British Policy Towards Ethiopia, 1909 to 1919

by

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
University of London
January 1971
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Abstract

British policy towards Ethiopia was governed by the Tripartite Agreement of 13 December 1906, which safeguarded British interests in the headwaters of the Blue Nile and in the western provinces of Ethiopia. Britain had no desire to dominate Ethiopia, and she wanted to keep her independent of Italian territorial control and French economic control.

Britain hoped that Lij Yawu, Menelik's grandson, would take command of the Government in 1913 and give Ethiopia a stable administration. However Yawu was opposed by the Shoan hierarchy, and since he did not receive the crown he virtually abdicated all responsibility. He became enamoured with Islam, and he consulted with Turkish advisers. Consequently, the Government fell into chaos, the Christian highlanders were insulted, and the Allied Legations feared that Ethiopia would join the Central Powers. Britain initiated the Allied démarche of 12 September 1916, and she supported the Shoan conspirators, who deposed Yawu on 27 September 1916.
The new Empress, Zauditu, and her Regent, Ras Tafari, were beset by internal problems, and they could not stabilize Ethiopia. The British Minister hoped that Ethiopia would accept administrative reforms, but he was not supported by the Ethiopians, the French or the Italians. Due to the belief that Ethiopia would soon break up, and that Italy would ask for Ethiopian territory as compensation for her war-time assistance (and that Britain could acquire the French Somali Coast), Britain began to consider the possibility of a new partition of the Horn of Africa.

At the close of the war Italy claimed vast compensation in East Africa, including the entire Somali Coast and Ethiopia. However the British and French negotiators at the Paris Peace Conference refused most of Italy's demands. Thereafter Ethiopian affairs returned to their pre-war state, with Ethiopia unstable and the Tripartite Powers in competition.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Note on Orthography and Abbreviations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I: The Last Years of Menelik</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II: Britain and the Ethiopian Problem</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913 to 1916</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III: The Shoan Coup d'Etat of September</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV: The Future of Ethiopia: The Internal Situation and Reforms</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916 to 1918</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V: The Future of Ethiopia: The Arms Trade and Partition</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916 to 1918</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VI: Ethiopia and the Peace Conference</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion and Epilogue</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Note on Orthography and Abbreviations

For the transliteration of Arabic names I have used Professor R. Hill's *A Bibliographical Dictionary of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, (Oxford, 1951). However, I have found no standard form for the transliteration of Ethiopian names and terms, and so I have used spellings 1) that will be familiar to the layman, and 2) that do not contrast sharply with the usage in practice in the period 1909 to 1919. No doubt this may lead to some unfortunate renderings, which may offend the Amharinya speaker, but for which I apologize in advance.

For the spelling of geographical names I have used the forms found in the Army Map Service (LU), Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, Washington D.C., series 2201, scale 1:2 million, sheets 20 (1967), 21 (1968) and 24 (1968), which are proudly "Compiled ... from best available sources".

For the abbreviations of Ethiopian terms, please consult the glossary which follows the text. It also contains the translations and definitions of the more frequently used Arabic and Ethiopian terms. For the abbreviations of works and sources in the footnotes, please consult the bibliography.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor G.N. Sanderson, who has led me through every stage of my thesis, and who has taught me what I know of the theory and practice of writing history. I should also like to acknowledge my debt to Professor David Dilks, who encouraged me to embark on this thesis.

In the course of my research I have had the help and advice of the Librarian of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London; of S.C. Sutton, Librarian and Keeper of the India Office Library; of the Keeper of Public Records and the staff of the Public Record Office; of the Librarian of the Institute of Historical Research, London; of the Director of the British Museum Reading Room; and of I.J.C. Foster, Keeper of Oriental Books, Durham.

My sincere thanks must also go to Mrs. Jean Gooding, who took on more than she knew when she agreed to type the final draft.

Lastly, I must thank my wife, without whom this volume would certainly not have been written, and to whom this thesis is dedicated.
# Illustrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memelik II (Holtz, p. 48)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lij Yasu and chiefs (Rey, <em>Unconquered Abyssinia</em>, p. 100)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lij Yasu (Holtz, p. 16)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikael (Mantegazza, p. 193)</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Legation (Hodson, <em>Seven Years</em>, p. 138)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zauditu (Rey, <em>Unconquered Abyssinia</em>, p. 104)</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hapta Giorgis (Hodson, <em>Seven Years</em>, p. 132)</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seyoum (Mantegazza, p. 256)</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of Manz</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noble Houses of Ethiopia</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Maps**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North - East Africa, 1913</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigns of October 1916</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia and environs, 1913</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Ethiopia before 1935 was a land of myth and misconception. Except for Egypt and South Africa Europeans had a longer continuous experience of Ethiopia than of any other part of the African interior; but the familiarity was superficial. In 1909 Ethiopia was one of the few independent states in Africa. It was an empire ruled by the Coptic Christian Semitized Hamitic "Abyssinians" of the highland provinces; more specifically, by the descendant of Negus Sahela Selassie of Shoa, Age Selala Mariam, Menelik II. Menelik's empire included the highland provinces of Tigré, "Amhara", Godjam and Shoa; the Galla-Sidama kingdoms south of Shoa and north of Lake Rudolph; the Somali Ogaden or Haud; and the Negroid Shangalla districts straddling the lowland borders of Sudan, Uganda and British East Africa (B.E.A.). Menelik was Negus Negusti - King of the Kings - of Ethiopia, though he had reduced the former "kingdoms" of Ethiopia to the state of subject provinces.¹ However Ethiopia was by no means a centralized state. Most of the highland provinces resented Shoan rule, and the Galla districts, especially in Wollo and Yejju, chafed

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1. Negus Tekla Haymanot of Godjam had died in 1901, and the Aba Jifar of Jimma, Muhammad Ibn Da'ud, was the only chief to hold the title of Negus from 1901 to 1911.
and Negus Negusti in 1889 upon the death of Yohannes IV at Metemma (Gallabat). He had defeated the Italians at Adua in 1896, and he had expanded the empire into Somaliland and into the Galla-Sidama lands to the South and West of Shoa. He had enormous power and prestige, and Ethiopia was considered reasonably stable and unified under his rule. He was helped by his wife Itegue Taitu (1844-1918), the much-married daughter of a Yejju noble. She was politically adept and she introduced her relations - notably her brother, Ras Wolye, and her nephew, Ras Gugsa Wolye - into the court and provincial hierarchies. She had great influence in the North, principally in Gondar, which she helped to carry for Menelik.

Menelik's rule was based on his power over and his friendship with certain influential factions: the nobility, the Church and the army. Although Menelik was the head of the Shoan House of Manz, at times he was challenged by the other noble houses, such as that of Yohannes in Tigré and of Takla Haymanot in Godjam, as well as by members of his own family.¹ Menelik's chief rival had been Ras Mangasha (d. 1906), the heir of Yohannes.² After an unsuccessful

1. In 1872 Menelik had banished three of his brothers, Bezabeh, Bafana and Mechacha.

2. Area Selassie, Yohannes' legitimate heir, had died in 1888.
attempt at rebellion in 1898-9 Mangasha submitted to Menelik and took one of Taitu's nieces for a wife. Thereafter the Tigre cause was carried on by his son Sayoum (d. 1960) and his nephew Gugsa Area (d. 1932). Godjam proved no difficulty to Menelik after the death of Tekla Haymanot in 1901, and he divided Godjam to facilitate its rule. Tekla Haymanot's son, Seyoum (1875-1945), succeeded to the rump Godjam in 1907 and became Ras Hailu in 1909. By wise political marriages and careful intrigue he expanded Godjam to exceed its historic borders, and after Menelik's death he increased his own powers until in the 1920's he was the chief balabat in the empire.

Menelik, however, did not suffer from Hailu's ambition, nor was he troubled by the ambitions of his own family. His right-hand-men were also his relatives: Ras Makonnen of Harar (d. 1906), who was considered heir to the throne, Ras Walda Giorgis (1855c.-1918), ruler of Kaffa and conqueror of the South-West, and Ras Tesamma, (1855-1911), governor of Ilu Babor, Walega and the provinces on the Sudan border. Menelik's son, Asfa Wossen, had died in 1888, and he had no other legitimate male heirs.¹ His

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daughter Zauditu (1876-1930), though much-married, was childless. Another daughter, Shoaraga (1867-1897) had had two children from her marriage to Wadajo Gobana, and another by Ras Mikael, the hereditary Galla chief of Wollo, and a Muslim by birth and upbringing. Mikael, as Imam Muhammad 'Ali Imam 'Ali Liban, had once fought against Menelik, but had been forcibly converted by Asé Yohannes in 1878 and given the name and rank of Ras Mikael. His son, Yasu Wasan Sagad (1896-1935), was to become emperor-designate upon Menelik's death. Menelik's Shoan party, with its subsidiaries in Harar, the South-West and Wollo, was sufficient to ensure the continuity of rule by the House of Manz. In addition he had firm control over the Church, headed by the Egyptian Copto Abuna Matewos (d.1926), a timid man and loyal to Menelik, and the Ethiopian Itchege Walda Giorgis, head of the monastery of Tekla Haymanot at Debra Libanos and the real power behind the Abun. Menelik was a loyal, though by no means a fanatical churchman, and the Church served him by excommunicating rebels and by blessing his pronouncements. The last factor in the Ethiopian power equation was the Imperial Army. This force had largely

1.  She had been married to Area Selassie, Dej Wubie, Wagshum Gwangoul and Gugsa Wolye.

been fashioned by Menelik, and it had been armed by his
French and Italian agents. Though each Ras and Dejazmatch
had his own army which could be called upon to lend assis-
tance, the Imperial Army was the central force. Menelik
had used his nobles as generals - Walda Giorgis, Tesamma
and Makonnen the most famous; but he also relied on Galla
commanders, such as Ras Gobana and Fitwary Hapta Giorgis
(d. 1926). Hapta Giorgis was Menelik's most able lieutenant
and most efficient administrator, and he dominates the
transition from the latter days of Menelik's reign to the
eyearly days of Haile Selassie's reign. By an able manipu-
lation of chiefs, Church and army Menelik was able to unify,
stabilize and expand Ethiopia until it was a powerful force
in North-East Africa. But a dynamic Ethiopia depended too
much on Menelik's skill and personality. When this began to
fail, Ethiopia slipped back into its traditional system of
anarchy and instability.

Britain, Italy and France were the Powers most interes-
ted in Ethiopia. After the defeat of the Mahdists and the
death of the Khalîfa 'Abdallâhi in 1899, British interests
were limited to 'peaceful penetration'. Before 1899 British
interests had been to ensure that Ethiopia did not intervene
on the side of the French or the Mahdists in the struggle
for the Nile. Ethiopian and French fears that Britain would
expand into Ethiopia were a chimera - in any case, the outbreak of the South African war would have made encroachment by Britain physically impossible. British interests, therefore, were to ensure the safety of the Nile headwaters to Britain, to maintain peace on the borders and to develop trade.

What Europe calls the Blue Nile and what the Amhara called the Abai flows from Lake Tsana in the highlands of Begamdir province. This waterway, due to the summer rains in the Ethiopian highlands, provides the majority of the water for the Egyptian Nile, as well as the rich alluvial mud that manures Egypt's fields during the river's period of flood. 1 By 1899 Anglo-Egyptian forces had secured the White Nile for Britain, and it became essential that the Blue Nile be prevented from falling into hands that were harmful to British interests. This meant propping up the Ethiopian empire or obtaining the Abai system for Britain. After the defeat of the Italians at Adua in 1896 Menelik proved capable of defending his territory without British intervention. Once Ethiopia undertook not to interfere in

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the Nile waters, by the Treaty of 15 May 1902, it became Britain's policy to protect the Nile waters by supporting the political and territorial integrity of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia was surrounded on three sides by British territories: the Sudan, E.E.A. and Somaliland. Border incidents arose due to the lax supervision by Ethiopian central and provincial authorities, who allowed armed bands of Ethiopians to rob, kill and enslave British protected tribesmen. Britain demanded a halt to the slave and arms trades, requested the demarcation of borders and insisted that Ethiopia be responsible for the acts of her subjects, but the Ethiopian Government was not able and did not accept the need to act on these representations.

The Ethiopian definition of their empire was vague even in the twentieth century, and they never considered their borders as a fixed line. The highland provinces were surrounded by Muslim and pagan areas that were fiefs, governed and exploited by highlanders, but not inhabited by them. These territories were generally accepted as free reserves to plunder and to raid. Very often the highland

1. Cf. text, FO 93/2, No. 5.
governors had no idea of the extent of their domains, and so their soldiers raided lands that were in fact parts of European colonies. Menelik himself could claim that Ethiopia's "ancient frontiers" were "as far as Khartum and to Lake Nyanza beyond the lands of the Galla" and Ethiopian forces did at times reach far beyond the bounds of the present empire, but it was clear that effective imperial authority barely extended beyond Shoa and the highland provinces.

The Somali border problem was exacerbated by the Jihad of Sayyid Shaikh Muhammad 'Abdille Hasan (1864-1921) - commonly called the "Mad Mullah". Sayyid Muhammad was the grandson of an Ethiopian Ba Geri Ogaden Somali, and he had broken out in rebellion against the British in 1899. He rallied the Muslim Somalis and anti-European feeling in the Horn of Africa, and he embarrassed Britain with his

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repeated victories. There was a danger that Muhammad would ally with Ethiopian Somalis or with the Ethiopian Government to drive out the Europeans from the Somali Coast. He was part of the nascent nationalist ferment of North-East Africa, from which emerged leaders like 'Urabi Pasha and the Mahdi Muhammad Ahmad; and he was to strike certain nationalist chords in the mind of the "boy-emperor" Lij Yasu.¹ Though his participation in Ethiopian affairs was minimal, his presence was felt in all aspects of Anglo-Ethiopian relations until his death in 1921. The other borders were troublesome, but they did not present a major threat to the security of Britain's colonies. Both the Sudan and the Southern borders were hazy areas, officially demarcated,² but neither adequately marked nor patrolled. Ethiopian border tribesmen, shiftas and irregulars raided British territory safe from British retaliation or Ethiopian


¹ Lewis, op. cit., p. 71.

reproach. These incidents caused bad feeling and sometimes minor border wars, and they were only settled - and then only temporarily - by British or Anglo-Ethiopian punitive expeditions.

The third British interest was the promotion and protection of trade with Ethiopia. British trade was minimal, smaller than that of France and Italy. The Ethiopians were suspicious of the European trader, did not trust the system of export and did not honour the principle of contract. Highland Ethiopians did not consider 'trade' to be a fit occupation for them, and they left commerce mainly to Muslims. Consequently they did not react favourably to requests for concessions and trade contracts. Also they were afraid that exports would reduce their supplies, and thereby cause shortages and starvation. Yet Britain envisaged a great trade with the rich territories of West Ethiopia, and this encouraged her to increase her contacts and expand her influence there.

