



In any further communication  
has only to be made

No. *AB051/5725/1*

adhere to the copy of same.

The Under Secretary of State,  
Foreign Office,  
London, W. 1.

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43274

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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.

*Mr. Russell*  
*Admiral*  
*No 81*

*June 1*  
*To Mr. Russell*

*London*  
*Admiral*

Similar letter sent to

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The Rt. Hon.  
 Sir ... of Madras, K.C.

for consideration or give food for thought. In short, I have gone on the principle that our interests would be best pleased to be as little concerned as possible with the affairs of Abyssinia.

There is a question that I may occasionally refer to here because it has in the past been included among our objectives. I allude to the elimination of French influence. The traditional hostility to England which informs French colonial policy was manifest in Abyssinia as elsewhere. France was the source of the marketing of the arms traffic. It was felt that with Italy, whose interests resembled our own, we might work for the betterment of the country. If it broke up, the problem would be simplified & the settlement could be among two interested parties instead of three. French influence in Abyssinia rests solely on the possession of Djibouti. If that went, the Franco-Ethiopian railway and all that follow. Suggestions have been made in the past that France might abandon her possession in exchange for an English colony. If such a project was ever considered, I presume it may now be regarded as in abeyance until more important matters are settled. A liquidation of French interests here is desirable, but, for sufficient reasons, it does not seem as urgent to us as it did to my predecessors. The waning revenue of Djibouti and the insolvency of the railway may in the future lead to some spontaneous step by France in the desired direction, but there is no good ground to anticipate it. For the time being, our activity under this head should be limited to improving communications between British Somaliland and Abyssinia. This should draw trade to Berbera and Sella to the detriment of the





territorial needs in Abyssinia lie in a nutshell. They are the Barot and the Blue Nile.

The Government of Kenya wish to include a portion of northern Abyssinia in the Protectorate. The district in question is, I believe, bounded on the east by the River Sobat, on the north by a line running along between the 10th and 12th parallels, and on the west by the existing borders of the Sudan. In acquiring this territory the Government of Kenya would obtain a rich territory and a valuable frontier. They would also possess a benevolent population. The herds of elephants which were formerly abundant in this country have taken sanctuary in this territory, and the natives are now following this last refuge in ever increasing numbers. If the Italian Administration were reduced to impotence, I believe that the annexation of the territory in question could be a simple operation. It would clash with the designs of no other Power.

As regards the Blue Nile, I think that the Egyptian and Sudan Governments would insist that the control of the river and its headwaters in Lake Tana must pass to a Power in whose hands their interests are safe. I do not know whether the before-mentioned Governments would desire the possession of the entire lake and of both banks of the river. I presume they would, and I presume too that Italy would declare this to be prejudicial to her interests referred to in Article IV (b) of the Tripartite Agreement. I cannot say what is the position as defined by Article IV.

I am unable to reconcile the Anglo-Italian Protocols of March 26th and April 15th 1901, and I was unaware what are the "subsequent agreements modifying them" or the "reserves formulated by the French Government", or whether these latter have any bearing on the question. If ever I am not so, I suppose that His Majesty's Government as long as we had retained an interest in Egypt or the Sudan, would not abandon the Nile Nile. In the event of a partition of all Abyssinia, our requirements being so moderate, it should be possible to compensate Italian claims by concessions in other directions.

For the rest, I imagine His Majesty's Government have no wish to add to British Somaliland, or (leaving some small modifications) to extend the frontier of the South-East of Sudan. The remainder of the country could then be left, without detriment to our interests, to satisfy the ambitions of France and Italy, or to work out its own salvation as a number of independent states. If we have a clear conception of what we want, the rest can be left for settlement when the time comes.

Your Lordship will not conclude because I have raised these problems that, in my opinion, the need for a considered policy is pressing. My brief acquaintanceship with this country does not lead me to expect its early break up. The monarchy is weaker than it was under the iron rule of Menelik, but there is no apparent tendency to disruption. The battle of Adowa gave Abyssinia a new lease of independence. The events of the past years have further prolonged it. In 1912 my

professor

under has  
 to be  
 the Province  
 is a  
 position





The Anglo-Saxons are "travelling about in pot-bellied  
 squintiness, not dreaming of heroic toil or sacrifice....  
 This also aptly characterizes the Abyssinians. I could  
 not find for them resemblances that a like destiny  
 is reserved to Abyssinia as was to England. ANGLICAN ENGLAND  
 England had the traditions, however faint, of centuries  
 of rule by a civilized Power. In the darkest age a  
 torch of learning was kindled on, and there were links  
 with the outside world to which there is nothing  
 parallel in modern Abyssinia. None the less, the Abyssinians  
 stand out among the native races of Africa.  
 Perhaps, under some such stimulus of foreign contact  
 as the English were subjected to, they may emerge, in  
 centuries to come, among the dominant and progressive  
 nations of a new age.

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No. 118.

(A 6051/5725/1).

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

August 24th, 1921.

Sir:

I received your despatch No. 51 of the 1st June last and am glad to see the British policy in Abyssinia and have to thank you for your interesting review of the existing position.

You are correct in your view that the interests of His Majesty's Government lie in the maintenance of Abyssinia as an independent State.

I have noted in the 1st part of your despatch your speak of the... The text of which is not... If you will state which of the... are not... copies will be forwarded.

I am, Sir, very respectfully,

Yours faithfully,

(The Secretary of State)

Messrs. ...  
... etc., etc.