

16

KENYA  
606

C 6  
606  
REC'D  
REG'D 6 JAN 21

FOREIGN

1921  
5th JANY

SITUATION IN ABYSSINIA

Last previous Paper.  
53859/20

True copy despatch from Adis Ababa

Mr Straker ✓  
2 pages  
606  
6-1-21  
W.  
7/1  
Kana

Handwritten notes and scribbles on the left margin.

Next subsequent Paper.  
5389

any further communication  
subject, please quote

A99045/1072/1

to any person by name.

Under-Secretary of State,  
Foreign Office,  
London, S. W. 1.

606  
REC'D  
6 JAN 21

THE Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his  
compliments to *the Under-Secretary of State,*  
*Colonial Office,* and, by direction of the Secretary of State,  
transmits herewith copy of the under-mentioned paper.

Foreign Office,

5th January 1921.

2897

Reference to previous correspondence:

F. O. letter: A7413/1072/1 of Oct. 27, 1920

Description of Enclosure.

Name and Date.	Subject.
<p>From Major Dodds (Addis Ababa) No. 150 of Dec. 2.</p>	<p>Political situation in Abyssinia.</p>

Similar letter sent to *the War Office.*

BRITISH LEGATION,  
ADIS ABABA.  
December 2nd, 1920.



My Lord:-

I have the honour to report that the general situation in this country has been very quiet for the last month.

The situation in the North remains somewhat obscure and the advisability of an expedition to Tigre through Wello is still under discussion.

About three weeks ago the Central Government were inclined to think that an expedition was unnecessary and that matters could be arranged satisfactorily with Ras Seyoum through emissaries. Now, however, the leaders of the Government consider that Ras Taffari should make a parade through the northern provinces and discuss the future of Lij Yasu and all other matters with Ras Seyoum.

The situation has been further complicated recently by the action of Dejazmatch Gabri Silassie, an ambitious Tigrean leader, who is constantly intriguing against Ras Seyoum in the hope of achieving the downfall of the Tigrean Governor and acquiring the Governorship himself. In this endeavour I am inclined to think

he

The Right Honourable,

The Earl Curzon of Kedleston, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

&c.

&c.

&c.

His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,  
Foreign Office.

he is supported by the Italians who have no liking for Ras Seyoum. Some weeks ago Dejazmatch Gabri Silassie enlisted the aid of the Italian Legation to send two servants with letters to Tigre through Asmara. The so-called servants were in reality Tigrean chiefs who on arrival in Eritrea proclaimed their identity and disclosed the purport of the letters they were carrying. These letters, emanating from Dejazmatch Gabri Silassie, informed the Tigre generally that they should be prepared for a revolution against Ras Seyoum and should join up with the Shoan army under Ras Tafari as soon as they arrived.

Ras Tafari declares emphatically that Dejazmatch Gabri Silassie was not authorized to send these letters and that he did so on his own responsibility.

Signor Piacentini finds himself in an embarrassing position and is very angry, so he tells me, with Dejazmatch Gabri Silassie, for having enlisted his assistance to send the messengers and letters through Asmara under false pretences.

The intrigue will, no doubt, settle itself without serious consequences, but it is interesting to note that Dejazmatch Gabri Silassie, beyond being excluded for the moment from the council meetings of the Central Government has not been otherwise punished.

Even if the letters were not authorized by the Central Government they would not appear to be harmful to their interests.

It now remains to be seen if an expedition goes north. Orders have been given and countermanded so frequently that I think the situation is very uncertain.

3.

8

difficulty in persuading anyone to believe that they are serious in any decision they make in this connection.

Lij Yasu remains on the borders of the Dankali and Tigre. He is reported to be friendly with Ras Seyoum and a rumour reached the Capital that they would together enter Axum for the feast of Lidat. No doubt this report caused considerable anxiety to the Central Government and it has probably revived the proposal for an expedition. It is unlikely that Ras Seyoum would allow Lij Yasu to enter Axum, but if he does Lij Yasu will have reached a sanctuary where as long as he remains, no authority would dare to lay hands on him, and he is safe from his enemies.

Fitaurari Hapta Giorgis is most loath to go North and is very anxious to be allowed to proceed to the Boran to put his province in order.

In this I am giving him all the assistance I can.

The conditions in the Boran remain unchanged and most unsatisfactory. I have complained and continue to complain insistently against the negligence of the Government in omitting to take effective measures for the establishment of order in that portion of Abyssinia. I am convinced that unless the Fitaurari himself goes to Boran we shall not see any real improvement in the existing conditions.

I have therefore emphasised the necessity of the Fitaurari's departure and if the expedition to Tigre is cancelled or postponed I am inclined to believe that the Central Government will agree to send him.

Trade

Trade depression throughout the country is seriously occupying the attention of all merchants at the present time.

Owing to a lack of demand for raw materials in Europe exportations have ceased almost entirely with the result that merchants are faced with a difficulty to pay for importations.

Sterling is in great request and dollars are a drag on the market. Before the opening of the trading season in October dollars stood at six or seven to the Pound sterling, and it was anticipated that by December the exchange would have risen to about five to the Pound sterling. Owing to the circumstances I have related they are being sold to-day at eight decimal fifty.

I fear that the Trade outlook in Abyssinia is far from satisfactory and that commercial concerns will be faced with a difficult situation for some time to come.

I am addressing copies of this despatch to Cairo, Khartoum, Nairobi, Berbera and Aden.

I have the honour to be,

With the highest respect,

My word,

Your Lordship's most obedient

humble servant,

Signed J.H. Dodds.