The safeguarding of Britain's interests implied the need for a strong Ethiopian Government, confident of its security and sovereignty, able to implement its promises, control its governors and feudatories and maintain law and

order. In order to stabilize and strengthen the Ethiopian Government Britain pressed for the abolition or control of the slaves and arms trades. The slave trade shocked European opinion, stigmatized Ethiopia as a barbaric state and invited European intervention as a means of endowing Ethiopia with 'civilization'. It was also the prime cause of the border raids, as well as being "the only industry" in the country.\(^1\) The arms trade also contributed to border friction and internal instability. Britain had no objection to arming the Ethiopian Government as long as there was some assurance that the arms would not be given to the truculent border tribes or be used to further the ambitions of individual balabatoch. Control of the slaves and arms trades was perhaps sometimes emphasized beyond its intrinsic importance because the British Government felt a vague humanitarian urge to reform the more unsavoury aspects of Ethiopian government and society.

Italian policy after the battle of Adwa was one of reserve, though potentially it could be transformed to a forward policy. Italy had not given up her interest in

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expansion into the Eritrean hinterland in Tigré and Gondar, and her agents from Eritrea attempted to win support from sympathetic Ethiopian chiefs. Her aim was to connect Eritrea with Benadir, with a protectorate over Ethiopia as the ultimate goal. Italy had no continuing interest in a strong Ethiopia, though she might for short-term practical or tactical reasons support British intervention to this end. At times the administrative chaos in Ethiopia annoyed even Italy, and she was not anxious to lose British friendship by refusing to co-operate with her. In general, Italy preferred the decentralization of Ethiopia, so she could tighten her grip on the Tigré. She found it helpful to bribe the border chiefs with arms, and she looked forward to the ultimate break-up and partition of Ethiopia.

Of the three Powers France was in the strongest position because of her very weakness. She had no territorial aims in Ethiopia (though doubtless she would have not minded acquiring Harar), and she maintained her friendship with Ethiopia by making no unacceptable demands and by supplying arms.¹ She was largely indifferent to the political stability of Ethiopia, and she was only moved to action when Italy or Britain looked as if they would act alone or when total anarchy prevailed. In general she was dedicated to preserving the territorial status quo and the political
independence of Ethiopia, since her freedom of action would be hampered by Italian territorial control or three-Power supervision. France remained Ethiopia's one 'friend'; her presence was at times welcomed as a counter-balance to Italian aggression in the North and to British sensitivity to the arms, slave and ivory trades - especially so long as she supplied Ethiopia's needs for weapons. With relatively little outlay, France could make herself extremely annoying to Britain and Italy, and her co-operation, never very enthusiastic even at the best of times, had ceaselessly to be bought by her colleagues.

France's principal interests rested on the port of Jibuti, its surrounding enclave and the Franco-Ethiopian Railway. The Railway was originally intended to extend from Jibuti to the White Nile, but by 1900 it had barely reached Dire Dawa, when its builders had run out of funds. It borrowed money from the Ochs Brothers, London bankers, and later it was subsidized by the French Government.¹ Menelik

¹ France might have been grateful for the 'help' she believed Menelik had given her when she tried to occupy the White Nile, cf. G. N. Sanderson's articles, "Conflict and Co-operation between Ethiopia and the Mahdist State 1884-1898", Sudan Notes and Records, 1969, ; Contributions From African Sources to the History of European Competition in the Upper Valley of the Nile", J.A.H., 1962, II, 1; "The Foreign Policy of the Negus Menelik 1896-1898", J.A.H., 1964, V, 1.
resented French Government interference in what he con-
considered a private company, and the British Government wanted
Ochs compensated for their losses when the railway was
virtually nationalized. The railway affair is a sample of
the numerous conflicts which complicated the relations of
the three Powers with one another and with Ethiopia. Since
Adua European interests had increased in Ethiopia and they
conflicted more often than not. Britain claimed Lake Tsana
and the Abai in her sphere of influence, but Italy claimed
that all the North was in the Eritrean hinterland and there-
fore in the Italian sphere. Italy wanted a territorial con-
nection between her colonies of Eritrea and Benadir to go
west of Adis Ababa, but this would conflict with Britain's
sphere of influence in the rich provinces of West Ethiopia.
France wanted to extend her railway at least to the Blue
Nile, now that Britain had established her control over the
White Nile, but both Britain and Italy looked upon the Blue
Nile as in their spheres of influence. Some sort of agree-
ment between the three Powers was needed to eliminate a
potential conflict and to make possible smooth dealing with

1. Cf. T. L. Gilmour, Abyssinia: The Ethiopian Railways
and the Powers, (London, 1906); Jones and Monroe, op.
cit., pp. 147-8; FO 371/3499, Knatchbull-Hugessen to
Sperling, 21.2.19; FO memo, 19.3.19; Royal Institute
of International Affairs, Abyssinia and Italy, Infor-
mation Department Papers, No. 16, 2nd Ed., (London,
the Ethiopians.

Discussions between the limitrophe Powers culminated in the Tripartite Agreement of 13 December 1906. This instrument safeguarded to those Powers certain existing rights, and made provisions for the possible break-up of the empire.

The three States agreed to maintain the status quo in Abyssinia, to refrain from seeking privileges or concessions which might be contrary to the others, and generally to keep one another fully informed of their projected actions, co-operating frankly to that end.

The agreement was designed to usher in a new era of European co-operation and control over Ethiopia. France forfeited her right to extend her railway into West Ethiopia in return for the immediate rewards of its prolongation to Adis Ababa. Italy received acknowledgment of her right to link her two colonies by rail west of Adis Ababa, while Britain's interest in Lake Tsana, the Nile headwaters and the western provinces was secured. The Agreement, which was supposed to settle Tripartite relations, in fact institutionalized the conflicts between the Powers. Nothing prevented Ethiopia, with French assistance, from extending the Jibuti railway to the West; Britain could not really control the

1. FO 371/1, Grey to Harrington, T. 25, 6.7.06; Harrington to Grey, T. 37, 1.12.06; FO 371/4320, Sperling memo, 19.1.20; cf. text in FO 93/33, No. 216.

2. FO 401/12, Hervey to Grey, No. 1, 1.1.09.
Nile headwaters when Lake Tsana was virtually within the Italian territorial sphere; Italy could not build her Eritrea-Benadir railway without encroaching on Britain's rights in the Abai region or the West. So long as Menelik was in control these conflicts were not of great importance. True, in 1908 Menelik granted the Vitalien Contract, which allowed France to extend the railway from Dire Dawa to the Hawash River; it would not however reach Adis Ababa for another ten years. Italian imperialism was dormant, and British energies were devoted to establishing an interest in the western provinces. Menelik had control of the Government and the empire; there was little cause for anxiety and the Tripartite Agreement worked smoothly. It was only when Menelik's control relaxed that the contradictions in the Agreement became evident; the Powers competed with each other while Ethiopia sank into confusion.

The everyday job of transforming British policy into action was carried out by the British representatives in Adis Ababa, and by the clerks in the Foreign Office. The Secretaries of State, Grey, Balfour and Curzon, were not overly concerned with Ethiopia. Sir Edward Grey, along
with Paul Cambon of France and Tommaso Tittoni of Italy negotiated the Tripartite Agreement in London in 1906, but this was the height of Grey's involvement in Ethiopian affairs. Most decisions were taken by the clerks in the Africa Department or, during 1914 to 1918, in the War Department of the Foreign Office. The Permanent Under-Secretary from 1910 to 1916, Sir Arthur Nicolson (Lord Carnock), rarely commented on Ethiopian affairs, and his successor, Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, was only slightly more interested - notably in the questions of the arms trade and of Italian compensation in Africa. The most authoritative personalities on Ethiopian affairs in the Foreign Office were Sir Walter Langley and Sir Rowland Sperling. Langley became Under-Secretary in 1914, with responsibility for the 'Abyssinia' papers. His minute was usually the final one, and his advice was most consistently followed. He was assisted by Sperling, who was Senior Clerk in the western and later in the War Department, and who took over Langley's mantle when the latter died in 1918.¹ Other clerks who contributed to Foreign

¹. Sperling became Assistant Secretary in 1919, and he was later Minister at Helsinki, 1930-1935. All information is from the various Foreign, Colonial and India Office Lists. Also helpful were: Sir J. Tilley and S. Gaselee, The Foreign Office, (London, 1933); Lord Strang, The Foreign Office, (London, 1955);
Office policy were: Sir George Clerk, Assistant at the Legation at Adis Ababa, 1903-1907, Senior Clerk in the Africa Department, 1907-1913, and later Ambassador to Paris, 1934-1937; Sir Laurence Collier, clerk in the War Department, 1916-1919, and later Ambassador to Oslo, 1945-50; Sir Harold Nicolson, son of Sir Arthur and a future M.P.; Sir Horace Seymour, future Ambassador to Peking, 1942-1947; Sir John Tilley, Senior Clerk in the Africa Department, 1910-1913, and Ambassador to Tokyo, 1926-31. By the time the Peace Conference met most Ethiopian questions were in the hands of Sperling or Sir Louis Mallet, Ambassador to Constantinople, 1913-1914.¹ Mallet had returned to the Foreign Office as Under-Secretary in 1918, and he was Chairman of the Committee deciding British policy towards Ethiopia after the war.

Britain's man in Ethiopia from 1909 to 1919 was Wilfred Thesiger, who had also served in Italy and Central Africa.² Despatches to and from Ethiopia took over a


¹ Mallet was blamed for Turkey's entry on the side of the Central Powers, Viscount Grey, Twenty-Five Years, 11, (London, 1925), pp. 169-70.
month to arrive, and telegrams took several days; therefore much was left to the discretion of Thesiger and his assistants. Notable among them were Major James Dodds (-Crewe), Consul at Harar and Adis Ababa from 1911 to 1922, and later Consul-General for Marseilles, 1940-1941; Major Charles Doughty-Wylie, nephew of the poet and traveller and the hero of 'V' Beach Gallipoli for which he was awarded the posthumous V.C.; Sir Gerald Campbell, High Commissioner at Ottawa, 1938-1941 and Minister at Washington, 1941-1945. There were also Consuls at Goré-Gambela in West Ethiopia, at Mega-Gardula (Sir Arnold Hodson, Governor of Sierra Leone and of the Gold Coast) in South Ethiopia, as well as agents in Maji and Gondar. Furthermore the Sudan Government under Sir F. R. Wingate could be called upon to provide information and manpower when necessary.

Since Ethiopian activities often created problems for Britain's North-East African colonies, the Colonial Office was often asked to provide expert advice. Sir Herbert Read, a member of the Colonial Office from 1889 to 1927 and then a Governor of Mauritius, could call upon the British authorities in Africa for advice. In Somaliland there was

2. Thesiger was scheduled to go as Consul-General to New York, but he died at Brighton on 31 January 1920 before he could proceed. His son is the famous Arabian explorer and author.
Sir Geoffrey Archer, future Governor-General of the Sudan, and Colonel Arthur Lawrance, a future Governor of Somaliland; in B.E.A. there were the District Commissioners in the Northern Frontier District (N.F.D.) and the officers of the King's Africa Rifles (K.A.R.) to provide help on border matters, as well as Governors Belfield, Bowring and Northey.

The other major source of expertise was the India Office. It was responsible for the Persian Gulf and Aden, and it was particularly concerned with the arms trade to and from Africa. Sir F. A. Hirtzel, the Private and Secret Secretary, and his assistant, John E. Shuckburgh, often commented on questions that affected the arms trade and the Aden and Somali Coast trade. Though Ethiopian affairs cannot be said to have occupied a great deal of time at Whitehall, there were, scattered among the various departments, men whose experience and advice were valuable for a full understanding of Ethiopian problems. Sir John Harrington, the former British Representative at Adis Ababa, was sometimes asked for his opinions, and Lord Kitchener, even after he was called to the War Office, continued to expound on Egypt's interests in Ethiopia. In general all Government Departments co-operated willingly on Ethiopian matters, and the Foreign Office was rather pleased at times to be able to obtain outside advice. There were cases of interdepartmental
disagreement, but they were usually on peripheral matters and were so rare as to be of no significance.

The period about to be studied is not without links to the past and future. Ethiopia had just emerged from a period of anarchy and isolation, into a period of national unification and conquest. This energetic empire met Europe when the latter was at the height of its power and when it was convinced of its world supremacy. Between Europe and Ethiopia was the ever-present danger of conflict. The Battle of Adua bought Ethiopia a respite until European supremacy was overwhelming. The narrow escape at Adua and the Italian aggression that was to come in 1935 are the poles in modern Ethiopian history. Lij Yasu's reign is the link in Ethiopian history between the Partition of Africa and the Second World War.
Chapter I
The Last Years of Menelik

As long as Menelik or his successor ruled effectively, Ethiopia had nothing to fear from the Tripartite Powers; the danger to Ethiopia derived from the possible collapse of imperial authority, and the political fragmentation of the country. In such a case the Powers, perhaps in concert, would intervene to protect their subjects and interests. Britain needed Ethiopian independence, since internal stability was needed to prevent friction on the borders, and to prevent other European Powers establishing themselves on the headwaters of the Blue Nile. The 1906 Agreement had recognized Britain's paramount interest in the potentially valuable western provinces of Ethiopia and in the Lake Tana region. As long as the treaty was effective Britain had a reliable guarantee for the security of the Nile waters, and her monopoly of the West Ethiopia trade was secure.

Fear of the possible dissolution of Ethiopia had been a powerful motive for the signature of the 1906 Agreement. The heirs both of the House of Manz, Ras Makonnen, and of Tigré, Ras Mangasha, died in 1906; and Menelik himself was stricken with attacks of paralysis or apoplexy in May 1906.¹

¹. Menelik suffered attacks in August 1907, June 1908 and October 1909.
There was no telling how long the Emperor would last, and this caused anxiety among the Europeans and lawlessness among the Ethiopians. As early as 1906 the British Minister, Sir John Harrington, noticed a distinct decline in order in the empire: "I have known this country for nine years, and the present state of affairs is the worst in my experience." Harrington wanted to withdraw the Legation, close the borders and stop all trade, but the Foreign Office recommended building a stronger Legation building, and signing the Tripartite Agreement.

