

926

KENYA

X. 1842

18 FEB 1926

Date

Page

Cont  
28

24th January 1926.

## REPATRIATION OF THE DEGODIA TRIBE.

Reports present position with regard to the -----

Paper

MINUTES

We got the complete breakdown.  
An exhibit from Major Dickman's  
report is at 38429 fms. Lt. Dulan's  
letter of 9 June records 64  
mms total, but he had the  
copy to it in 48955 fms.

The completed report to the  
C.O. (1910) is the claim that  
Manga has not come to itself  
to carrying out the

See on 1910

Cont. 14. 2. 26.

Paper

KENYA.

No. 28



1842

GOVERNMENT HOUSE,

NAIROBI,

KENYA.

18 FEB 1926

CONFIDENTIAL.24<sup>th</sup> January, 1926.

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to correspondence terminating with your Confidential despatch of October 31st dealing with the Degodia incursion into the Northern Province of this Colony.

2. I have received no report upon the result of Pitaurari Ayella's efforts to induce this tribe to return to Abyssinia although I learn from a despatch addressed by His Britannic Majesty's Consul at Mega to His Majesty's Minister at Addis Ababa that the situation appears to have changed somewhat, a great many of the Degodia now grazing on the Abyssinian side of the Daua River although their villages are still in British territory. This statement appears to me to indicate that it is not unlikely that this tribe will eventually return to Abyssinia, given the continuance of good administration by the Governors of Borana and Libana.

3. In this connection I would state that I have received from His Majesty's Minister a copy of his despatch of November 23rd to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from which it appears that in Mr. Bentinck's view the decision of this Government not to employ force in the repatriation of the Degodia to Abyssinia constituted

RIGHT HONOURABLE

LIEUTENANT COLONEL L.C.M.S. AMERY, P.C., M.P.,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES,

DOWNING STREET, LONDON S.W.

H.M. Addis  
Ababa.

FAC  
63455  
25

a reversal of the policy intimated in the Acting Governor's despatch to the Minister No. S/A. 22845/1/102 of June 9th, a copy of which is annexed. It has, however, never been the intention of this Government to proceed to such a length nor would such a step have been likely to receive your sanction or the approval of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, judging by your telegram of October 9th. On the other hand it has always been made clear to the Degodia that their intrusion is most unwelcome and only regarded as temporary: their return to Abyssinia has been a subject of constant discussion with their Chiefs: they have been concentrated as the result of considerable organisation and trouble on the border and strong efforts have been made to obtain a better administration in their own country as an inducement to them to return. That is to say, every effort was made to bring about a set of circumstances which would, upon the order of evacuation being given, most easily effect obedience.

4. It became clear, however, as time went on that the emigration of the Degodia would not materialize without the use of armed force on this Government's part and armed resistance on their side, and the Officer-in-Charge of the Northern Frontier Province intimated that in such a case a force amounting to about a Battalion and a half would be necessary. The whole situation was fully discussed on August 5th between the Acting Governor, the Acting Colonial Secretary, the Acting Chief Native Commissioner, His Britannic Majesty's Consul at Mega, the Officer-in-Charge of the Northern Frontier

Frontier Provinces and other Officers concerned, and unanimous agreement was reached as to the policy to be pursued: this is denoted in the following minute:-

"It was decided that His Britannic Majesty's Consul should discuss the repatriation of these persons with the Abyssinian Governor recently set down from Addis Ababa and inform him that the British Government had collected the Degodia together on the Dawa River and was prepared to facilitate in every way their repatriation to Abyssinian territory and to give him every facility for interviews with the tribe, but that it could not contemplate the use of armed force directly or indirectly to expel them from British Territory."

and the decision was reported in Kenya Confidential despatch No. 149, of August 27th, a copy of which was sent to His Majesty's Minister. It appears from the circumstances referred to in paragraph 2 supra that the steps taken have had the desired effect.

5. I trust that this explanation will dissipate any misunderstanding that may exist in regard to the intentions of this Government.

6. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Britannic Majesty's Minister at Addis Ababa.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

Edward Gigg

G O V E R N O R .

✓A. 22242/✓102.

9th June, 1925.

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to Major Miles' letter addressed to you No-7/8/25 of the 19th March on the subject of the repatriation of the Dogodia immigrants to Abyssinia and to state that I am in entire agreement with Major Miles' remarks contained therein.

2. As you are aware, the constant migrations of Abyssinian subjects into British territory have been a source of concern for some time - These immigrants bring large numbers of stock with them and so prove detrimental to the interests of natives of this Colony, who are already severely handicapped by the scarcity of grazing and water. I enclose for your information a copy of a memorandum by the Officer-in-Charge, Northern Frontier Province, from which it will be observed that a recent immigration assumed very large proportions.

3. The reasons given for these constant migrations are maltreatment and mutilations practised on the Dogodia at the instance of junior Abyssinian officials. I cannot too strongly urge that the Abyssinian Government be approached with a view to sending a competent and trustworthy senior official to receive and administer the Dogodia on the border when the final repatriation takes place.

