

EAST AFR. PROT.
SOMALILAND
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by his authority
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20/4/13

1913
April 11

Situation in Abyssinia

707272664/2-2-11
13/1/14

Mr. G. Fiddes
Mr. Bathurst

I am sorry that the preparation of memoranda for the Colonial Ed. Debate & the necessity for hunting out papers has prevented me from dealing with this more quickly.

I sent on recently H. M. Minister's report on Abyssinia for the past year. In that report he spoke of the extraordinary situation in Abyssinia due to the "living death" of Menelik & the refusal of Lij Yasm, his successor to the throne of the Lion of Judah, to return to the capital & transact business. No one can or will commit himself to a decision on any point & Lij

Handwritten notes in left margin: "Handwritten notes" and "707272664/2-2-11"

Subsequent Paper
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19013

Yassa has taken the view between
his talk & gone off with a strong
body of followers refusing to remain
a puppet in the hands of advisers
or ~~advisors~~ ~~obey~~ with all res-
ponsibility & no power - an
attitude that one is bound to
sympathize with.

If there is any serious prospect
of the 'break-up' of Abyssinia - by
which understand the rise
of a number of absolutely
independent States in the
various provinces of Ethiopia -
it is ^{obviously} ~~clearly~~ ~~undoubtedly~~ ^{obvious} that
the Powers should have some

clear line of policy. At present,
the most important factor in
the situation appears to be the
Agreement between the U.K., France
& Italy signed at London 13 Dec. 1906.

The gist of this agreement is that,
come what may, these three Powers
shall try to maintain the
political & territorial 'status quo'
in Ethiopia: ~~that~~ in the event
of risings or internal change
in Ethiopia these three Powers'
representatives shall maintain

neutral attitude abstaining from
all intervention in the internal
affairs of the country - that in
the event of the 'status quo' being
disturbed, they shall concert
together to safeguard their res-
pective interests which are
enumerated in Article 4 & which
may be summarised as the
Hill Bani for Great Britain, Eng.terra
& the territorial concession between
that District & Italian Somaliland
for Italy. A Djibouti, its hinter-
land & the Djibouti Railway for
France.
There are other
Articles about concessions etc.
which need not be considered in
this connection.

The theory of 'status quo' has
lately received rather a serious
knock & the P.O. clearly con-
templates that the old doctrine
may not be treated with greater
respect in Abyssinia than in the
Balkans.

You will remember that when
Sir R. Wingate was sent out to
assist in Somaliland, this
very question of the break-up of

Ch. 324
(copy
arrived

Abyssinia & the consequent action
of the neighbouring British P^{tes}
was referred to. In the letter
of inst^{ns} sent to Sir R. Wingate
15 April 1909 para 26 reads as
follows:-

But an even larger question appears
to be coming up for settlement
shortly. In view of the present
state of the Emperor Menelik's
health, it is probable that the
various British adm^{ts} (including
Somaliland) in N. E. Africa
will shortly be faced with a general
break-up of Abyssinia, and seems
to be very desirable that they should
decide beforehand what is to be
their policy in this eventuality
endeavouring to cooperate as far
as possible. I shall shortly have
an opportunity of consulting
the Governors of Uganda & the
E. A. P. personally on this
matter & I will suggest that
you should discuss the question
with Capt. Cordana from the point
2

of view of the Sudan & Sahabiland,
in order that some scheme of
co-operation between the
adm^{ts} may if possible be
arranged not only for the purpose
of meeting the contingency when
it arises but of preparing
for it meanwhile.

Sir R. Wingate's remarks on this
subject will be found in Appendix
IV (6) of his report which I enclose.

The ~~subject~~ speaks up of
Abyssinia & according to Sir R.
Wingate, probably to lead to
wholesale raiding, inter-tribal
warfare among the Gallas, Somalis
& Abyssinians, & widespread spoliation.
In the event of a reverse to the
Abyssinians the tribes in the
neighbouring British P^{tes} will be
tempted to make common cause
with those in revolt, but it will be
the duty of the protecting Powers to
keep the peace among their tribes -
to urge them to protect themselves
against raiders. But no scheme
of cooperation between the British
P^{tes} is in his opinion feasible.

Each must do the best it can
with what he acknowledges to be
the inadequate resources at its
disposal. His advice, in short,
is for each Admin to devise local
schemes of defence at a part
of the threatened points leaving
the greater part of the frontiers
to look after itself. Not a
cheerful policy, it must be
admitted.

This, of course, assumes that
the territorial status quo of
Abyssinia is preserved; but
we are now up against the more
difficult question of what to do
if the agreement of 1906 fails to
secure its object. This we
presumably have been dis-
cussed at the meeting of
Governors suggested in Mr Read's
memoire of 4/5/09 or Mr ~~973/09~~ 973/09,
but to the best of my knowledge
such a discussion did not come
off. At least I can find no
word of it. There were discussions
as to the Geyyon & Mand areas
for the Southern Abyssinian frontier.

10/34692/07

but I must think the bigger question
was ~~discussed~~ held with 112

For a general statement about
Abyssinia, Mr Clark's excellent
memorandum written at Addis
Ababa in April 1907 should be read.
It is extremely interesting & helpful,
although some years old now.