As Menelik's health deteriorated, power gradually left his hands. In October 1907 he appointed his first Council of Ministers. The new Ministers, most of whom were ignorant of their duties, helped to diffuse power, but did not contribute much to the administration of the state. Most of the important posts merely incorporated men who had held differently named, but essentially similar positions before. Afa Negus Nassibu became President of the Council and Minister of Justice; Dejazmatch Mulugeta, Menelik's treasurer, became bajirond of the Ministry of Finance;

1. FO 371/3, Harrington to Grey, T.28, 12.10.06.

2. FO 371/193, Hohler to Grey, T.42, 27.10.07; Menelik to Hohler, 25.10.07; Guèbré Selassié, (Paris, 1931), ii, pp. 527-8. Chronique du Règne de Ménelik II.
Fitwary Hapta Giorgis, the commander of the Imperial Army, became Minister for War; Nagadras Haile Giorgis, the chief merchant of Adis Ababa, became Minister for Commerce. The other five appointees had no real Ministries and little contact with the Legations.¹

The two Ministers of major importance were Hapta Giorgis, the last of Menelik's great Galla generals, and Haile Giorgis, who also held the portfolio of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The other Ministers were either "bad influences" or of no importance. The British Minister relied on Hapta Giorgis, as a man of character and decision,² to keep the Council in line and to offset the pernicious influence of Haile Giorgis, who was described as being "clever, unscrupulous, plausible, and corrupt".³

Menelik's illness and the death of the two most likely heirs made the selection of a successor necessary. Lij Yasu,⁴ the son of Shoaraga and Ras Mikael, was the only candidate that satisfied the dynastic prescription of being of Menelik's line. Thus Yasu had the support of

¹ FO 371/193, Hohler to Grey, No. 68, 26.10.07, and No. 69, 28.10.07.
³ FO 371/193, Hohler to Grey, T.43, 30.10.07.
Above: Lij Yasu and Ras Tesamma
Below: seated left to right:
Hapta Giorgis, Ras Tesamma, Lij Yasu,
Raw - Betwoded Manfasha Atikem
(father of Ras Kabada Mangasha of Gere'),
and Ras Wolye
Shoa and of Wollo, and the opposition of Gondar and Tigré. He was a sickly child, but he was brought up in luxury and did not have to bear hardship. He was an average student and had a knowledge of French and Arabic, but his preparation for kingship was inadequate since he was not thought of as heir until his tenth year.

Menelik was by now a prey to intrigues from his family and entourage. In order to assure the accession he assembled the principal chiefs on 10 June 1908, and announced that Yasu would succeed him, and that the Prince would be under the guardianship of Ras-Betwoded Tesamma Nado, a member of the House of Manz. This was ostensibly a victory for Mikael, since it put his son at the head of the most powerful bloc in the empire: the Shoan supporters of Menelik. Tesamma was well-suited for the dual task of preparing Yasu for kingship and chairing the Council of Ministers, but his position was made difficult by the increasing opposition of the Empress Taitu.

4. Nassibu died in 1908, and so Fit Telahoun became Afa Negus, and Tesamma became President of the Council.
Taitu wanted to fill the gap made by Menelik's illness by assuming the title of Regent in an attempt to restore the empire to the Gondar line. Having no children of her own, she at first favoured Wassan Sagad (Shoaarga's son by Dej Wadajo Gobana, and often described as simple-minded) in opposition to Lij Yasu, but when the former died in 1908 she changed her allegiance to Menelik's other daughter, Zauditu. Taitu's nephew, Gugsa, had married Zauditu in 1901, and she was firmly under the Empress' control. Besides her family, Taitu's party also included Ras Hailu of Godjam (married to her cousin) and several Tigréan chiefs. She was opposed by Yasu's faction, which included Mikael, Tesamma, the Council and most of the Shoan chiefs. The split was on familiar lines with Taitu rallying the North, and Yasu rallying Shoa. Yasu was opposed in the North because he was Menelik's heir. Zauditu was supported by the North, even though she was Menelik's daughter, because she was married to Gugsa and backed by Taitu.

Both parties tried to influence Menelik; Tesamma, Haile Giorgis and Mulugeta were close to the Emperor, but Taitu and Zauditu were in constant attendance. As a result of these rivalries Government business came to a halt. Lord Herbert Hervey, the British Chargé d'affaires at Adis Ababa, complained that personal representations to Menelik were not longer possible, and that written representations did not always reach the Emperor in the original form. He thought it essential that a Regent be appointed and that the Council be reduced to two or three Ministers.

The inability of the British Legation to obtain satisfaction from the Ethiopian Government was also due to Britain's loss of prestige at court. In 1906 British prestige was high, but it declined (according to Harrington and Hervey) because of the machinations of the French Ministers, Klowbukowski and Brice, who took advantage of the Tripartite Agreement to gain preference for French interests. Haile Giorgis, eager to fill his pockets from

1. Menelik's authority was a "nominal suzerainty ... an authority ... of the most nebulous kind", FO 401/11, Graham to Grey, Africa 11, 26.9.08.

2. Minister at Lima and Quito, 1923.

3. FO 401/12, Hervey to Grey, No. 1, 2.1.09.

4. FO 371/192, Clerk to Grey, 4.4.07; FO 401/11, Harrington to Grey, 6.12.08; FO 401/12, Hervey to Grey, 2.1.09.
any source, was a willing tool of the French, and British hopes that Tesamma or Hapta Giorgis would check him were unfulfilled. The British Legation even hoped, during the summer of 1909, that a German Conseiller d'État, Dr. Alfred Zintgraff, would reorganize the Council, counteract Taitu's influence, reduce French intrigue, and assure Lij Yasu's succession.¹ Zintgraff, however, never achieved any effective political influence, and the "Zintgraff Affair" was a comic incident of little political importance. It would not be worthy of mention had not Ras Mikael involved himself in German intrigue several years later.

Lij Yasu took a step closer to the throne on 16 May 1909, when he was married to Woizero Romanie Worq, the young granddaughter of Asé Yohannes, and also a niece of Taitu’s. Romanie Worq had been brought up under Taitu’s care, but there was little chance that the marriage would reconcile Taitu and the Tigré with Mikael.² For the moment however the union secured Taitu’s acquiescence, and on the 18th Yasu was proclaimed Menelik’s heir before the people.³ Taitu’s hand was further weakened when Tesamma

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was named "Regent Plenipotentiary of the Ethiopian Realm", and Fit Hapta Giorgis was elevated to the Presidency of the Council. Tesamma had in fact been carrying out the duties of Regent since 1908, but his promotion had the dual effect of 1) subordinating Taitu to him, and 2) reducing Mikael's importance in the Shoan coalition.\(^1\)

It was probably hoped that Tesamma would mediate between Taitu and Mikael, both of whom were mistrusted by the Shoan chiefs; but Shoa had to depend on Mikael, because his son Yasu was Menelik's only heir.

Yasu's party contained most of the powerful men in the empire, but two important chiefs were still uncommitted; Ras Walda Giorgis, a grandson of Sahela Selassie and governor of Kaffa, who disliked Adis Ababá's politics; and Dej Abata, a member of the Shoan Moja family, a relative

\(^2\) FO 401/12, Hervey to Grey, T.21, 18.5.09, and No. 35, 4.6.09.

\(^3\) Texts are found in Guebrè Selassié, \textit{op. cit.}, ii, p. 542, Wallis Budge, \textit{op. cit.}, ii, p. 543, and Moore, \textit{ubi supra}, p. 773. A further public proclamation was made on 19 October 1909, H. G. Marcus, "The Last Years of the Reign of the Emperor Menelik, 190613", \textit{Journal of Semitic Studies}, IX, i, p. 261.

\(^1\) Tesamma was appointed 30 October 1909, Guebrè Selassié, \textit{op. cit.}, ii, p. 622, but he had been Yasu's guardian since 1908, Greenfield, \textit{loc. cit.}
of Mikael's wife and a man of courage and ambition. The two main political groups (which are for convenience called the Shoan party and Taitu's party) were not static institutions. Countless plots and intrigues, which seem to be inconsistent and contradictory, though not unique to Ethiopia, confuse an already complicated political scene.\textsuperscript{1} The two coalitions were often at the mercy of personal rivalries and opportunism, and their composition was constantly changing.

The new British Minister, Wilfred Thesiger, helped in a small way to overthrow Taitu and pave the way for Yasu's succession. He informed Tesamma in February 1910 of a confidential report from the Sudan that Taitu and Ras Wolye intended to put Ras Gugsa on the throne.\textsuperscript{1}

It is hard to judge what effect Thesiger's intervention

\textsuperscript{1} Two examples: Taitu appointed Dej Abata, a Shoan, to put down an Azebu revolt by Dej Abreha, a Tigréan, with the help of several Gondar and Tigréan chiefs. After Abata had defeated Abreha (7 October 1909) he was disarmed by Taitu and forbidden to enter Adis Ababa, FO 401/13, Hervey to Grey, T.34 and T.35, 7 and 11.10.09. Also, on 24 September Haile Giorgis was dismissed only to be replaced by another Shoan, Hapta Giorgis, as Foreign Minister, FO 401/13, Hervey to Grey, No. 61, 24.9.09.

\textsuperscript{2} FO 401/14, Gorst to Grey, No. 6 Africa Con., 4.2.10.
had on the mind of the Regent, since he and the Shoans were certainly weary of Taitu's nepotism and interference in affairs of state. She still had the support of the Church and a considerable proportion of the Northern chiefs (most of whom were her own nominees), but Tesamma had the support of Shoa and his prestige as Regent and guardian of the heir to the throne. As in most political intrigues the lines were crossed by traitors, opportunists and the undecided and indifferent. It has been said: "There seems to be an Ethiopian tradition ... not so much to avoid taking sides as to appear at the actual moment of conflict to be on both! Such 'insurance' can have its limitations and often its absurdities."¹ Ras Mikael had no love for Shoa (the dislike was mutual) and had closer ties with the North, but circumstances had provided the Shoans as allies. Both Ras Walda Giorgis and Dej Abata refused to commit themselves; the Church supported Taitu as much because of its suspicion of Yasu's Wollo Galla origins as out of respect for the religious Empress. Loyalties cut many ways, making for strange allies.

¹ Greenfield, op. cit., p. 120.
On 21 May 1910 the Shoan chiefs, at the instigation of Ras Mikael, denounced Taitu to the Abun and demanded that Tesamama rule alone. A week later, on the 28th, the Abun released the chiefs from their oath to Taitu, and forced her to refrain from meddling in affairs of state. All Taitu's appointments were cancelled; Fit Taye, a great grandson of Sahela Selassie and a possible candidate for the throne, was imprisoned by Mikael, and the Itchege Walda Giorgis annulled Yasu's marriage to Romanie Worq and remarried him to a daughter of Ras Hailu of Godjam, Woizerø Sabela Wangel.

Tesamama pressed for unconditional powers to rule with the assistance of Hapta Giorgis, but the Shoans refused to bind themselves to him. Abata, as yet neutral in the conflict, arrived in Adis Ababa on 14 April 1910, and the Council named him Ras of Kambata on 12 May in return for his support. The Shoans seemed to be in

1. FO 401/15, Thesiger to Grey, T.1, 22.3.10 and No. 16, 25.3.10; Guèbrè Selassié, op. cit., ii, pp. 622-3; Mosley, op. cit., p. 62; Marcus, ubi supra, p. 231.

2. All except Dej Tafari Makonnen, who had just replaced Dej Balocha as governor of Harar, FO 401/15 Thesiger to Grey, No. 17 Con, 26.3.10.


4. FO 401/15, Thesiger to Grey, No. 19, 1.4.10.

command of the situation, and in October 1910, with the help of Walda Giorgis and Hailu, they captured and briefly imprisoned Ras Wolye and Ras Gugsa. However no sooner had Taitu's party been crushed then the Shoan party began to disintegrate. On 23 February 1911 Tesamma fell ill with a paralysis similar to Menelik's, and he died on 10 April 1911. Suspicion immediately fell on Taitu and her family, and on 10 May Gugsa and Wolye were again arrested, this time for murder, and were held by the Fit Hapta Giorgis.

Tesamma's death was the signal for all of the chiefs to descend on Adis Ababa in search of political advantage. Ras Walda Giorgis, now Governor of Begamdir, was called in by the Council, but many feared that he wanted the throne for himself so he was not offered the Regency. Zauditu had many supporters; and there were smaller factions in favour of Dej Birru and Tafari, also great-grandsons of Sahela Selassie. The only person with sufficient ability

1. FO 401/15, Thesiger to Grey, No. 29, 16.6.10, No. 42, 16.9.10, No. 46, 6.10.10; Merab, op. cit., ii, p.77.
and power to fill the role of Regent (or Emperor) was the Minister of War and President of the Council, Hapta Giorgis. However, he was a Galla (and not even a Galla noble like Mikael), fit enough to command troops, but not to rule the empire. The only other candidate of any stature was Ras Abata, and he now made his bid for power.

As soon as Yasu realized that the Shoans were finding it difficult to choose a successor to Tesamma he demanded the crown. Hapta Giorgis and Abata, the strongest chiefs in the capital (Walda Giorgis refused to come to Adis Ababa, and Mikael was putting down a revolt by Wolye's son Amadi in Yeju), called a meeting of the chiefs and forced Yasu to accept the authority of the Council. The next day, 20 May, the Prince sulked and repeated his former demand. Abata, thinking he had Hapta Giorgis' support, moved his troops on the Ghebi in an attempt to kidnap Zauditu and win the throne. Hapta Giorgis, however, deserted Abata and closed the Ghebi before Abata's troops could arrive. Abata took refuge in the Abun's compound and swore allegiance to Yasu, and the Prince, on his part, swore to rule as Regent with the advice of Fit Hapta Giorgis.¹

¹. FO 403/420, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 44, 2.6.11. Abata had also tried to kidnap Yasu at one time, Greenfield, op. cit., p. 133; he may have had a damoz with Zauditu, Mosley, op. cit. pp. 64-5.
Abata thereupon returned to Kambata. With Lij Yasu recognized as Regent, there was a possibility that the Government would get down to work. The British believed that Yasu had the opportunity to organize an entirely new power basis; to dismiss the intriguers and the corrupt officials; and to return Ethiopia to 'normal' stable relations with the Powers. In the following months all opposition to Yasu was ruthlessly crushed; further arrests of Abata's supporters took place in the capital; and in August 1911 Mikael attacked Yejju, defeated Dej Amadi, and thereby reduced the remnants of Taitu's influence. In addition, Northern chiefs (such as Wagshum Gwangoul, Dej Seyoum and Ras Sibhat), who had lost their positions under Taitu and Tesamma, were reinstated. Mikael then marched to Adis Ababa in November and promoted Demissie of Walega and Lul Sегод of Arusi to the rank of Ras. Both these men were Shoans, but they

1. Mosley, op. cit., p. 73.

2. Mérab, op. cit., ii, p. 81; Guèbrè Selassié, op. cit., ii, p. 625; FO 403/421, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 61, 10.8.11.

