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Agent Office

1913

9 Aug.

Last previous Paper

26870

Situation in Abyssinia

Sents dep. from Adis Ababa recording
Conversation with Italian Consul regarding
unsatisfactory position of affairs in Abyssinia.

Mr. J. Anderson

Nothing encouraging here

Put by ?

H. J. R.

12/8/13

th. 12.8.13

12.8.13

Put by

In any further communication on this subject, please quote

No. 34678/13

The Under-Secretary of State,
Foreign Office,
London.

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents
his compliments to the Under-Secretary of State for the
Colonies and by direction of the Secretary of
State, transmits herewith copy of the under-mentioned papers.

Foreign Office,

August 9, 1913.

Reference to previous letter:

Gov.
24944

Colonial Office July 26

Description of Inclosure.

Name and Date.	Subject.
<p>Mr Theiger (Addis Ababa) July 3</p>	<p>Situation in Abyssinia</p>

Similar letter sent to

BRITISH LEGATION,

ADIS ABABA,

3rd July, 1913.

Sir:-

I have the honour to report that I had a conversation with Count Colli this morning on the general situation and before telling him anything of my opinions asked him to say what he thought of the position and how Italian interests were being treated.

He told me that in all that concerned commercial interests, justice to their subjects, or frontier incidents, the Legation was powerless and that it was impossible to obtain any settlement of outstanding cases or reparation of any kind. As regards their frontiers, although all was quiet on the Tigre and Benadir borders, they were having considerable difficulties with the Danakils on the strip of territory between Hamfilah and Raheita, as these tribes refused to recognize the frontier and had recently destroyed some newly constructed wells 25 kilometres from Asab and had even penetrated to Raheita on the coast and taken some natives prisoner

there.

Right Honourable

Sir E. Grey, Bart., K.G.

&c., &c., &c.

there. All the representations made through the Legation had been fruitless as the Abyssinians refused to make any efforts to control or to punish these people, and he had consequently received orders to take much stronger measures.

In his opinion, although the Italian or British Government might enforce reparation for outrages of this kind, and so obtain temporary satisfaction, nothing could bring about any real improvement in the condition of the country. All Government had ceased to exist except in name and there was no man or party possessing the capacity to reorganize it. He believed that, as for serious incidents like that of Captain Aymer's death, if either country put forward an ultimatum the Abyssinians would give way at once, but that this would not do away with the danger of similar incidents arising immediately afterwards, as the Government had lost all control.

Count Colli's views of the situation here are therefore practically the same as those which I have expressed for some time and I gathered that, if we found

found it necessary to put forward an ultimatum, we can count on the support of the Italian Legation. This is more than can be said for the French Legation, who having settled the question of the railway, decline to take up any controversial matters which would bring them into disagreement with the government here.

Knowing that Mr. Brice had paid a long visit to the Italian Legation on the previous day, I asked Count Colli if he had spoken of our difficulties on the frontier. He told me that he had asked Mr. Brice what he thought, but that the latter had shrugged his shoulders and said that, by international law, if one power did not fully administer and protect their frontiers, they could not hold the neighbouring power responsible for any incidents of this kind which might occur, which appears to me a novel contention but one which may increase our difficulties if suggested by him to the Ethiopian Government.

Count Colli also expressed the opinion that, whether it was a question of protesting against the general lawlessness of the country, or of the trade in rifles, no assistance could be looked for from the French Legation; he was for his part absolutely convinced that the railway question had only been settled by general

general assurances that the French would facilitate in every way the reopening of Jibuti, and quoted in support of his opinion a remark made to him by General Famin, to the effect that Count d'Apchier had made a grave mistake in causing this port to be closed to the arms traffic as this had created enormous difficulties for the railway Company; a very different attitude to that which he adopted in his conversation with me.

As regards the arms traffic, Count Colli assured me that he had ample proof that, although no arms were being brought up by the railway, quantities were passing from French territory to Dessie and other places.

I am addressing a copy of this despatch to Lord Kitchener.

I have &c.,

(Signed)

Wilfred G. Thesiger.