I also annex a map of Abyssinia.
Great Britain's interests lie ~~mainly~~

in (1) the Harar Province -

(2) the Nile Tributaries

(3) the Southern Province,
France's interests lie in the

immediate hinterland of Djibouti
up to Ankober or Addis Ababa.

Italy's interests in the hinterland

of Erythraea according to the

1906 agreement it is clear that

they contemplate some kind of

territorial linking up Erythraea

with Italian Somaliland - i.e. ~~the~~

presumably a kind of crescent-shaped
belt thus (

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The Sudan will of course look after
the Nile Tributaries: they are already
making efforts to establish sound
trade relations especially at Gambia.

The C.O. is therefore concerned only
with the Harar Province ^{in Southern} - ~~for~~ I doubt

whether the E.A.P. wd wish to
extend further north; except so far
as slight occupation in the
Gygen line might be desirable.
As to the Harar Province, all the
means by wh. H.F. would (this
I suppose, is the prospective
son-in-law of W. Belfield - an
Earl name?) - If anyone
has to take over the Harar Province,
it wd be desirable that it wd
should do so, although in view
of the present position in Somaliland
it is not an undertaking which
the Govt would be anxious to
agree to. It might, however, as
pointed out by W. Belfield, be
commercially profitable, as
well as strategically advisable.

I suppose that all that we can
do for the moment is to send
to the Comm^r of S. Land a copy
of the Gov of the Lab. copies of this
letter & enclosure in Secret Dig.
for consⁿ & ask to be furnished
with any returns - & ask for
very early reply.

ask receipt & receipt to F.O. &
say what we are doing. W.B.

Formely HAR
W.B.

* N.D. the
present speaks of
Italy as having
claim to consⁿ
of Adis Abeba
L. 183

but call attention to his R. Vignate's
report as above.

113

Recd 30/4/13
Genly F. B. B.

If the tentative agreement to partition
ever comes off I do not think there can
be any doubt what will have to become
of the Harar Province. If the Sudan
gets the Nile system - at base, Blue
Nile, & ~~Sobat~~^{Sobat} basins (I have roughly
indicated the watershed in pencil on the
map) and Italy gets a line extending
from Eritrea to Italian Somaliland,
I do not see who is to refuse Harar to
France. It is unfortunate, as the trade
of Zayla, depending on the Harar
caravan route, would go to the Jubah
railway even more than at present.

As regards Southern Abyssinia, it may
be possible to suggest a better inter-tribal
frontier, but I don't think an extension
north of the E.A.P. would be an unwise
thing. If e.g. we took over the Boran
tribe we should gain a trade but
incur great expense in administration.
We may be sure that any Italian
extension west in this region would
have no effect on our difficulties in
Italian Somaliland as it stands as
administration except along the coast.

I do not think the C.O. stands to
gain much by partition - unless we
could trade the purchase of the Holy
Land for the left bank of the Jordan
Judea (transferred rights of navigation being
of course preserved)

As proposed

6/11

30. 13

W. G. Fielder

As the Sudan has the largest interest
in the matter - & is the best position for
a military point of view - to make its influence
felt I think that we should await the
views of Lord Kitchener & the Sudan. The F.O.
will no doubt receive them shortly.

When they have been received by Mr. Jellie
of the F.O. - I think that the best plan
will be to discuss the matter with
Major Douglas Wylie (Mr. Thompson's 2nd
command), who is on his way to the
country. Mr. G. Clerk, who visits the
Sudan - refused to do so - & who is associated
with the northern portion of Abyssinia -
was in the F.O. & will be available, if
necessary.

In the meantime, we might write to
the S.S.P. & land as proposed?

H. J. K.

8/5/13

Pr. 9. 5. 13

The Representation of 1906 appears to contain
plans for the whole of Abyssinia except the
Nile Basin going to Dr. or Italy. But
I am inclined to put my money on Lij Yasu
as proposed.

Oct. 9. 5. 13

I am inclined to think also that
Lij Yasu knows his way about.

Oct. 10. 5. 13.

Ad. 10. 5. 13

10. 5. 13

In any further communication
on this subject, please quote
No. 16728/13.
and address
The Under-Secretary of State,
Foreign Office,
London.

RA 25, N, B

115

FOREIGN OFFICE

April 24 1913.

SIR:-

I AM directed by Secretary Sir E. Grey to transmit to you herewith copy of a despatch which has been received from His Majesty's Minister at Adis Ababa in regard to the political situation in Abyssinia.

You will observe that the state of affairs disclosed in this despatch is a very serious one and I am to say that Sir E. Grey would be glad to be furnished with Mr. Secretary Harcourt's views as to what action it would be desirable to take in the event of a disruption of the Abyssinian Empire, in order to secure British interests in British Somaliland and British East Africa.

As Mr. Harcourt is aware the agreement of 1906 between Great Britain, France and Italy contemplates the co-operation of those Powers in maintaining the territorial status quo in Ethiopia, but it may be well to keep in view the possibility of

Under Secretary of State,
Colonial Office.