3. FO 403/421, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 54 Con., 7.7.11. Amadi had refused to recognize Gwangoul's authority, FO 373/Box 5, No. 97, "Lij Yasu", p. 58.
were also married to Mikael's relations. Mikael also arrested Abata in December and imprisoned him at Magdala. In January 1912 Hapta Giorgis was rewarded for his support for Lij Yasu with the province of Kambata. Only then did Mikael return to Wollo. Thus, by the beginning of 1912 all potential opposition to Lij Yasu had been eliminated, and the Prince was free to build his own party.

Mikael was now emerging as the foremost personality in Ethiopia. There were only a few chiefs (notably, Ras Walda Giorgis), who could even attempt to challenge his authority. With the collapse of the anti-Yasu forces, Mikael began recruiting his own party. He no longer needed the support of the Shoans - since there was no effective opposition - but the Shoans needed him. Yasu's power was based on Mikael's Wollo Galla army, perhaps the single most effective fighting force in the empire. The Shoans, of course, could muster great numbers of feudal levies, some of them fine warriors, but this required a common cause to unite them; in 1911 there was none.

1. Guèbrè Selassié, loc. cit.; Mérab, op. cit., ii, p.77. Out of approximately 10 Rasas Mikael was allied with four (Demissie, Lul Seged, Hailu and Sibhat), and was the gaoler of four (Wolye, Gugsa, Abata and Abreha). Only Walda Giorgis was independent.

2. Guèbrè Selassié, loc. cit. We can now speak of the Shoa party and the Wollo party.
Lij Yasu was the heir of Menelik and Regent of Ethiopia; Ras Mikael, though a Galla, controlled Yasu, and so the avenues of power led through his capital of Dese. Mikael could name his price, and the chiefs would have to pay or be excluded from the aristocracy's favourite game: politics.

During 1911 conditions in the capital and provinces were deplorable, and Yasu did not attempt to deal with them. Robbery was rife; the Legations were subject to attack; sporadic revolts occurred in the North; and arms smuggling was unchecked. Thesiger attributed the relaxation in authority to the absence of Menelik and the death of Tesamma. The latter he described as the "last member, who, by birth and hereditary power, had that hold on the popular imagination which only descent and Royal blood can give". Lij Yasu replaced both Menelik and Tesamma in name, but their power and prestige eluded him.

Menelik, though gravely ill was still Emperor, and Taitu controlled access to him. Her power had been drastically curtailed by the Shoan confrontation of 1910, but she was still a factor to be considered. The Council

1. Mosely, op. cit., p. 70.
2. CO 533/127, Thesiger to Grey, No. 6, 20.1.12.
derived its authority from Menelik, and had much influence on imperial decisions, especially those on foreign affairs. Yasu was able to introduce his own creatures to the Council, and convert others to his side, but the Council still remained a largely Shoan body, fearful of Northern-Galla influence. Furthermore, the rest of the empire - the Somali Ogaden, the Galla-Sidama South-West, the independent-minded Tigré, and the Gondar/Galla North-West - took every opportunity to ignore the Shoan-based Government. These areas were virtually captive provinces, with their own history, and Gondar and Tigré had their own ambitions to dominate Ethiopia. Lastly, Mikael himself was a mixed blessing to Yasu. In return for his support Yasu was obliged to follow Mikael's lead in most matters, which could be frustrating. Wollo was an area that did not inspire confidence: to the Christians it was Muslim; to Highlanders it was Galla; to Tigréans it was Southern; to Shoans it was Northern. The Highlanders did not forget that Mikael was a convert, and since conversion was unthinkable to them, Mikael was looked upon as suspect and dangerous.

Yasu was indeed "in an invidious position, responsible but without power". Thesiger reported that even though Yasu had been presiding over the Council since 1911 he could do nothing without the consent of the Shoan chiefs, except frustrate their actions. Both the Church and the Council were opposed to Lij Yasu's coronation. Though it would have been unusual to hold the coronation before Menelik's death, the notables could hardly expect Yasu to bear the responsibility of kingship without the power. Due to this impasse Yasu decided to leave Adis Ababa for his father's capital of Dese. The Abun and the Council attempted to dissuade him, but he refused to rule without the crown, and left the Council to govern.

Yasu's demands for the throne, and his actions to gain the throne are often inconsistent. His refusal to take responsibility; his frequent absences from the capital; and his disregard for the sensitivities of the Shoan nobles made it unlikely that he would succeed to the throne in the conventional manner. It seems clear that the Prince preferred to have the Government in a state of confusion, ineffective without his manipulation.

2. CO 533/137, FO to CO, 7.4.13.
That Yasu wanted the kingship on his own terms is most probable, and that the Council was reluctant to offer the crown before Menelik had died and while Yasu was still under the influence of Mikael, is equally so.¹

On 15 February 1912 Yasu left Adis Ababa for Wollo, and stayed a month at Dese.² He soon made it clear he put no time limit on his absence. Thesiger believed that he longed for freedom from the confines of imperial responsibility, and wanted to prove his manhood by killing an elephant on a hunt and killing a man in battle.³ At Dese Yasu and his father probably discussed the situation in the north. Mikael's sphere included Tigré; Yejju and Lasta were ruled by his allies; and Godjam was ruled by Yasu's father-in-law, Ras Hailu. This included well over half of the northern provinces. The other portion was ruled by Walda Giorgis, the most powerful of the Shoan party. Walda Giorgis ruled the very heartland of Ethiopia, the provinces of Begamdir and Simien (sometimes


2. CO 533/137, FO to CO, 7.4.13.
called "Amhara"), from the proud and illustrious former capital of Gondar. Not only was this a prestigious district, but it was also economically valuable and strategically important. It controlled the small but growing trade to the Sudan (via Gallabat); the headwaters of the Blue Nile, coveted by both Britain and Italy; and it contained some of the best warriors in the empire. Some highlanders therefore looked upon Walda Giorgis as a virtual viceroy of the North, but Mikael had an even stronger claim to that title.

Mikael, however, was not ready to challenge Walda Giorgis by war. Yasu was waiting to build up his own army, and recruit officers loyal to himself alone, before he committed himself. Some sort of arrangement between the two old chiefs was necessary, and after Easter 1912 they met with Yasu at Boro Media. This meeting merely clarified the existing positions: Walda Giorgis in the North-West and Mikael in the North-East. War was postponed for a while, but both knew that neither could trust the other for long.

Yasu instead of returning to the capital then left for the South-West, to the Muslim Galla areas of Jimma, Kaffa and Gimira. He stayed in Gimira for three months,

and it is said that "here began the practices which were to lead to his downfall - the gradual adoption of the Muslim faith". Here, at any rate, he secretly "married" the daughter (and probably the niece) of the Negus of Jimma, the Aba Jifar, Muḥammad ibn Da'ud, and also the daughter of the former Moti of Leka-Kellem, Dej Jotei Aba Iggu. It is not clear what kind of marriages they were: official or of the damoz-alliance variety; whether they were performed under Christian or Muslim rites, or indeed any rites at all. Inter-tribal marriage was a favourite form of alliance in Ethiopia, and Christian Emperors had been marrying Galla princesses ever since the Oroma (Galla) first appeared in the wake of Imām Ahmad Graḫ's Jihād in the 16th century. Menelik's consort, Desseta (Yasu's grandmother) was a Wollo Galla, and most of the families of Shoa and Gondar were fruits of a highland-Galla union.

1. Jones and Monroe, loc. cit.

2. S.I.R. No. 226, May 1913. Jotei was a Christian, but had fought with the Mādīists in 1887; the Aba Jifar was a Muslim, but had fought with Menelik. In any case, Yasu was still officially married to Sabela Wangel, Trimingham, op. cit., pp. 130-203.

3. Wallis Budge, loc. cit.,
the accepted pattern.

Yasu ignored appeals of the Council to return before the rainy season. Instead he visited Gidami and Walega, and on 1 November he left for Nekempte to meet with Dej Gabra Egziabher, the former Galla "king" Kumsa of Walega. In December he summoned Shaikh Khojali Wad Hassan of Asosa, the watawit chief of Banī Shanqul, to meet him as he surveyed the Sudan border. In general, Yasu's 1912 "tour" was designed to acquaint him with his new empire. However, he spent most of his time in the Muslim-Galla regions, and the notables he met and consorted with were largely the unwilling subjects of the Christian highlanders. It is not known what he discussed with these chiefs, but the highlanders had no doubts that it would sooner or later mean trouble for them.

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The British policy of promoting trade with the Sudan had political as well as commercial significance. The western provinces of Ethiopia - Godjam, Walega, Jimma and Kaffa - were thought to be a potential economic 'El Dorado', though (or perhaps because) not much was known

about them. The natural outlet for these areas was the Sudan, but the Sudan only received a fraction of their trade, and most of it went to the Italians at Eritrea and the French at Jibuti. The French, who already received the lion's share would get even more when their railroad, then nearing the Hawash River, finally reached Adis Ababa. In the face of this Britain naturally wanted to compete.¹

Britain also wanted to secure her sphere of influence as provided for by the Tripartite Agreement. Her interest in the headwaters of the Nile, and Italy's interest in the Eritrean hinterland seemed contradictory. Theoretically, both could be satisfied with a precise division of spheres; in practice both coveted their neighbour's share. In order to strengthen her claim not only to the Nile headwaters, but also to the economically valuable western provinces, Britain needed to increase her influence in North West Ethiopia. One method would be to bring the North-West and the Sudan closer through economic co-operation. This task became more urgent in 1909 when it was clear that Menelik could no longer

effectively rule. Lij Yasu appeared to stabilize the
Government when he became Regent in 1911, but his absence
from the capital in 1912 put an end, for the moment, to
that hope. If Yasu lost the allegiance of the North-West,
Britain had to be ready to press her claim there; and
once the Sudanese trade became important, her claim would
be a strong one.

British trade was aided in March 1912 when the Sudan
led a successful expedition against the Yambo (Anuak) of
the Baro-Sobat area, for raiding unarmed Sudanese Nuers
and disrupting the border trade.¹ Lij Yasu also helped
Britain in December by ordering Ras Walda Giorgis to repre-
ress the shiftas on the Gallabat route.² Raids by
shiftas, soldiers and tribesmen for cattle, ivory and
sport were also linked up with the system of slavery. In
Ethiopia slavery was an accepted institution, looked upon
rather like a punishment for defeat in war or an indemnity.³
Tewodros, Yohannes and Menelik had issued edicts forbidding
the trade, but they were universally ignored, sometimes
even by the Emperors themselves.⁴ Thesiger reported in

1912 that the Shangalla peoples, who formed the workers of the prosperous provinces of the west, were being systematically enslaved by the highlanders. Though they denied it, the chiefs, the Ministers and Lij Yasu himself were all implicated in the trade. Two caravans a week were reaching Dangla in Agaumdir, so that slavery had become Ethiopia's most profitable enterprise. The trade in arms and slaves was so prevalent that Thesiger was prompted to predict: "The question of the slave traffic and the contraband trade in rifles would at no very distant date force upon the Powers the question of the subjugation and partition of the Ethiopian empire".

The slave and arms trades were the main cause for friction on the borders with the Sudan, B.E.A. and the Somaliland Protectorate. With safe borders trade could flourish, and both Ethiopia and Britain would profit. In the west Britain wanted to develop the Gallabat route from Gondar and the Gambela route from Jimma; in the south was the Moyale route; and in Harar was the Zeila


2. FO 371/1572, Thesiger to Grey, No. 29, 12.5.13.
route. In all cases Britain competed for trade against France and Italy: Jibuti was the channel for trade from Harar, Shoa and the South-West, and Eritrea for trade from the North. Traditionally the trade route from Gondar to the Sudan, via Gallabat, was an important one, but ever since the development of the Sudan by the British, and Eritrea by the Italians, the Gondar trade tended to go to the Red Sea, and the Sudan trade turned within to more accessible markets.\(^1\) The Gambela route was designed to tap the riches of the West and South-West. The Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty of 15 May 1902, besides defining the frontier,\(^2\) and forbidding barrage works on Lake Tsana without British acquiescence, provided for the lease of a block of territory to the Sudan at Itang on the Baro River. In 1904 Gambela was substituted for Itang, and preparations were made to develop the route.\(^3\) The Southern border was laid down in an Agreement on 7 December 1907,\(^4\) but the frontier was still a shadowy area.\(^5\) The Southern

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trade was small, and even today there is practically no trade with Kenya, due to the difficulty of terrain and the similarity of produce. The logical outlets for the lucrative Harar trade were the British Red Sea ports of Berbera, Zeila and Bulhar, but the Franco-Ethiopian railway, with its station at Dire Dawa, destroyed the value of those caravan routes. Somaliland was a valuable supplier of Aden, and Britain was anxious to extend its trade into the rich Harar country. Britain was hindered, of course, by the rebellion of Sayyid Muḥammad 'Abdille Ḥasan. Muḥammad had been allowed to retire to Illig in 1905, but he quarrelled with his neighbour at Obbia, Sultan Yusaf 'Alī Kenadid, and by 1910 he and his dervishes were again ravaging the interior of Somaliland. Britain was forced to arm the 'friendlies' and withdraw to the coast, and the tide did not change until the Camel Constabulary was formed in 1912.


2. Jibuti trade 1900: £1 329,917; 1903: 719,245. Zeila trade 1900: 432,374; 1903: 211,140, FO 401/8, Bertie to Lansdowne, No. 163 Con., 30.4.05 with Baird Memorandum.

Britain's success in reducing friction on the borders; of stopping the arms trade, slave raids and ivory poaching; and of encouraging commerce in and with Ethiopia, depended on the degree to which the Ethiopian Central Government - Yasu, the Council and chiefs - were responsive to British requests. From 1909 to 1911 the Taitu-Tesamma struggle preoccupied the Government, and during 1912 Yasu was absent from Adis Ababa. Only when the Prince returned to the capital and assumed the role of ruler could Britain hope to settle affairs in Ethiopia.

