approche systémique .....	26
B- Les techniques d'analyse et la collecte des données.....	27
C- Les éléments théoriques et les paradigmes .....	28
1- Les éléments théoriques .....	28
a- La théorie des jeux .....	28
b- Les théories des conflits.....	28
2- Les éléments paradigmatiques .....	29
VII- Plan.....	31

**PREMIERE PARTIE : UN CONFLIT INSOLUBLE PENDANT**

<b>LA GUERRE FROIDE</b> .....	32
<b>CHAPITRE I : LES ENJEUX ET LES ACTEURS DU CONFLIT</b> .....	34
<b>SECTION I : LES ENJEUX DU CONFLIT</b> .....	35
Paragraphe I : L'Erythrée territoire autonome ou prolongement de L'Ethiopie ? .....	35
A- Brève description de l'Espace Erythrée .....	35
1- Un relief et un climat diversifiés .....	36
2- Une population variée .....	36
a- Le groupe sémitique .....	37
b- Le groupe hamitique .....	39
c- Le groupe nilotique .....	40
B- Evolution historique et politique de l'Erythrée .....	40
1- La colonisation italienne (1889-1941).....	41
2- L'occupation britannique (1941-1952).....	44
3- Les rapports avec l'Ethiopie : de la fédération à l'annexion.....	46
C- Les arguments des parties .....	49
1- Les arguments historiques.....	49
2- Les arguments sociologiques, culturels et religieux.....	50
3- Le droit international : Le principe de l'intangibilité des frontières héritées de la colonisation....	52
Paragraphe II : La Mer rouge et la non-reconnaissance par l'Ethiopie du droit à l'autodétermination du peuple érythréen .....	54
A- La Mer rouge .....	54

B- La non-reconnaissance par l’Ethiopie du droit à l’autodétermination du peuple érythréen .....	57
SECTION II : LES ACTEURS .....	58
Paragraphe I : L’Etat éthiopien .....	58
Paragraphe II : Les MLN érythréens.....	61
A- Le Front de Libération de l’Erythrée et ses factions .....	62
1- Le Front de libération de l’Erythrée-Forces populaires de libération (FLE-FPL) .....	63
2- Le Front de Libération de l’Erythrée-Conseil Révolutionnaire (FLE-CR) .....	64
B- Le Front Populaire de Libération de l’Erythrée (FPLE).....	65
CHAPITRE II : EVOLUTION DU CONFLIT DE L’ERYTHREE JUSQU’A LA CHUTE DU MUR DE BERLIN .....	69
SECTION I : LES TENTATIVES DE REGLEMENT PACIFIQUE DU DIFFEREND.....	69
Paragraphe I : Les tentatives de résolution pacifique anté-gorbatchéviennes .....	70
A- Les tentatives de résolution provenant des parties belligérantes .....	70
1- La tentative du FLE en 1965 .....	70
2- La tentative du Général ANDOM, Chef de l’Etat éthiopien en 1974 .....	71
B- Les tentatives des organisation internationales .....	71
1- Le mouvement des non-alignés en 1974.....	72
2- L’OUA par le Conseil des ministres des Affaires Etrangères en 1975 .....	72
C- Les tentatives des Etats.....	74
1- La médiation soudanaise de 1975.....	74



## Table des matières

2- La tentative soviéto-cubaine de 1977 : la fédération de la corne .....	75
D- Les tentatives particulières :	
le Parti Socialiste Français en 1981 .....	77
Paragraphe II : La tentative de résolution sous Gorbatchev à Atlanta en 1989 .....	78
A- Le contexte environnemental de la rencontre d'Atlanta.....	78
B- La conduite et les retombées des pourparlers d'Atlanta.....	81
SECTION II : LES OPERATIONS DE MAINTIEN DE LA PAIX.....	82
Paragraphe I : Les opérations érythréennes .....	83
A- L'opération effectuée sur fond de l'antagonisme israélo-arabe .....	83
B- L'opération initiée dans le cadre du soutien du bloc soviétique aux MLN en 1977 .....	84
C- L'opération initiée dans le contexte de la politique de désengagement soviétique des conflits régionaux et la doctrine Reagan .....	89
Paragraphe II : Les opérations éthiopiennes .....	90
A- Les tentatives du régime impérial d'Haïlé Sélassié .....	90
B- Les tentatives des régimes marxiste-léniniste de Mengistu Haïlé Maryam .....	92
1- La "marche du paysan" de juin 1976.....	92
2- L'opération soviéto-éthiopienne de juillet 1978 .....	93
3- L'opération "Etoile rouge" de 1982 .....	95
<b>DEUXIEME PARTIE : UN CONFLIT RESOLU APRES LA FIN DE LA GUERRE FROIDE .....</b>	<b>99</b>
CHAPITRE III : LE REDIMENSIONNEMENT REGIONAL ET LOCAL DU CONFLIT .....	102



## Table des matières

SECTION I : DES IDEOLOGISATIONS DU CONFLIT ET	
REDIMENSIONNEMENT REGIONAL ET LOCAL .....	103
Paragraphe I : Le retrait de l'assistance militaire soviétique et des alliés	
du bloc de l'Est d'Ethiopie .....	103
A- L'évolution de l'environnement économique et politique ..	104
1- L'environnement économique.....	104
2- L'environnement politique.....	107
B- Les conséquences sur les relations soviéto-éthiopiennes ...	108
1- Baisse d'intérêt soviétique pour les	
Négociations d'Atlanta .....	109
2- La peur d'une « vietnamisation » du conflit	
De l'Erythrée .....	109
Paragraphe II : Le désintérêt américain	
malgré les initiatives éthiopiennes .....	110
A- Les initiatives politiques et diplomatiques.....	110
B- Les initiatives économiques.....	111
SECTION II : LE RETOUR A LA DIMENSION REGIONALE ET	
LOCALE DU CONFLIT .....	112
Paragraphe I : Les manifestations.....	112
A- La désidéologisation du conflit... ..	112
B- L'émergence du thème de la « résistance aux Arabes » .....	114
a- L'implication de l'Eglise chrétienne orthodoxe	
d'Ethiopie .....	115
b- La reprise des relations diplomatiques entre l'Etat	
hébreux et l'Etat abyssin .....	118
Paragraphe II : Les conséquences du retour à la dimension	
régionale et locale du conflit.....	119
A- La reddition de l'armée éthiopienne .....	119