(16728/13).

of such co-operation failing to secure its object, as well as the possibility of British interests suffering from a prolonged state of anarchy and disturbance before order could be restored and the integrity of the Empire assured.

I am to add that Lord Kitchener has also been requested to furnish Sir E. Grey with his views on the subject.

I am,

Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant,

W. Langley

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EAST-AFRICA.
CONFIDENTIAL.

[April 12.]

SECTION I.

No. 1.

[16728]

Mr. Thesiger to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received April 12.)

(Not In.)
Sir,

Adis Ababa, March 20, 1913.

I HAVE the honour to report that Lij Yasu, in spite of all his assurances to the Council, has not returned to Adis Ababa after his visit to the Zukwala monastery, but has gone on, having sent back to Adis Ababa for several machine-guns, large supplies, and about 12,000 men.

His intention is apparently to lead an expedition against the Dankali who recently added to their past misdeeds by raiding the Kerayu tribe in the neighbourhood of Mount Fantalli, and it is more than likely he will put into practice his long rumoured intention of visiting Harrar and the Arusi districts. It is consequently generally believed that he will not return to the capital for an indefinite period.

He has also summoned Negadras Haile Giorgis, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Commerce, to join him, and, from the amount of stores which the latter has sent for, it seems very probable that he also will be absent for a very considerable time.

All business has thus been broken off without any notice, and no arrangements have been made by which the Council may have power to decide any of the many questions under discussion.

I might mention that General Famin, vice-president of the railway company, has just arrived at Adis Ababa. On hearing that Lij Yasu contemplated leaving the capital the French Legation asked for and received the most solemn assurances from Negadras Haile Giorgis that Lij Yasu would return on the 18th to discuss a settlement of the railway question with General Famin whose engagements only allowed him to remain here for a few days, and whose coming had been notified to the Government.

It is typical of the chaotic state of affairs now prevalent here, that General Famin should on his arrival find that not only was Lij Yasu absent, with no intention of an immediate return, but that also the Minister for Foreign Affairs had disappeared without any explanation or apology.

I saw Fitaaurari Hapta Giorgis this morning, and such of the Ministers as appeared at the Council, and went through a long list of questions which had formerly been held over to await Lij Yasu's return and told them that as his Highness had again left for an indefinite period without doing any business I must now insist that they should give me definite answers in settlement of these affairs. Although they have promised to do so, it is certain that their replies will be evasive and unsatisfactory, as there is no one left here who would dare to accept the responsibility of deciding any question on which the Council were doubtful of Lij Yasu's views.

Since all the expectations which had been founded on Lij Yasu's return have now definitely failed, it is difficult to see what is to prevent the Government of this country from gradually sinking into such a state of chaos as will call for strong action on the part of the three Powers most interested. At present all hope of any amelioration in the condition of affairs seems absolutely hopeless.

I am addressing copy of this despatch to Lord Kitchener.

I have, &c.

WILFRED G. THESIGER.

Secret.

DRAFT.

U. S. of S.

F.O.

MINUTE.

- Mr. Reed 14/5/13
- Mr. Holt 14/5/13
- Mr. Read 14
- Sir G. Fiddes.
- Sir H. Just.
- Sir J. Anderson.
- Lord Emmott.
- Mr. Harcourt.

22 May 1913

Sir,

I am etc. to acknowledge the receipt of
 your letter No. 16728/13 of the
 22nd of April transmitting
 a copy of a despatch which
 has been received from the
 Minister at Addis Ababa
 in regard to the political
 situation in Abyssinia,
 & to state, for the info.
 of Sec. Sec. Esquay, that
 he is obtaining an
 expression of opinion on
 the

and Enclosure
 will, again
 afterwards

that it would ~~possibly~~
be useful for ~~the~~ 119
difficult question to be
discussed by representatives
of the F.O. & the C.O.
with Major Wright
by me, who it is
understood is ~~coming~~ ^{now}
in this country ~~also~~ ^{also}
~~has a leave~~, ~~when~~

the views of ~~the~~
Lord Kitchener
~~authorities on the~~

~~General~~ have
been received.

M.R. }

RIEMAS
D 18 120

70/13855/ ^{Earl}
~~General~~ Somaliland

Earl
militant }
DRAFT. } Secret

Governor A. Conway Belfield, C.M.G.
Comd H.A.B. ~~at~~, C.M.G.

22 May 1913

MINUTE.

Mr. ~~Adair~~ 14/5/13
Bottle 1450
Mr. Read #
Sir G. Fildes.
Sir H. Just.
Sir J. Anderson.
Lord Emmott.
Mr. Harcourt.

14/5/13
Earl
militant

Have the honour to transmit
to you for your information a
copy of a letter from
the F.O. with a dispatch
from the Ministry at
Addis Ababa in regard
to the political situation
in Abyssinia, & to request
that you will furnish
me ~~with~~ with any
observations which you
may

may have to appear on the
minutes
from the point of view
of the P.W. under your
administration

2. I shall be glad to
receive a very early
reply to this despatch.

L. A.