Unfortunately the British Legation did not see much of Lij Yasu in 1913 either. On 2 February 1913 he repeated his demand for the throne, and then he entered the capital with an impressive following of soldiers and chiefs.¹ Thesiger intended to present Yasu with the Grand Cross of the Victorian Order on the 9th as symbol of British support, but this ceremony had to be postponed because on the 8th Lij Yasu made his first move to establish effective control over the capital and the Government. His soldiers surrounded the Ghebi, and called for the surrender of Fit Gabra Mariam, the commander of the Mahal Safari, the Palace Guards. The Abun interceded, as is usual in such cases, and induced Gabra Mariam to

¹ FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, No. 9, 7.7.13.
surrender. Yasu later claimed that Gabra Mariam had failed to salute him upon his return to Adis Ababa, and that he had spread rumours that Yasu wanted Menelik and Taitu removed from the Ghebi to Entoto, but the reasons for the clash were more basic. Even before Yasu had entered the capital he had ordered the Council to arrest Gabra Mariam, but the chiefs were afraid to challenge the powerful and prestigious commander. Gabra Mariam was a trusted officer of Menelik, and barrier to Yasu's control of the Ghebi, therefore he had to be eliminated. Thesiger was greatly impressed by Yasu's growing authority, and presented him with the G.C.V.O. and the Coronation Medallion on 13 February. In his presentation speech, Thesiger stressed the need for stable relations on the borders, and emphasized that the development of trade was the only British policy in Ethiopia. Yasu agreed that he should follow in the footsteps of his grandfather.

1. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, T. 2 and No. 10, 11.2.13. Yasu was supported by Hapta Giorgis, Lij Bayena (former Min. of posts) and Walda Gabriel, the Grand Chamberlain, Mérab, op. cit., ii, pp. 264-7.

and answered Thesiger's other statements in a conciliatory tone. 1

Lij Yasu's stay at Adis Ababa was not as long as had been hoped, and on 11 March he left for Mt. Zukwala on the pretext of a pilgrimage to the monastery of St. Aba.2 A week later he sent back for arms, supplies and soldiers, and he promptly proceeded to the Danakil country, for a month of plundering villages along the Eritrean border.3 He ignored appeals by the Council to return to Adis Ababa, and the Council ignored appeals by the Legations for action.4 Thesiger still believed that the Council dominated the Prince, and that he was usually convinced by the last person to advise him: "in a country like this were every Greek adventurer has the ear of some chief this is fatal." Yasu returned to the capital on 8 April only to leave on 8 May for his father's capital of Dese.5

1. FO 372/416, Thesiger to Grey, No. 11, 14.2.13.


3. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, No. 19, 20.3.13. Mérab, op. cit., ii, pp. 267-8; Guèbrè Selassié, op. cit., ii, p. 626. On FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, No. 22, 19.4.13, Lister noted: "Lij Yasu's methods have at any rate the merit of thoroughness though he appears to have exterminated the population in the wrong district. It is a curious conception of Government".

4. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Tilley, private, 23.3.13.
stayed in the North until November, leaving the Legations to deal with Hapta Giorgis, Haile Giorgis or any other Minister that would listen.

Lij Yasu and Ras Mikael prepared for the latter's coronation as 'Negus of the North' but they did not challenge Ras Walda Giorgis, who still ruled at Gondar. Although Yasu seemed to be moving against Walda Giorgis, Thesiger believed that Mikael, himself an old man, would probably wait for Walda Giorgis to die before moving on Gondar, since Walda Giorgis was not a current threat to Mikael's power. Walda Giorgis refused to obey an order to appear at Dese, and the Council, for their part, refused to prepare for war against him. The great danger was that the young chiefs under Mikael would force his hand. Walda Giorgis was too clever to be embroiled in a quarrel when he has nothing to lose by waiting; his claim to the throne was better than Mikael's, and he had great support from the Shoan chiefs.


1. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, No. 63, 12.9.13. Theoretically this would have given Mikael power equivalent to that held by ለሰይ Yohannes. In 1913 the አባ Jifar was Negus of Jimma, and Yasu was Negus of Kaffa.

2. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, No. 67, 2.10.13; Mérab, op. cit., p. 270.
When Lij Yasu returned to Adis Ababa on 15 November 1913 it was with 50,000 of Mikael's troops, and it was thought that the Prince would take up where he had left off in February. Yasu had spent less than ten weeks of 1913 in the capital, and relations between the Government and the Legations had stagnated. Britain had problems on all her borders, and was especially concerned with the Gambela and Gallabat trade and the lawlessness on the Southern border with B.E.A. These questions were cleared up in the course of the year, but not without a certain amount of compromise on the part of the British, who became increasingly convinced that only her own action, or action in concert with her partners, would solve her problems in Ethiopia.

Britain however also had problems with her Tripartite partners. With Italy, Britain competed for trade and influence in the North, especially around Lake Tsana; with France, Britain feared the extension of the Franco-Ethiopian railway west of Adis Ababa, and French complicity in the arms trade. All these questions - those with Ethiopia as well as with the Tripartite Powers - were perennial; questions that either had no practical solution, or no solution at all.
One of the most frustrating questions for the British Legation was that concerning French Somaliland, the Franco-Ethiopian railway and the arms trade. While Lij Yasu was absent in the Danakil country, General Famin, Vice-President of the Franco-Ethiopian railway company, arrived in Adis Ababa to discuss the question of the prolongation of the railroad. The railroad, with its bearing on trade and arms supply, was a big factor in Ethiopian affairs. French interest in the railroad, and indeed in Ethiopia itself, stemmed from their pre-Fashoda policy in Egypt and the Sudan, but when their ambitions in North-East Africa were smashed, the railroad was left as their main interest in Ethiopia. From this root-interest, French influence branched out to all corners of Ethiopia, largely aided by the aggressive and secretive behaviour of the French Ministers, Klowbukowski and Brice. The British Legation therefore had a tendency to 'over-react' to any sign of French activity.

3. The British Legation tended to believe all suspicious rumours about France, which was a dangerous game in Ethiopia, where rumour-mongering was almost a national pastime. Cf. FO 371/1570, Thesiger to Grey, No. 98, 26.12.12, where fears are aired that France would take over the Bank of Abyssinia.
Famin was to get Ethiopia to agree to extend the railway to Adis Ababa; the line, thanks to an agreement obtained by a Dr. Vitalien in 1908, had now reached the Hawash River, but no further. The French Government asked both Italy and Britain to support their appeal; but the Italians would only agree to action à trois if France agreed to guarantee equal treatment for all nations on the railroad,¹ and the British would only agree to concerted action if the Ochs Railway Trust claim was settled.²

Talks between the French mission and the Council continued, with the Ethiopians threatening to give the Hawash-Adis Ababa contract to the "Society for the Construction of Public Works", composed of Leon Chefneux (Menelik's adviser), Souvis (an arms dealer), and Rinaldo Baldassare (a legal adviser to Menelik). The Council was prepared to finance the Society, and Chefneux had surveyed the line. The French were willing to let the Ethiopians finance and build the line, if they would do so in the name and under the supervision of the Franco-Ethiopian Railway company. Just how committed to the "Society" and the Ethiopian Government was is not clear, the arrangement

1. FO 371/1571, Imperiali to Grey, 12.3.13.
2. FO 371/1571, Roux to Langely, 14.2.13.
was probably just a useful lever for the Nagadras Haile Giorgis to squeeze more baksheesh out of the French. Giuliano Cora, the Italian charge,¹ told Thesiger that the French were hinting that they might include a scheme for arms control in return for Italian support on the railway, but Thesiger suspected that this was one of Brice's tricks to get the agreement signed quickly. The French had an enviable bargaining position. The railroad was the main route by which Ethiopia received arms. At that moment Jibuti was closed to arms, mainly because of Anglo-Italian pressure, but it could be opened at any time if Ethiopian would pay the price: agreement to prolong the railway to Adis Ababa.

The railroad and its sister problem of the Jibuti arms trade were the two long-standing questions in Anglo-French relations in Ethiopia. French merchants made huge profits by shipping arms to Ethiopia by rail, which were then used against British subjects, and to disturb Ethiopian internal affairs.² Ethiopia would never be stable, and Anglo-Ethiopian relations would never be friendly until the traffic in arms ceased or was

¹. Italian Minister at Adis Ababa, 1926 to 1930.

². Italy had obtained Ethiopia's signature to the Brussels Act of 1890; this allowed Ethiopia to import arms without restriction.
regulated. Jibuti arms were a currency that was exchanged for food, slaves, ivory or property, and though the arms traders of the 1880's and 1890's rarely made their expected fortune, the Jibuti-based merchants and the French authorities made handsome profits. The European Legations spent much time on designing a plan to regulate the arms trade. Count Giuseppe Colli di Felizzano, the Italian Minister, devised one of the germinal plans which limited all arms dealing to the Emperor himself. However, this plan, in the state of confusion that characterized Ethiopia in 1912 and 1913, was impossible to implement. Furthermore, Brice, the French Minister, refused to accept the "Colli Scheme", lest it offend the Ethiopian Government. Short of an appeal to force, Thesiger could only suggest removing Ethiopia from the list of Powers that had adhered to the Brussels Act. The French closure of the port of Jibuti eventually led to a temporary improvement, sufficient to warrant a postponement of this action, but arms supplies in the country were still great, the port

2. FO 403/429, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 95, 12.12.12.
3. IO L/P&S/11/57/2439, Thesiger to Grey, No. 27, Con., 6.5.13.
of Tajura managed to supply Dese with weekly caravans, and arms also seeped through by dhow from Arabia.¹

The Franco-Ethiopian talks went more smoothly once Yasu returned to Adis Ababa on 8 April. By the 23rd Famin was confident enough of agreement to discuss rail shipping rates from Adis Ababa to Jibuti with the merchants of the capital. The Ethiopians wanted assurance that the line would always be open for arms.² On 9 May the agreement was signed, and though the French said they would uphold the Jibuti arms embargo,³ Britain well knew that there were many ways the French could get around the embargo to satisfy Ethiopia's arms hunger.

Poincaré, the French Premier, in November 1912 had agreed to halt arms shipments, and Brice, at Adis Ababa, had issued no import permits. Therefore Thesiger and Colli were convinced that the only way arms could get through was if the Famin railway agreement was conditional on a tacit removal of the arms embargo, or if the Jibuti officials were secretly allowing the import

1. IO L/P&S/11/54, Thesiger to Grey, No. 16, 14.3.13.
2. FO 403/438, Thesiger to Grey, No. 23, 24.4.13.
of arms. The Foreign Office was not impressed by the French denials of arms trading, and it concluded that only a comprehensive settlement of the arms issue would ever completely stop the flow of arms from Jibuti.

The Italian Consul at Aden accused the French authorities of evading the arms embargo by ordering arms themselves, and then selling them to private dealers. The munitions eventually found their way to Dire Dawa, and into the hands of minor chiefs and their soldiers, and of Somali tribesmen. French laxity in regard to the arms trade moved Lewis Harcourt, the Colonial Minister, to remark: "The Entente Cordiale is about as valuable to us as the Triple Alliance."

The trouble-spot was Jibuti, and Thesiger suggested that Britain should purchase Jibuti, perhaps in exchange for Gambia in West Africa. The Colonial Office, to which this proposal was referred, was not favourable. They reasoned that 1) France would not accept; 2) that French Somaliland was useless desert; and 3) that Britain could not increase her Somali commitments at that time.


2. IO L/P&S/11/47, FO to CO, Con., 10.2.13.

Sir John Anderson (later Viscount Waverley) at the Colonial Office noted: "I would not encourage France to think she can blackmail us sufficiently to extort the Gambia"; and Harcourt stated: "If the Entente is worth a centime the arms traffic at Jibuti ought to be stopped. If the Entente is worthless could we not give British Somaliland to France to spite her?"\(^1\)

The time was not right for such an exchange. Under different circumstances (perhaps if French Somaliland had been more valuable, or the Jibuti Railroad not existed, or the Sayyid Muhammad's revolt not been in progress) the Jibuti-Gambia exchange might have been pursued; but under different circumstances it might not have been necessary. Clearly, it would have been a very neat solution to the whole problem. Britain would have acquired the most valuable trade route in the Horn of Africa; Sayyid Muhammad would have been starved of munitions; and Britain and Italy could have 'supervised' Ethiopia to their own satisfaction. Spheres of influence in Ethiopia would have had to be renegotiated, possibly compensating

\[4. \text{CO 535/32, FO to CO, 28.2.13, (trs. Kitchener to Grey, Con., 9.2.13), with Harcourt Minutes.}\]

\[1. \text{CO 535/32, FO to CO, 9.2.13, (trs. Thesiger to Grey, 3.1.13), with notes.}\]
Italy east of Adis Ababa, and therefore leaving Lake Tsana and the west for a British sphere. In return for all this France was to get - Gambia.

Regardless of the French arms embargo reports were continually being received at Adis Ababa, Cairo and London that arms were being shipped to Ethiopia. Attempts to prove or disprove the rumours were fruitless; Paris maintained that the embargo was in effect, but Thesiger knew that the arms were coming from the French enclave. From Paris to Adis Ababa was a long way, and there was ample opportunity - at Jibuti, Tajura, Obok; at the railway offices at Dire Dawa; and at the French Legation at Adis Ababa - for the embargo to be broken by local French officials conniving at breaches of the embargo while continuing to maintain it in public. In such instances protests to Paris were useless.

Though the arms trade was the usual barrier to Anglo-French amity in Ethiopia, another was the French desire to extend their railroad into western Ethiopia. Under the

Tripartite Agreement a railroad west of Adis Ababa had to be under British auspices, yet in August 1913 Thesiger learned of private talks between the Ethiopian Government and the French railroad concerning prolonging the line to Jimma.¹ This would divert trade from the Sudan (which had only recently improved) to Jibuti. Famin had approached Chefneux in April with the object of purchasing the remainder of the latter's concession. Chefneux knew Britain would veto the idea so it was dropped for the moment, only to be revived several months later. Chefneux was anxious to unload the rump of his concession. Anyone who purchased it would not need to negotiate a new agreement - an interminable process in Ethiopia, especially with Lij Yasu away. As Langley rightly noted: "The danger if we don't get hold of the Chefneux Concession is that it may be acquired by a company nominally Abyssian but really run with French money".² Both Wingate and Kitchener urged Britain to buy the concession.³

Though the French Foreign Minister Pichon denied that

France intended to extend the line, Thesiger did not believe him, and he persuaded Chefneux not to deal with the French railroad authorities. The Foreign Office found it could not spend money to prevent such a hypothetical occurrence. The Sudan had no funds, and Kitchener began to doubt the validity of the concession. He suggested that the Foreign Office find a suitable British company to put up the money, but it could not find a group that was willing to risk its capital in an Ethiopian venture.

Anglo-French relations during this period were less than cordial. On the arms and railway questions the two Legations were continually at odds. The hostility that was engendered by Klawbukowski was continued by Brice. John Shuckburgh at the India Office, after following Thesiger's reports of the arms trade noted: "Mr. Thesiger's case against the French Legation at Adis Ababa under M. Brice is a very strong one". At the time that unity was needed between the Powers to exact reforms from the

Central Government, the Anglo-French enmity must have confirmed Ethiopian suspicions that the Europeans were only concerned with their own profit in Ethiopia.