TO MAJESTY'S MINISTER,

AFRICAN DEPARTMENT.

ADRIAN J. BAKER

It is important that arrangements for this removal should be completed as soon as possible and I would suggest October as a suitable time as grazing will then be plentiful on account of the rains.

I am informed by the Officer-in-Charge, Northern Frontier Province, that at least three months' notice will be required for the final arrangements to be put in hand and I shall be grateful therefore if I may be informed as early as possible that the necessary steps are being taken for the reception of the Degodia on the Abyssinian side of the border.

4. In anticipation of these arrangements being completed in time to allow of the repatriation taking place in October, as suggested above, the following plans have been made:-

(1). Steps have been taken to control the Degodia during the rainy season and all recent immigrants are being confined to certain specified areas, details of which have been given to the officers concerned; precautions are being taken to ensure that the Degodia are kept far enough away from the Boran tribe to prevent a repetition of the fighting which continually occurred when the Degodia watered their stock at Boran wells.

It is hoped that these measures will lead to a further concentration of scattered Degodia families in the Hil wah area with the result that in the near future all the immigrants will be living near the border thus rendering possible their early despatch over a short distance into Abyssinian territory when orders for the final evacuation are issued.

(ii). It has been decided that the old Degodia who have been for many years in the wajir district shall not be moved at present.

(iii). Provisional instructions have been issued to

the officers concerned regarding the final arrangements; these orders will of course be modified as occasion may demand.

5. In conclusion, I would repeat that I should be most grateful if the necessity for an efficient senior official to take over the Dégudia may be most strongly represented to the Abyssinian Government, <sup>and that</sup> trustworthy assurances <sup>may</sup> being given that the Abyssinian officials will be prevented from taking reprisals upon this tribe which would merely result in a break back into this Colony, and that the existing system of pillage, disguised as tax collection, by junior officials, which it is alleged exists, may be terminated.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

R. B. DENHAM

ACTING GOVERNOR.

Office of the Officer i/c N.F.P.

Meru, 13th March, 1925.

The Hon. Officer Commanding Troops,  
Nairobi.Forcible Repatriation of certain Abyssinian  
Tribesmen.  
Ref. Your No. 03417 of the 9th September, 1924.  
-----

I forward herewith a report as called for in para 3 of Colonial Office despatch Confidential (6) of 8/8/24 on the subject of Abyssinian refugees immigration into Kenya.

For many years there has been a quiet filtration of refugees from Abyssinia into British territory, almost entirely confined to the Boran into the area south and west of Moyale, and the Gabbra, east of Lake Rudolf. This was due, not so much to ill-treatment received at the hands of the Abyssinians, but because the latter made such heavy demands on their stock. It has been hinted that slavery also was responsible for sending them across the border, but I think, that though undoubtedly the Boran were taken as slaves, in some cases voluntarily, that this cannot be considered to be the real cause of their immigration.

Early in 1924, a totally different aspect was put on the question.

Instead of individuals crossing the border and joining their own people on our side, a complete tribe, namely the Degodia, came across with all their stock, some 3000 men, women and children, and about 30,000 head of mixed stock. The head Degodia chief, Weber Abdi, has been interviewed by several officers in the Northern Frontier Province, including Major A. T. Miles, D.S.O., M.C., H.M. British Consul for Southern Abyssinia, and it is perfectly clear that the only reason for their taking such a drastic step was due to the cruelty and aggression they received at the hands of the Abyssinians. This the Degodia had put up with for many years until matters became unbearable. Officers have testified to seeing



seeing the actual individuals who have received maltreatment at the hands of the Abyssinians.

It has been carefully explained to the Degodia that there is barely sufficient water and grazing in the Northern Frontier Province for the British Residents thereof. Weber Abdi, in spite of this, has begged not to be sent back to Abyssinia, as their ill-treatment, instead of decreasing would be increased. He has intimated very clearly that if sent back across the border, it will not be long before they are on our side again.

In spite of this, the Degodia who came over early in 1924 (about 80% of them - the other 20% having joined up with their own sections who have been in the Wajir District for the past 15 years) have been collected, and are now watering on the Dama River about Gombissa, ready to be moved back to Abyssinia, when and where decided.

Colonel Muirhead is at present on safari en route for Moyale, there to consult with Major Miles and the Abyssinian authorities as to details of the handing over.

Perhaps it would not be amiss to mention here that the Degodia are unanimous in ascribing their ill-treatment to one man, one Lej Boli, the Governor of that portion of Abyssinia, i.e. the Dama River. This individual was recalled, and it is understood was ordered to Addis Ababa to answer for his sins. Be that as it may, he is now back in his old haunts, and has even been reported on our side of the border, carrying on his famous "reign of terror".

Ed. W. Dickinson  
Major,  
for Officer-in-Charge,  
Northern Frontier Province,  
(absent on safari)