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Arms Traffic in Abyssinia

Sends copy to Adm. Khaki enclosing
report by Mr. Zapher on the traffic in
arms in Amussland and Ogaden

Mr. Fisher. A new state of affairs
Put by?

H. J. R.
5/1

Sir P. Hopwood

Put by
J. G.

95.
71.10.

Too bad for anything

C. G. D.

In any further communication on this subject, please quote

No. 47063 09

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

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JAN 10

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 paper.

Foreign Office

January 4, 1910

Reference to previous letter:

Description of Inclosure.

Name and Date.

Subject.

Lord H. Bouverie

Adis Ababa

Arms Traffic in

No. 77

Abyssinia

Dec 4

[Similar letter sent to

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47063

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4 JAN 10

DEC 29 1909

British Legation

Addis Ababa, December 1 1909.

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit to you, enclosed, a copy of a Despatch from Mr Sapiro, British Inspector on the Southern Abyssinian boundary, reporting on the traffic in arms in Arussiland and the Ogaden.

From time to time regulations have been issued by the Emperor with the avowed purpose of checking the indiscriminate sale of arms. Last year an edict was promulgated forbidding all persons (except soldiers) who were not bona fide merchants, or traders, to own rifles; any trader who required a rifle for the protection of his person or property was required to have a special registration mark placed upon it, and when he was not travelling, the rifle was to be deposited with the Shoum of the place he belonged to. This regulation was evaded from the beginning, and has now become a dead letter.

Yours faithfully,

Arthur

W. P.

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Another edict, forbidding the use of cartridges as currency, was at first allowed to lapse, but it has been put into force again, and in the neighbourhood of the capital seems to be observed.

The root of the evil has not been touched. The unrestricted importation of arms through Tibet, now forming the subject of negotiations between the British and French Governments, provides a source of revenue for the Emperor and his supporters which their cupidity will not allow them to forgo.

The Emperor himself, not attending his promise to the foreign Representatives, has been, at any rate in my time, the chief offender. He gives an order through some merchant for a large consignment of rifles, ostensibly for Government purposes; before even they arrive, the greater part of them is resold to the importer at a profit of one hundred per cent or more, and eventually they are found for sale at the houses of most of the merchants of any importance in Adis Ababa. I am informed that the same thing goes on at Harar and Giradwa.

In more recent times the Emperor's will appears to have been

been developing this system on his own account. He obtains the rifles at a cheap rate, collects a number of men, gives them a rifle and a belt of ammunition each, and sends them off to the Southern Frontier and Arusiiland to shoot elephants. If they succeed in obtaining a sufficient quantity of ivory, the rifles become their own property, and many of them dispose of these arms at an enormous profit, frequently to Somalis and others in our territory.

Mr Zaphiro refers in his report to the sale of rifles on the western frontier, according to information from the Governor General of the Sudan, Gallabat seems to be a favourite place for the passing of arms across the frontier, and I have several times made representations to the Government on the subject. With regard to Mr Guignone's proceedings, I have no doubt that Mr Zaphiro's reports are accurate, as the former has been well known for many years as being mixed up in many shady transactions in arms. His latest information here however is to the effect that he is now entirely discredited with the Abyssinian Government, who discovered he was trying to smuggle arms in one of his latest deals.

It has recently come to my knowledge that the Govern-

ment propose to give the monopoly for the sale of arms and ammunition to one individual, and I have protested against this as a violation of the Emperor's promise that no more monopolies should be given. Such a monopoly in the hands of a single person, who could fix his own price, would in my opinion tend to a still greater circulation of arms than before. I have proposed that they should grant licenses to respectable persons for the sale of arms and ammunition, the licensees being obliged to furnish detailed returns of all sales, and to enter into strict guarantees to supply no arms or ammunition to unauthorized persons.

I have the honour to be, with the highest respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble Servant,

Robert Heine

Copy.

501
4 JAN 10

47063
DEC 29 1909

British Legation,

Adis Ababa, December 1st 1909.

Sir

I have the honour to bring to your notice certain facts concerning the sale of rifles by a French merchant to the natives of Ogaden and the natives south of Arussi.

Two and a half years ago the Emperor Menelek bought from France ten thousand Gourdi Fusils-Gras Rifles to be delivered at Jibuti at six dollars each. When these rifles reached Diredawa the Emperor sold the same to Mr Guignone at ten dollars each. Half the number of these rifles found their way to Ogaden and the other half were sent to Adis Ababa.

Those of the Ogaden were sent from Harar in the following manner: Mr Guignone had at that time a representative in the south of Harar, and in Arussiland for buying ivory from the Abyssinian hunters; also he was trading in

Robert ...

skinner

C. C. C.

skins, bees wax &c. He used to send a great number of soldiers with the goods to his representatives, and such a soldier had to carry one new rifle and two belts of cartridges; on their arrival the rifles were taken from them and were sold to the hunters. The hunters again after they had killed what they wanted, sold them to the natives of the Ogaden. The Ogaden natives again exchanged those rifles for camels and cattle to the tribe of the Ber Afcal and the Merrihan who inhabit the countries west of Ganale, in British territory.

Several times these reports reached me and I decided to send three natives to find out of the above report was true. They came back reporting that the European Agents had gone away, but the reports which I had heard were all true.

Two years ago the Merrihan crossed the Ganale and bought 50 rifles from the Ogaden, since then they have bought over one thousand of these rifles, and use them against the tribes who have no rifles for looting their animals. I have succeeded in confiscating two rifles from the Merrihan which I have brought up to your inspection, and having seen the rifles which are west of the Ogaden

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is selling, I am in a position to prove to you that the
rifles are the same which the Emperor sold him at Dire-dawa.

Lately it was reported to me by an Abyssinian in the
service of Mr Guignone, that they employ the same method
for sending rifles to the Western frontier, and a certain
Frenchman named Servigni, his agent, is selling these
rifles at the price of fifty dollars each to the natives
of Beal Shangul and others.

Further I have to report that Mr Guignone did not pay
the price of these rifles to the Emperor, and it seems
that at present he is in Paris for the purpose of bringing
another lot of rifles.

I hope that strong steps may be taken as soon as
possible in the matter to prevent him from selling rifles
to the natives or hunters, otherwise once the Islam
population in British territory is armed, we shall have
trouble, which will certainly entail a great amount of
expenditure to His Majesty's Government.

I have &c

(Signed) P. G. ...

P. G. Inspector

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, LONDON