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British relations with their Italian partners were better than with the French, since Italy too viewed the arms trade with alarm, and also did not wish to have the French monopolize Ethiopia's trade. However Anglo-Italian interests clashed in the vital area of North-West Ethiopia. The question of Lake Tsana was of paramount importance to the British, and she wished to reverse the flow of the Gondar trade from Eritrea to Gallabat. In December 1912 the Sudan sent an agent, C. H. Armbruster, to North-West Ethiopia to strengthen commercial ties with Godjam and to report on Italian intrigues in Gondar. He tried to obtain land for a consulate at Gondar from Ras Walda Giorgis because the Italians had recently placed their Consul Ortini there in August 1912. Armbruster had some success with Ras Hailu, but he was completely rebuffed by Ras Walda Giorgis. ¹ An indication of the Italian influence and ambition in the North-West had come in July 1912, when the Italian chargé, Cora, claimed that

¹ S.I.R. No. 230, September 1913; FO 371/1570, Kitchener to Grey, No. 3, 9.2.13, (trs. Wingate to Kitchener, No. 8 Secret, 29.1.13); FO 371/1572 Thesiger to Grey, No. 45 2.7.13.
both Gondar and Godjam were in the Italian sphere. Italian claims had never gone as far west as Godjam and this worried both Thesiger and the Foreign Office.¹

The latter felt that Italy might soon force the partition of Ethiopia by pursuing a forward policy from Eritrea. Nairobi stressed the need for additional border guards if Ethiopia broke up.² Kitchener, on the other hand, wanted to press Britain's demand for West and South Ethiopia, as well as most of Harar, in the event that Italy forced the break up. J. A. C. Tilley of the Africa Department complained that Kitchener wanted more territory than Britain should or could get, or indeed even wanted. Langley noted:

I do not believe that any of our authorities wish to see Abyssinia break up, or think that it would be otherwise than a misfortune for us should it do so ... If it does break up there are certain of our interests [sic] will be in danger and which must be safeguarded ... The division will of course be a matter for discussion between us and France and Italy.³

Langley and Tilley of the Foreign Office discussed

1. FO 403/430, Thesiger to Grey, No. 55 Con., 6.7.12; Soughty-Wylie to Grey, Con., 31.8.12.


3. FO 371/1571, Kitchener to Grey, No. 12 Con., 29.5.13, with map.
British policy towards Ethiopia on 2 July 1913 with Wingate, Herbert Read of the Colonial Office and Doughty-Wylie, the Consul at Adis Ababa. Among the topics discussed were the break-up of Ethiopia and the Sudan trade. Both the Sirdar and Doughty-Wylie felt that Ethiopia would remain intact, and would face any foreign aggression united. Furthermore, neither B.E.A. nor the Sudan could intervene to protect their interest in Ethiopia if it did collapse. The Sirdar emphasized that Britain needed "peaceful penetration"; she was not in a position to take forceful measures, and Ethiopia probably realized this. The Sirdar's view agreed with Thesiger's point that ultimatums had only a limited effect in Ethiopia.

The meeting concluded with all agreeing that Britain's main interest was in the headwaters of the Nile and Lake Tsana; but she could not be content until this claim was recognized by her partners. The Tsana question arose on 4 November 1913, when Sir Edward Grey, speaking to the Italian Ambassador, the Marquis Guglielmo Imperiali di Francavilla, about Italian interests in the Near East,

1. FO 371/1572, Note by Gilley, 3.7.13.
2. FO 371/1572, Thesiger to Grey, No. 48, 3.7.13.
brought up the subject of Ethiopia. He said that he did not wish for partition, but if it became necessary then it was "essential that Lake Tsana and the district that supplied the Nile should not come under any control other than our own." Italy was trying to strengthen her position in Ethiopia, and so Imperiali told Grey on 12 November that Italy believed Tsana to be in the Italian sphere. Grey replied that it was quite clear that Britain should have predominance in West Ethiopia: "What we considered that we secured by the Tripartite agreement was everything on which the waters of the Nile depended, and Lake Tsana was a most essential element in this". However they agreed that the question was not urgent, and that discussions could continue in Rome. The Foreign Office was not prepared to waive its rights to Lake Tsana, but Italy wanted plenty of room for her connecting strip from Eritrea to Benadir west of Adis Ababa. Grey held that this strip need not go near Tsana: "After all that we had done in Egypt and in reclaiming the Soudan,

1. FO 371/1572, Grey to Dering, No. 271, 4.11.13.


3. FO 371/1572, Grey to Dering, No. 19, 12.11.13.
we could not possibly consent to the passing of L. Tsana under any control than our own if Aby broke up".  

At Rome where Sir Rennell Rodd spoke with the Italian Foreign Minister, Antonio di San Guiliano, and the Secretary-General to the Ministry of Colonies, Giacomo Agnesa, the Italians insisted that Article IVa of the Tripartite Agreement only guaranteed the safety of the Nile affluents to Britain under Italian territorial control.  

They based their claim upon the Protocol of 15 April 1891, which had placed the entire highland kingdom under Italian influence. However this was before the Battle of Adua and the cancellation of the 1889 Treaty of Wuchale, when Ethiopia was commonly considered to be an Italian protectorate. Further agreements after the 1896 Treaty of Adis Ababa so traversed the 1891 Protocol that the Foreign Office could not see how the Italians could insist on its application.  

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1. FO 371/1572, Grey to Dering, No. 21, 25.11.13.  
3. Hertslet, *op. cit.*, p. 918. T. Tittori, *Questioni del Giorno*, (Milano, 1928), pp. 42-3, claimed that the protocol was the basis for Italy's claims in Paris 1919.  
4. Ibid., pp. 454-7. S. Rubenson, *Wichale XVII*, (Adis Ababa), claims that there was no protectorate.
that San Guiliano realized that Britain would not give up her rights to Lake Tsana.\(^1\) Nevertheless, Agnesa gained the impression that Rodd was sympathetic to the Italian claims, and that "there may be new grounds for agreement".\(^2\) The negotiations were dropped when both parties were made aware of their colleagues' views, and they were not taken up until the post-war discussion of Italian compensatory claims.\(^3\)

Britain's eagerness to control Lake Tsana might have appeared to be an eagerness for partition; but at that time the break-up of Ethiopia was thought to be inevitable, and the British hoped to postpone the partition as long as possible. The European conviction of the instability of Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian fear of European attack and partition are continuous threads in Ethiopian affairs during this time. Yet at no time was the invasion or the partition of Ethiopia seriously contemplated by the policy makers of the British Government (though some of its members thought partition inevitable in the long run). The official policy of His

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1. Rodd, T.2, loc. cit.
2. Hess, ubi supra.
3. Cf. infra, Ch. VI, pp. 374-6.
Majesty's Government was still unchanged from that stated by Sir John Harrington to Menelik on 11 April 1905:

I am glad to state that the British Government does not follow in reference to Ethiopia, any other policy than the maintenance of its complete independence. 1

Eight years later, E. G. Lister at the Foreign Office could not qualify Harrington's statement to any great degree:

It is not in our interest that anything like a partition of the country should take place in the near future. We have a lot of lost ground to recover in the way of influence in the North ... & we ought to create & consolidate British interests round Lake Tsana & place them on such a firm footing that when the partition does come all the Lake Tsana region so far as it controls the waters of the Blue Nile shall be unquestionably in the British sphere. 2

Ethiopians, of course, were justifiably suspicious of the European Powers, and this distrust made them reluctant to co-operate in the continuous problem of border control. In the West Thesiger had difficulty in obtaining Ethiopian agreement to several internal improvements which the British were constructing at the market town of Gambela -

1. Rey, Real Abyssinia, p. 147.
2. FO 371/1571, Note on Thesiger to Grey, No. 19, 20.3.13.
a road to Bure and a bridge over the Bonga River. Construction was halted until 1913, when Thesiger was finally able to convince Lij Yasu that the improvements were not to be used for an invasion of Ethiopia, but would develop the Gambela route and strengthen the Sudan trade.

Thesiger also wanted to acquire the potentially valuable Baro Lands Concession, managed by Hasib Ydlibi, which was near Gambela. Ydlibi was a long-standing member of the Levantine community in Ethiopia, and was known for his shady dealing. Unfortunately, no British group could be found to purchase his concession. With it Britain could not only consolidate her growing interests in the West, but she could also extend her control over the truculent border tribes. In May 1913 some of these tribes - the Anuak, Nuer and Galla - rose in rebellion and threatened Gambela. As Thesiger could not rely on the Ethiopian authorities to defend Gambela, he arranged for Wingate to send a gunboat to protect British interests. The rebellion died out before the gunboat could arrive, and by December

1. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, No. 12, 21.2.13, No. 15, 11.3.13, and No. 22, 19.4.13.
2. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, No. 8, 1.2.13, T.22, 30.7.13, and No. 54, 9.8.13.
4. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, No. 31, 17.5.13.
an expedition had ravaged the rebellious tribes. In theory, the West was a valuable area; in practice, neither British capitalists, nor the local authorities knew or cared anything about it. Its isolation was only exceeded in Ethiopia by that of the Southern border.

On that frontier 'Tigré' hunters (i.e. highlanders, though not necessarily from the Tigré) very often raided the loosely patrolled border, murdered British-protected tribesmen and stole their property. This was a regular feature of border relations, and could not be dealt with unless either Ethiopia or Britain increased their frontier forces - something that the former did not want to do, and the latter could not afford to do. Friction between Ethiopia and Britain increased in 1913 over the murder of Captain Aylmer, the political officer of Garre country. His death came after several hundred Boran and Gabra tribesmen, who had taken refuge in British territory, were attacked by Gar Gashi, a highland governor in the Boran.

Aylmer's death raised the cry for more and better mobile

1. S.I.R. No. 231, October 1913.
3. CO 535/118, Belfield to Harcourt, T., 20.5.13, and No. 55 Con., 27.5.13. The attack was on 22 April 1913.
border patrols. The Colonial Office thought that mere protests to Adis Ababa would be futile, and suggested a border rectification and a refusal to hand over the refugees to the highland authorities. The matter was left to Thesiger's discretion, but he was warned not to make excessive demands, and on 7 June he gave permission for an Ethiopian expedition to cross the border into B.E.A. to pursue Aylmer's murderers.

The British increased their forces at Nairobi and Moyale, and Kitchener suggested that a Consul be appointed for Southern Ethiopia to report on border problems. A border rectification would not in fact have made the job of the Consul or the Military any easier. The Southern border had always been a hazy area; it was one of the last districts conquered by Menelik, and it had only

2. To the "tender mercies of a blustering scoundrel like Garazmatch Gashi", CO 535/118, Belfield to Harcourt, No. 54 Con., 21.5.13.
5. FO 371/1572, CO to FO, 18.10.13; CO 535/127, Kitchener to Harcourt, 17.7.13; Moyse-Bartlett, loc. cit.
recently been defined. On the British side, until 1910, the N.F.D. had only been loosely under Nairobi's control.¹

The Colonial Office demanded vigorous action,² but the Foreign Office was sceptical of the efficacy of protests, since it would have been difficult for the Ethiopians to control the small 'Tigré' groups even if they had wanted to do so. With Yasu at Dese and the Council unwilling to commit itself, it was unlikely that representations would be very effective. The only advantages the British held were the Boran refugees (who cost money and invited Ethiopian reprisals), and the vague threat of armed force. In return they were demanding an expedition, arrest of the 'Tigré', a border rectification, and a huge indemnity. All this because of a few raids and one dead British officer.

Britain was in a bad bargaining position. She did not want to undermine Ethiopian stability or independence, and she could neither afford to intervene militarily, nor allow France or Italy to do so. A threat to withdraw

British diplomatic support would be a mere bluff, especially as there was no particular danger against which Britain could protect Ethiopia. There was no money market to close; impounding Ethiopia's share of the Sudanese customs receipts until she toed the line would only hurt British 'peaceful penetration'. She could only rely on strong diplomatic representations. Thesiger continued to blame the Council for the raids, but all they did was ask for more time. Thesiger believed that affairs in Ethiopia were fast approaching a crisis. Complaints of injustice to British subjects, for which it was impossible to obtain redress, were continually arriving from Harar and Gambela. He felt that a severe lesson was needed to show that Britain would not tolerate further outrages. He hoped such a lesson would induce the Ethiopians to introduce reforms, which he believed to be the only real cure. The Foreign Office was disturbed by Thesiger's suggestion virtually to break off relations with Ethiopia. Sir Edward Grey, in reply, ordered Thesiger to remain in the capital and to reduce his demands, adding that it was not Britain's policy to use force in these matters.

1. FO 371/1572, Thesiger to Grey, No. 41, 19.6.13; Grey to Thesiger, No. 14, 18.7.13. At the 2 July Conference (supra p. 77) it was decided to not press an indemnity.

2. FO 371/1572, Thesiger to Grey, No. 42, 27.7.13; Grey to Thesiger, No. 16, 36.6.13.
By July Ethiopian troops were scouring the frontier for Aylmer's murderers, but the border question had to be postponed until Yasu returned from Dese. Nag Haile Giorgis warned Thesiger that public opinion was against border concessions: "Either vengeance or blood-money, but under no circumstances both" were ever taken. In the meantime, the Colonial Office built up its case against Ethiopia, and B.E.A. built up its border forces. With time the matter lost its urgency, and by October the border was much quieter. The Ethiopian expedition, led by Fit Waldi of Gardula, was accompanied by J. O. W. Hope of the N.F.D., and made a very satisfactory sweep through the frontier region and cleaned out most of the 'Tigré'.

Thesiger raised the question of the Southern frontier as soon as Yasu returned from Dese in November, but under pressure from the Shoan chiefs the Council declared that the border could not be changed so long as Menelik lived. Many members of the Foreign Office thought Menelik was already dead, and they realized that Yasu could hardly

1. FO 371/1572, Thesiger to Grey, No. 52, 31.7.13.
2. FO 371/1572, CO to FO, 12.9.13 and 8.10.13.
4. FO 371/1571, Thesiger to Grey, No. 71, 10.10.13; FO 371/1572, Thesiger to Grey, No. 78, 29.11.13.
begin his reign with something as unpopular as a border rectification - especially since the Southern border was the special reserve of the Shoan chiefs. Britain did not give up hope of getting a border adjustment, but she did give up, for the moment, all efforts to obtain one.

