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FOREIGN OFFICE

November 13 1913.

In any further communication
on this subject please quote
49627/13.

Under Secretary of State
Foreign Office
London

Sir:-

With reference to your letter of the 18th. ultimo
I am directed by Secretary-Sir E. Grey to transmit to
you herewith copy of a further despatch from His
Majesty's Minister at Adis Abeba respecting the
question of the Abyssinia-British East Africa boundary.

I am to observe that a copy of your letter of the
18th. ultimo has been forwarded to Mr. Theisger, so
that he will shortly be aware that the question of the
strengthening of the frontier forces is receiving
consideration.

Subject to Mr. Harcourt's concurrence, Mr.
Theisger's proposal to visit the frontier on his way
home on leave in January next will be approved.

I am,

Sir,

Your most obedient,
humble Servant,

W Langley

Under Secretary of State,
Colonial Office.

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EAST AFRICA.

[November 1.]

CONFIDENTIAL.

14 NOV 13
SECTION I.

No. 1.

49627]

Mr. Thesiger to Sir Edgard Grey.—(Received November 1.)

(No. 68.)

Addis Ababa, October 8, 1913.

Sir, I HAVE the honour to report that I have received a despatch from Mr. Hope informing me that he met Fitaurari Waldi near Gaddaduma on the 24th August, and that they went together, via Kuffole and Gadeir, as far as Jara.

No Tigre were met with, although they received information that some hunters had been in various places on our side of the line quite recently.

On the scene of Captain Aylmer's fight, the remains of two Tigre were found, which showed that the hunters had not escaped soot free.

Mr. Hope informs me that "should the Abyssinian Government eventually agree to the rectification of the boundary, I fear that, with the present force here, we will have great difficulty in occupying it, as the local officials would be dead against it, and we would find ourselves everywhere having bands of so-called Tigre against us, and the local officials would wink at it and not help us."

It is, I think, very much to be recommended that I should, when I go on leave next year, be authorised to travel home via Moyale and Nairobi. I could then see Mr. Hope on the spot and discuss the whole question with him. If the rectification is agreed to, I could take down the documents and show them to the local chiefs, whom I would visit for this purpose, and try and induce them to accompany me to Moyale to arrange for our joint conduct in future. If I were to go, I would certainly ask the Government here to send down an influential officer with me for this purpose, and I would propose taking Mr. Zaphiro, whose leave is also due, as his knowledge of the country would be of great use.

Even if the frontier question were not settled, I believe that the fact of my going there would have a good effect, and induce the Abyssinians to continue enforcing the present edicts against the hunters for a considerably longer period than would otherwise be the case.

At present, matters are more or less quiet on the border, but it is only because the question of the frontier is still under discussion here, and, sooner or later, unless strong preventive measures are taken on our side, they will revert to their former state.

It is difficult to see, however, how these preventive measures are to be taken unless the force on the frontier is increased, but, as I gather from Mr. Hope's letters, this proposal has already been vetoed by the Protectorate Government, whose policy, if one may judge from Colonel Thesiger's memorandum on the military situation dated the 17th April, 1912, it is to decrease the forces at our disposal, on the score of expense, at the very moment when their responsibilities are increased.

The rectification of the frontier, if we obtain it, can, in my opinion, serve no useful end unless we intend to put a permanent post at Gaddaduma and strengthen our patrols sufficiently to enable them to deal effectively with these bands of raiders, and this is apparently out of the question with the force at present at Mr. Hope's disposal.

No pressure that can be brought to bear here will ever induce the Abyssinian Government to take permanently effective measures to stop raiding and gun-running from their side, or to persuade them to put posts under efficient officers on the strategic points on the frontier when these points are unhealthy or undesirable from an Abyssinian point of view.

I recently saw Ganiasmach Gashi, one of the principal wardens of the frontier, who told me that his headquarters were at Tuka, E.N.E. of Moyale, further even from the raiding centre of Gaddaduma than Mr. Hope's headquarters, and that for various climatic reasons he could not live permanently at Gaddaduma; all he could do was to send an expedition there whenever he heard or was informed by us of raiding parties.

When it is considered that the Abyssinians have no real incentive to catch these bands, and that the local chief is fully aware that the mere sending of an expedition

will be quite sufficient to satisfy the Central Government that their orders have been complied with, it is obvious that no improvement in the situation can be expected from any action which is forced upon the Central Government by the legation.

It must be remembered also that Fituarari Waldi and Ganiasmatch Gashii, who depend directly from Fituarari Hapta Giorgis, Minister for War, are the only two officers on the frontier on whom direct pressure can be brought to bear from here and while Mr. Hope reports favourably of their efforts, the means at their disposal are utterly inadequate to the task, although their co-operation would be of great utility if our border garrison were stronger and more widely distributed.

As matters now stand these two officers cannot prevent gun-running caravans and bands of hunters, who come from the provinces of the semi-independent chiefs who surround them on three sides, from passing the marches and penetrating into our territory, or watch the whole line in order to catch them on their return, while our patrols are barely strong enough to pursue them, and far too weak and few to head them off in any desired direction, as is essential if any system of co-operation with the Abyssinians is to be introduced.

Although the efforts I have made here have recently resulted in the arrest of many hundreds of broken men and hunters in the frontier provinces, these men cannot be indefinitely held in prison, and when released they will undoubtedly return to their old life of brigandage and raiding. It is also futile to hope that the Central Government will ever regain strength enough to put down the injustice and oppression which are turning out men of this stamp as from a manufactory by numbers which are increasing yearly, and therefore the Protectorate Government must realise that, if order is to be kept on the border and our tribes protected from continual raids, and from the ever present chance of death at the hands of Abyssinian outlaws, it can only be by their own unaided efforts. That this must mean additional expenditure is obvious, but this expenditure must be regarded in the light of insurance money and to grudge it in the present cause is to court certain disaster in the future.

Our lack of sufficient men on the border is only too well known here and is fatal to our prestige, as the Abyssinians very naturally ask why, if we cannot afford to supply an officer of Captain Aylmer's standing when on patrol duty with an escort of more than ten or twelve men, they on their side should do more.

The only solution I can see for this question would be to increase our frontier force in such measure that we shall be able to give our tribes the protection we have promised them for so long, and then, when we have redeemed that promise, to institute a system of general taxation among the tribes so protected, the whole proceeds of which shall be devoted to the protection and development of the northern frontier districts.

There are, I acknowledge, many points in this question which I cannot understand and without a full knowledge of which I cannot act efficiently here, and I have therefore, honour to ask that I may be authorised in the beginning of next year to go down to Moyale, taking Mr. Zaphiro with me, so that I can visit the frontier chiefs en route and, after seeing the country with Mr. Hope, proceed home by Nairobi.

I have, &c.

WILFRED G. THESIGER.

F.O. 39226/1913

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DRAFT.

The U.S. of S.
F.O.

17 Nov 1913.

Sir,

I am etc. to acknowledge
the receipt of your letter of
the 13 of Nov (No 24627/13)
and to ~~inform you that~~
request you to inform
Secy Sir Edward Grey
that he concurs in
the proposal that Mr.
Thesiger should visit
the Abyssinia - British
East Africa frontier on
his way home on leave
in January next.

17/11/13
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Copy to Carlisle No 4

(Signed) H. J. READ.

for the Under Secretary

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