## Table des matières

1- La perte de Massawa en février 1990 .....	119
2- La perte d'Asmara, Assab et Décamaré en mai 1991 .....	124
B- Le triomphe d'une guérilla : le FPLE .....	125
1- Le triomphe militaire sur l'armée éthiopienne.....	126
2- Le triomphe politique et militaire sur les autres MLN érythréens .....	127
CHAPITRE IV : L'AUTODETERMINATION DE L'ERYTHREE.....	132
SECTION I : LA QUESTION DE L'AUTODETERMINATION DE L'ERYTHREE .....	132
Paragraphe I : Le revirement des Etats-Unis, d'Israël et de l'ONU...	133
A- Le revirement des Etats-Unis, .....	133
B- Le revirement de l'Etat hébreux .....	143
C- Le revirement de l'ONU.....	144
Paragraphe II : Le revirement de l'Etat éthiopien .....	146
A- Les facteurs du revirement .....	147
1- La chute du régime de Mengistu .....	147
2- La prise du pouvoir par Meles Zenawi .....	155
B- Le régime de Meles Zenawi et la question érythréenne .....	160
SECTION II : LE PROCESSUS REFERENDAIRE ERYTHREEN .....	161
Paragraphe I : Les disposition préalables au référendum .....	161
A- La formation du Provisionnal Government of Eritrea (PGE).....	161
1- La promulgation du décret sur la nationalité érythréenne .....	163
2- La promulgation du décret relatif à l'organisation du référendum .....	165

## *Table des matières*

---

3- Le PGE fixe la date du référendum .....	166
B- La conférence sur la paix et la démocratie d'Addis-Abeba (1-5 juillet 1991) .....	166
C- L'installation de l'UNOVER en Erythrée .....	166
Paragraphe II : Le référendum proprement dit.....	167
A- La campagne électorale .....	167
B- Le vote et les résultats .....	169
CONCLUSION .....	174
ANNEXES .....	180
BIBLIOGRAPHIE.....	236

**Thème : MUTATION DU SYSTEME INTERNATIONAL ET RESOLUTION DU CONFLIT DE L'ERYTHREE**



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**ABSTRACT**

Ever since considered as being an integrant part of Ethiopia, the ancient Italian Colony of Eritrea accedes to independence on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1993. It is at once recognised by many States and then by great instances of international legitimisation. As Eritrea belongs to a regional space known as the Horn of Africa which was subjected to high rivalries during the period of cold war between the two antagonist blocs, the present study is about knowing whether Eritrea's accession to independence is a manifestation of the slackening of the world's order in Africa in general and particularly in this part of the continent.

**RESUME**

Longtemps considérée comme faisant partie du territoire éthiopien, l'ancienne colonie italienne d'Erythrée accède à l'indépendance le 24 mai 1993. En juin son leader **ISSAIS AFEWORKI**, chef de l'un des MLN qui a conduit la lutte de libération nationale dans l'indifférence feinte ou réelle d'une bonne partie de la communauté internationale participe au Caire en Egypte au 29<sup>ème</sup> sommet de l'OUA. La présence du chef d'Etat Erythrée au sein de cette enceinte de légitimation internationale suscite de nombreuses interrogations. Car l'Erythrée appartient en plus à un espace régional (la corne de l'Afrique) qui a fait l'objet d'après rivalités du temps de la guerre froide entre les grandes puissances. Il s'agit pour nous de savoir si l'indépendance de l'Erythrée n'est pas « l'effet émergent » du relâchement de l'ordre mondial en Afrique en général et dans cette partie du continent singulièrement. D'où notre thème : **Mutations du système international et résolution du conflit de l'Erythrée.**

Cette thèse s'articule autour de la question centrale suivante : Comment les changements constatés au sein du Système International à savoir le passage d'une logique de l'affrontement à celle de la coopération, <sup>les</sup> superpuissances puis la disparition de l'URSS dans la hiérarchie des puissances ont-ils déterminé la résolution du conflit de l'Erythrée ? L'approche méthodologique adoptée pour la réalisation de cette étude a intégré les méthodes proprement dites (historique, sociologique et systémique) les techniques d'analyse et de collecte des données, les éléments théoriques (théorie des conflits et des jeux) et enfin les paradigmes réaliste, néoréaliste et globaliste. Ces différents instruments nous ont permis de parvenir aux conclusions suivantes :

1- Des mutations du Système International ont dévalorisé l'enjeu idéologico-stratégique du conflit, ramenant ainsi le conflit à sa dimension régionale et locale. D'où la victoire militaire du FPLE sur l'armée éthiopienne en Erythrée.

2-Les mutations du Système International ont amené la communauté internationale (Etats-Unis, Israël, Ethiopie, ONU, OUA) à opter pour l'autodétermination de Erythrée par la voie des urnes. A l'issue du référendum des 22-24 avril 1993, le peuple erythréen choisira à 99,8 % l'indépendance.