The various border questions had ramifications that included all aspects of Anglo-Ethiopian relations. Since the Ethiopian Central Government did not, in practice, govern its frontier districts, the responsibility fell on the neighbouring colonial governments. Trade, perhaps the major interest of Britain in Ethiopia, would never flourish until merchants could be assured that they and their merchandise were safe from attack. Also, British 'protection' would be useless to the border tribes of British colonies unless British military forces could in fact protect them from robbery, enslavement and murder. Britain needed peace on her borders as a prerequisite to her avowed aim of developing trade, not only with Ethiopia, but within her own colonies as well. As long as highland soldiers and armed tribesmen raided with impunity, Anglo-Ethiopian relations would remain difficult.
The shock that the European Legations had been waiting for the last seven years came and went without causing the upheaval they had predicted. Asê Menelik II died between 2 and 3 a.m. on the morning of 12 December 1913.¹ According to Ethiopian custom he was buried quickly; the Abun buried him privately during darkness because he feared that Lij Yasu would disrupt the funeral.² Yasu banned public mention of Menelik's name, he neglected to burn candles or incense over his body, and instead he and friends "'mounted their horses and rode away [to Film Wuja] to enjoy themselves at picnics'."³ Taitu and Zauditu left the Ghebi for Entoto, but there were no disturbances in the capital and the public was kept ignorant of the Emperor's demise for about 40 days.

Thesiger expected no trouble (though the Foreign Office told him to concert with his colleagues if there was), and he confidently went on with his arrangements to leave for Nairobi in the next few months.⁴ Langley said, "It is the best thing that could happen", since it meant

2. Asfa Yilma, loc. cit.
that there was nothing in the way of Yasu's coronation and responsible government.\(^1\) The press reaction was kinder than that of Langley or Lij Yasu. The Italian papers printed long and favourable appreciations of Menelik,\(^2\) and The Times reported:

> The death of the Emperor Menelik has removed from the field of African politics not merely a picturesque figure, but what was at one time a powerful personality. It was Menelik's tragic fate to outlive his greatness.\(^3\)

The Annual Register cited Menelik's diplomatic skill, and called him, "A powerful ruler, naturally just and humane, ... \(\text{who}\) behaved with magnanimity and dignity".\(^4\)

Though the journalists and travelogue authors of Europe would miss Menelik, the Chancelleries and Legations would not. Menelik's "living death" had made diplomacy difficult for the Adis Ababa Legations and their masters in Europe, in a country that was not greatly...

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2. The Times, 24 December 1913.

3. Ibid., 23 December 1913.

Lij Yasu
suited to European diplomatic methods at the best of times. With Menelik out of the way the Council had no concrete reason to deny Yasu the crown, and the Prince had no concrete reason to refuse to act responsibly.

Menelik's death did free the chiefs from the danger of his possible recovery, but they had no unity and could not yet oppose Lij Yasu. Mikael was the single most powerful chief in Ethiopia, though he would be vulnerable against a united Shoa. Ras Wolye and Ras Guga were in prison at Adis Ababa, and Fit Taye and Ras Abata were in prison at Magdala. The Rases Sibhat, Abreha, Hailu, Demissie, Lul Seged and Seyoum were allied (some by marriage) to Mikael, and Yasu had made further arrangements (some also matrimonial) with the Aba Jifar, Dej Jotei, Dej Ganami and Shaikh Khojali. The most important personalities in the Shoan camp were still Fit Hapta Giorgis, Nag Haile Giorgis and Ras Walda Giorgis. Hapta Giorgis was practically one of Yasu's lieutenants; Yasu lodged with him at times, and, in his wiser moments, took advice from him. Haile Giorgis,

1. Jones and Monroe, loc. cit.
2. S.I.R. No. 223, February 1913.
though leader of the Council, was very much under Yasu's thumb, since imperial favour often brought rich rewards. Walda Giorgis was content to remain at Gondar and probably did not nurse imperial ambitions as long as he was left alone. He himself was certainly not a contender for the throne, but his attitude would greatly affect the prospects of any other claimant. Split by personal rivalries, the Shoan party could unite only for a negative purpose - to frustrate effective rule by Lij Yasu.

Yasu's reaction to his grandfather's death was one of unrestrained relief. He was never close to Menelik and probably would have found little in common with him. His flouting of Ethiopian conventions was by now evident; he had never shown any patience for imperial ritual, and would have been much happier in the role of a provincial noble. Perhaps Yasu would have been more successful as the hereditary ruler of Wollo than as Emperor-designate. From what we can gather of the Prince we see a very young man, fairly intelligent and full of life; surrounded by the old, suspicious friends of his grandfather; petitioned by the European Legations on apparently minor grievances; placed in a position that demands responsibility but refuses power; encouraged by a septagenarian
father whose ambitions may not have necessarily been the same as his own. It is no wonder that some of Yasu's actions may have been erratic or ambiguous.

The British, of course, did not consider this - their problems were quite real. They wanted peace on, and trade over their various borders. The Lake Tsana question was being considered with Italy, and the Jibuti arms traffic question was being considered with France; but there were several matters that needed consideration in Adis Ababa. These matters could not be dealt with unless there was a responsible authority present at the capital. Britain looked to Lij Yasu to take up his rightful, and long overdue, burden.
Britain and the Ethiopian Problem 1914 - 1916

The years 1914 to 1916 were characterized by two developments in British policy towards Ethiopia; the impossibility of dealing with Lij Yasu's regime, and the danger to Ethiopia and the Allies of the consequences of Lij Yasu's Muslim policy. Lij Yasu's reign was not unique in its unresponsiveness to British requests and demands, but it marked the exhaustion of Britain's patience. However there was some progress in Anglo-Ethiopian relations in reference to the borders, the arms trade, and commercial expansion. In 1915 the Gambela wireless station was completed, adding another link to co-operation between the Sudan and the western provinces; in 1916 the joint Lake Tsana Survey Commission reported favourably on the feasibility of a barrage across Lake Tsana; and the borders, especially the Southern and Somali, were generally quieter. However these concessions and improvements had been extorted by Britain with the maximum of diplomatic pressure, and they had been accepted by Ethiopia with the minimum of goodwill. Also, due to the divisions in the Ethiopian administration and the frequent absences of Lij Yasu, the Legations found
it virtually impossible to maintain stable relations with the central government.

All this must be viewed, of course, in the light of the Great War. Allied fortunes did not improve until well into 1917, and Lij Yasu could not be blamed for not committing himself to them. Had Lij Yasu maintained a strict neutrality the Allies could not have objected to him; but he had, due to his affinity for Islam, a preference for the Central Powers - and in particular for the Ottoman Empire. The logical conclusion was that Lij Yasu would lead his country into the War on the side of the Turks, and attack either the Sudan, Somaliland, Aden or British East Africa. This was not a pleasant thought to Allied strategists with the memory of Adua in the back of their minds. Fortunately Britain and her Allies were not alone in their fear and dislike of Lij Yasu, and they finally joined forces with the disaffected in Ethiopia to oust the Prince-Regent, and instal those whom they felt were more sympathetic to the Allied cause and to Christianity.

The questions that presented themselves to the British Legation in the years 1914 to 1916 were the
perennial problems of the borders, the arms trade, commerce and Lake Tsana. None of these were settled, though all of them moved, if sometimes hardly perceptibly, along the road to eventual solution.

The Southern frontier, though pacified by the Hope-Waldi expedition of December 1913, continued to be a problem in 1914. The Council of Ministers met on 5 December 1913 and refused to consider a border rectification, and they laid full blame for the disturbances on the Southern chiefs: Dej Balcha Abanefso of Sidamo, Bal Walda Gabriel of Kambata, Dej Nado of Bale' and Dej Merid of Gofa and Bako. Lij Yasu despatched Fit Hapta Giorgis to the South to survey the situation; in fact this was a strategem to remove the Fitwary, who was a conscientious administrator and who disliked the confusion in the capital. The Foreign Office had little hope that Thesiger could persuade the Council to accept a rectification: "They are probably more afraid of their own chiefs than they are of us, and they follow the line of least resistance".

1. Supra, Chapter I, pp. 87-8.
In January 1914 Thesiger left for the Southern frontier to talk with Fit Waldi and Garaz Gashi. Thesiger found the South disgusted with the corruption in Adis Ababa, and some chiefs spoke of Dej Tafari of Harar as a successor to Lij Yasu. The lack of control from the capital made it impossible for powerful governors to rule unhindered, but it also made it absolutely impossible for any outside Power to treat with Abyssinia as a whole, or to obtain through the central Government the solution of questions which affect the provincial administrations ... it is becoming every day more obvious that we can look for no help from the side of the Abyssinian Government, but must in future depend entirely on our own powers of prevention to check the continuation of gun-running and raiding from the Abyssinian side of the border ... It is equally vain to hope that a change in the administration will bring about a better state of things, the whole Government is so disorganized that matters must inevitably go from bad to worse ... We are destroying the prestige which we have hitherto enjoyed in Abyssinia by our inability to deal with border raids with a strong hand; and we are arousing in the minds of our Somali tribes the suspicion that we are afraid of them.

3. Herbert Read noted on CO 533/145, FO to CO, 13.1.14: "Fitaurari Hapta Giorgis is the ablest man in Abyssinia & the most helpful from our point of view, & I hope he will not come to an untimely end."

1. FO 371/1880, Thesiger memo, 15.5.14.
Consul Doughty-Wylie asked that the compensation question not be pressed since it would prejudice the Lake Tsana negotiations, which were considered to be "the most important British interest in Abyssinia, after the maintenance of peace", and which were being pursued at that moment. Of the Ethiopians he wrote:

They have a fierce patriotism and a distrust of all foreigners. They are divided, corrupt, bad governors, but they have, as seen in recent years, the many conquests of white men, and foreign aggression would unite them all ... A threat, unless you are prepared to follow it up, is not the best way of dealing with such a people, and without a threat you are unlikely to get money as matters stand. Conquest besides being for the time politically unthinkable, is a very serious military problem. It would require a very large and good army to take and hold for the first few years the present well armed Abyssinia.

The Colonial Office was not anxious to press the situation on the Southern frontier, and they virtually denied they had any interest in the hinterland of B.E.A. Instead they approved in July 1914 Kitchener's idea to appoint a Consul for Southern Ethiopia, and in August

1. FO 371/1878, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 64 Con., 12.7.11
2. Read noted on CO 533/145, FO to CO, 20.3.14, (trs. Rodd to Grey, No. 77, 2.3.14): "We scarcely want to increase our commitments in the desolate country in the north of the E.A.P., altho' we sho'd like some small adjustment of the frontier so as to make it easier to patrol." Also of. FO to CO, 22.5.14, (trs. Kitchener to Grey, No. 77, 26.4.14 and CO 533/127, FO to CO, 24.4.13.
Arnold W. Hodson accepted the post.\textsuperscript{1} Border difficulties had decreased in 1914, but the Northern Frontier District was still an unsettled area. Marehan Somalis, fired by the \textit{Jihad} of Muhammad 'Abdille Hasan, and armed with munitions smuggled from Jibuti, raided the Jubaland during February through May 1914.\textsuperscript{2} On the Somali frontier \textit{Sayyid} Muhammad had closed the Ain valley in December 1913, and he had threatened Burao and Berbera.\textsuperscript{3} Wingate's hopes of pacifying a disturbed sector of the Sudan-Ethiopia frontier were frustrated when his proposed occupation of the Garjak district of Upper Nile Province was postponed, and ultimately cancelled, owing to the outbreak of the war in Europe.\textsuperscript{4} Britain was dealing with border affairs, largely through her own efforts, having all but given up hope of procuring Ethiopian assistance of a permanent nature. The Ethiopians, if pressured, would usually grant

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{1.} FO 369/658, CO to FO, 3.7.14 and 19.8.14. Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 85, 14.11.14 transmitted the Ethiopian Government's acceptance. A suggestion to appoint H. Darley as Consul at Maji was raised and dismissed: FO 371/1572, Sperling to Thesiger, 11.11.13; FO 371/1878, Thesiger to Sperling, private, 7.12.13; Kitchener to Thesiger, Con., 1.3.14; and Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 12.3.14; Cf., \textit{Infra}, CH. IV and V for later developments.
  
  \item \textbf{2.} FO 371/1879, CO to FO, despatches from February to May 1914.
  
  \item \textbf{3.} FO 371/1878, CO to FO, No. 36, 31.12.13, and 11.4.14.
\end{itemize}
some token concession, but in general they were averse from co-operation with Britain in these matters.

An interdepartmental conference attended by Thesiger, Hope of the N.F.D., Sperling of the F.O. and Read of the C.O. was held at the F.O. on 26 January 1915 to consider the Southern frontier problem. Thesiger predicted that B.E.A. could expect more raids in 1915 since Yasu had appointed new chiefs along the border, and they had brought new retainers with them. He suggested the assignment of more and better armed frontier police, and that Ethiopian raiders should be imprisoned rather than executed, in order to improve relations with Ethiopia.1

During 1915, however, the border was quieter, though some Southern chiefs were influenced by rumours that Germany had captured Nairobi and Lugh. Most of the chiefs were more concerned with Lij Yasu's Muslim affiliations, and Consul Hodson reported that Lij Yasu's replacement of Dej Balcha in Sidamo by the corrupt Betwoded Haile Giorgis, had angered the chiefs.2 Thanks to agreements

4. FO 371/1880, Kitchener to Grey, No. 70, 19.4.14 (trs. Wingate to Kitchener, No. 76, 5.4.14), and FO 371/2227, McMahon to Grey, No. 12, 20.1.15, (trs. Wingate to McMahon, No. 129, 14.1.15.).

1. FO 371/2227, CO to FO, 25.1.15.

2. FO 371/2228, Walker to Grey, No. 9, 10.2.15. Balcha had been given Sidamo by Menelik long before 1906.
between B.E.A. and the Italians in Benadir, Jubaland was carefully watched and patrolled, and the seasonal migrations of Somalis westward over the Juba did not increase in the N.F.D. ¹

The arms trade became more troublesome to Britain in 1914 since Austria-Hungary joined Ethiopia's arms suppliers. An arms deal negotiated by Karl Schwimmer, the honorary Austrian Consul, included the supplying of cannon and military advisers. However under the Brussels Act Ethiopia had the right to import arms, and since cannon could not be used by border tribesmen to raid British territory, the British Legation had no plausible grounds for objection. The deal worried the Italians even more, since, as Sperling noted: "There is some reason to suspect that the It. Govt. may be contemplating action against Abys. & they would therefore be more nervous about these guns". ²

An Ethiopian military mission arrived in Vienna in March 1914, and met Franz Josef, the Archduke Franz

¹ FO 371/2228, Rodd to Grey, No. 300 Commercial, 25.3.15, and CO to FO, 8.11.15.
² FO 371/1879, de Bunsen to Grey, No. 52, 15.4.14. Some of this correspondence can be followed in I.D.D.I., Series 4, III, Documents, 26, 97, 122, 205, 374 and 377.
Ferdinand, as well as the War Minister and the Chief of the General Staff, Conrad von Hoetzendorff. The guns that they bought, however, which had been taken from the Verona fortress, were of 1861 vintage, and were not thought to be particularly formidable. There was little chance that Austrian influence could predominate in Ethiopia, but the incident illustrates Lij Yasu's desire to reduce his dependence on the Tripartite Powers, especially Britain and Italy, in favour of other friends. The "Schwimmer Concession" should not be overemphasized, however, since France was still Ethiopia's main supplier, and Count Colli reported that caravans carrying 1000 rifles per week were arriving at Dese from Tajura, via Dire Dawa. The French premier, Viviani, denied that the acting Governor of the Somali Coast, Fernand Deltel, had sold more than three or four rifles at a time, but

1. FO 371/1879, de Bunsen to Grey, No. 49, 9.3.14.

2. _Loc. cit._, No. 52, 12.3.15; Wingfield to Grey, No. 88, 8.5.15. Schwimmer was recalled in October 1914 on representations from Rome that he was intriguing against Italy - an example of the Central Power's sensitivity to Italian neutrality, _The Times_, 24 November 1914.

3. Lij Belai, the chief of the Ethiopian mission, caused consternation in Rome when it was reported that he feared an imminent Italian attack on Ethiopia, I.D.D.I., _loc. cit._, Cerrina to San Guiliano, T.u. 5955/156, 5.6.14. (document 80).
"the authorities at Jibuti [could] hardly be expected to tell the truth about this question."1 Thesiger re-opened the question of the purchase or exchange of Jibuti, since it was the only way 1) to destroy the arms traffic; 2) to cut off Sayyid Muhammad's supplies; 3) to reduce border friction; 4) to keep a strong hold over Ethiopia; and 5) to prolong Ethiopian independence.2 In addition the ultimate partition of Ethiopia would be made easier, and in the meantime Italo-British control over Ethiopia would be smoother. Thesiger warned that no improvement in Ethiopian internal affairs could be expected while France held Jibuti. Sir Arthur Nicolson, The Permanent Under-Secretary, noted: "I am afraid that it is but a vain dream", since even though France wanted Gambia, she would be loath to lose her Somali Coast in exchange.3 Also, Jibuti without the arms trade was felt


1. Langley minute on FO 371/1879, Bertie to Grey, No. 336, 8.7.14.

2. The arms fed dissident tribes which disrupted the internal situation, and they bred friction with Italy which would someday force the partition of Ethiopia.
to be a useless territory to Britain.

Herr von Syborg, the German Minister at Adis Ababa, showed Consul Dodds a letter in January 1914 written by General Famin of the Compagnie Franco-Éthiopien to his agent in Adis Ababa, which stated that he had the support of the French Ministry of Finance to export 150,000 Gras rifles to Lij Yasu without the authorization of M. Brice.¹ French laxity in the Jibuti arms trade raised questions in the Commons, and shortly afterwards the French Embassy notified the Foreign Office that new regulations were being despatched to Jibuti.² And at the same time word came that a new Ethiopian decree was being published.³ The decrees were virtually identical (indicating that France had probably prompted the Ethiopian proclamation).

³. The war-time alliance led to a reversal of the pre-war policy in Gambia of preventing French ownership of land, and it therefore reduced Britain's bargaining position. During the Anglo-French discussions on Gambia France never offered anything for the enclave, P. H. S. Hatton, "The Gambia, the Colonial Office, and the Opening Months of the First World War", JAH, 1967, vii, 1, p. 125.

¹. FO 371/2179, Dodds to Grey, No. 6, 18.1.14. This would account for Brice's statement of August 1913 that he had issued no import permits for arms, supra, Ch. I, p. 69.

². FO 371/2179, FO note, 24.2.14.

³. FO 371/2179, Fleuriau to Grey, 6.3.14.
but the Foreign Office doubted whether the French and Ethiopian officials would attempt to enforce the regulations.¹

Doughty-Wylie reported in April 1914 that Brice and the Foreign Minister, Nagadras Haile Giorgis, were negotiating a deal for 50,000 Gras rifles worth about a half million Ethiopian dollars.² Thesiger, then on leave in England, and convinced that Brice was involved in the arms trade, suggested an anti-French press campaign. The Foreign Office, rejected the suggestion, since it felt that nothing would move the French from their profitable enclave and since the French arms contract was legal (notwithstanding their self-imposed arms embargo). The embargo, however, expired at the end of 1914, and by January 1915 the Italians were complaining that Jibuti was exporting arms to Ethiopia. Langley, after seeing the Italian charge d'affaires, Prince Livio Borghese, on 15 January 1915, noted:

¹. FO 371/2179, Fleuriau to Grey, 23.4.14.
². FO 371/1880, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 40 Strictly Con., 24.4.14. and No. 43, 2.5.14. The despatches included photographs of an autograph letter from Brice to the Nagadras detailing the bargain.
It was useless to attempt to get any improvement made in regard to this traffic as the French Minister at Adis Ababa is interested in it as are the Governor of Jibuti and all the principal notables in Abyssinia from Lij Yasu downwards.

Bertie, in Paris, made representations to the Quai d'Orsay, expressing the hope that the French Government would keep down the amount of arms in Jibuti. T. Delcassé told Bertie on 29 January that Paris had forbidden all arms traffic during the War, including the delivery of arms ordered before hostilities. Regardless of French assurances arms managed to seep out of Jibuti, and the question of the purchase or exchange of Jibuti remained an idée fixe that obsessed the Foreign Office and Thesiger. Since they never received any encouragement from France it is puzzling why the British officials held so tenaciously to their scheme. It is more a symptom of British frustration than of reasoned strategy. From Jibuti France controlled Ethiopian trade and the arms traffic. Jibuti was helpful as a port-of-call for the French Asian empire, but it also helped

1. FO 371/2227, IO to FO, 6.1.15; Langley minute, 15.1.15.

2. FO 371/2227, Grey to Bertie, No. 64, 21.1.15; Bertie to Grey, No. 36, 29.1.15.
maintain French influence in Ethiopia. The colony itself was poor, but it was less of a liability than, say, British or Italian Somaliland were to her partners. With comparatively little expenditure France had a strong position in Ethiopia. Britain would have to pay much to beat such a bargain.

Aside from the Lake Tsana question, which remained the largest British interest in Ethiopia, the biggest problem of the British Legation was the Gambela wireless station. The station was part of the project to draw together the western provinces of Ethiopia and the Sudan, as well as to relieve the British and Ethiopian Governments of their dependancy on the Italian telegraph line. It was the Betwoded Haile Giorgis who first suggested that British construct a line from Gallabat to Dunkaz or from Adis Ababa to Gambela; and Gan Bayena Yimat, the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs and a protégé of Lij Yasu, called upon Doughty-Wylie on 7 May 1914 to discuss the project. The Italians might have objected to the Gallabat line being through their "sphere", but the Gambela line was well within Britain's "sphere". Doughty-Wylie obtained agreement in writing on the Gallabat line in June, and discussions continued on the
Gambela line, which was eventually agreed would be wireless. ¹

The Ethiopian Government was anxious to get British support since the Italian Legation had records of all telegrams sent on their line; had a copy of the Ethiopian cypher; and could halt messages at any time. Britain was only too pleased to be able to help Ethiopia for a change, especially since it meant cementing relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan, and developing the Gallabat and Gambela trade routes. Once war broke out in Europe, however, the negotiations faltered. Bayena, who held pro-German views and was influenced by the German agents in Adis Ababa, became Minister for Foreign Affairs in December 1914. Thereafter he used his influence to halt work on the Gambela wireless station. Though Italy and France had their grievances against Ethiopia (the former concerning trouble on the Eritrean frontier, and the latter concerning the acquisition of a site for their Adis Ababa railway station), they would not join with Britain in protesting against Bayena's interference, because they were only too happy to have work at Gambela

¹. FO 371/1880, Doughty-Wylie, No. 46, 10.5.14, No. 59 Con., 19.6.14, and T. 28, 2.7.14; Symes, Sec'y to Wingate, minute, 9.7.14.
Bayena claimed that the Council had never approved the project, but the Legation held that the connection of Gambela with the Sudan was an economic necessity provided for in the 1902 Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement, and that the Council had agreed to it in principle in May.\(^2\) The Sudan, in the meantime, ordered its engineers to speed up work at Gambela, while Thesiger tried to fore-stall the Council. The Council, as usual, was divided into factions, with the Betwoded and the Fitwary supporting Britain, and with Bayena and Afa Negus Telahun opposing. Nothing was decided since everything was referred to Lij Yasu, who usually gave ambiguous answers.\(^3\)

Bayena was aided in his campaign by the individual efforts of the German, French and Italian Legations. Brice complained that Thesiger was causing anti-Allied feeling by insisting on the Gambela question, and that the Betwoded and the Fitwary were being discredited for assisting the British. Prince Borghese added that Britain

\(^1\) FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 49, 6.9.15.

\(^2\) FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 38, 5.8.15.

\(^3\) The Council, by its lack of direction, also contributed to Mikael's success in dominating the North. Ras Walda Giorgis was virtually isolated: "The Shoan party which, four years ago, was a distinct power, has now ... ceased to be of any account, owing to the jealousies and dissensions among the chiefs." FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 34, 15.7.15. *Infra*, p. 133.
was not heeding Ethiopian objections to the station.¹ The Franco-Italian complaints were simply due to the fact that the Gambela line would compete with their own system of communications: the railroad to Jibuti, and the telegraph line to Eritrea.

The station was completed and Gambela and Nasir were linked on 5 September 1915. The German Legation called the wireless "an unfriendly act", and Bayena tried to get Ras Demissie of Walega to destroy the station. The Betwoded, on the 19th, said that ratification of the wireless agreement would be no problem, since he had assured the Council that Britain would be willing to sell the apparatus to Ethiopia upon request.² However the Betwoded had made this statement on his own authority, and Thesiger refused to support him unless he received guarantees that Ethiopia would keep up maintenance and service. The Betwoded was in a desparate position, open to attack as being pro-foreign. Thesiger wanted to protect the Betwoded against Bayena and Telahoun, but he was reluctant to acquiesce on this matter and thus set a precedent.³ Thesiger compromised and gave him a general

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 50, 7.9.15; Borghese to Clerk, 10.9.15.
2. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 53, 20.9.15, and No. 55, 4.10.15.
letter, stating that the Sudan would sell the station at cost and continue to provide staff if Ethiopia would provide the upkeep. With this ammunition the Betwoded was able to defeat Bayena and clear his own name.¹

Britain's chief interest in Ethiopia was the Nile waters and the Lake Tsana barrage. Britain was impressed with growing Italian influence in the North in 1914,² especially in the area of Lake Tsana. Sir Rennell Rodd, commenting on Lord Kitchener's partition plan,³ said that British influence over the North-West would be unacceptable to Italy: "There is at present a chauvinistic tendency in this country which leads public opinion to look upon nearly the whole of Abyssinia as an area of Italian irredentism." This was clearly contrary to British interpretations of existing treaties, as Sir Edward Grey minuted:

³. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 87, 23.12.15, and No. 89, 30.12.15. He also wanted to prevent the Italians from erecting a wireless station in Adis Ababa.

¹. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 10, 20.1.16.

². Cf. infra on the Tigre Revolt of February 1914, pp. 126-3

³. Cf. supra Ch. I, p. 76.
There are two cardinal points in the matter. 1. We must have in our sphere all the water that really affects the supply of the Nile. 2. The Italians must have a territorial connection - i.e. territory of their own not merely a right of way over our territory - to connect their possessions.

The increase of Italian influence in the North, and the French desire to prolong the Franco-Ethiopian Railroad soon dictated a change in Britain's approach to Lake Tsana. The French, in 1913, had not only tried to purchase the Chefneux Concession, but had also offered to Lij Yasu a loan. Thesiger still believed that a five year option on the Chefneux Concession could preserve Britain's interests since it would buy time 1) to judge the effect of the Franco-Ethiopian Railroad on the western trade; 2) to see if the Ethiopian dislike of railroads was modified; and 3) to develop the Sudan railway system. Also, in time the Baro Lands Concession would be developed, and communications between Gambela and the Sudan would be strengthened. But, Thesiger cautioned:

Within the next five years, however, Lij Yasu might have come to the throne, in which case the whole present system of government will probably change, or some

1. FO 371/1878, Rodd to Grey, No. 77, 2.3.14.
of the many contingencies may have arisen to alter the whole face of the situation, in which event it will do no harm to delay binding ourselves too strictly for the moment. ¹

Thesiger thought that French policy was very ambitious, and claimed their aims to be 1) to extend the railroad to the west; 2) to control the Adis Ababa and the Dire Dawa customs; and 3) to eliminate the Bank of Abyssinia in favour of a French concern. The French, he said, were willing to loan Ethiopia five million M.T. dollars, with the customs receipts as security; and the French were in a good bargaining position since they could cut off even the clandestine arms smuggling at Jibuti, and blame their action on Anglo-Italian pressure. ²

However, as Paris denied any intention of extending the railroad westwards, British ardour to purchase the Chefneux Concession cooled. The Concession was especially valuable since its translation read: "Near our train no other Company should lay a Railway". ³ In British hands the Concession could prevent the envisaged Eritrea-Benadir railroad from competing with a British line. The Foreign

Office dropped the matter however on Kitchener's suggestion that an extension west of Adis Ababa would not pay a French company and therefore the Concession was not worth purchase. Though this disposed of the railway question for the moment, the prospect of a French loan was still imminent. Kitchener therefore proposed that Britain offer Lij Yasu a loan in return for the right to build a barrage on Lake Tsana. In this way Britain would frustrate the Franco-Italian threat to British interests in Ethiopia with a singular master-stroke. Kitchener, without first consulting the Foreign Office, instructed Doughty-Wylie to sound out the Ethiopian Government on the loan proposition. In talks with the Nagadras Haile Giorgis on 13 May 1914 Doughty-Wylie emphasized the need to preserve Ethiopian independence from the threats of a French loan, but the Nagadras was principally interested in the amount of flooding the barrage would cause, and he was dissatisfied with the amount of the yearly subsidy that Doughty-Wylie had

2. FO 371/1880, Kitchener to Grey, No. 35, 12.5.14.
Grey had wanted to smooth the way in Paris and Rome before he opened discussions in Adis Ababa on Lake Tsana, and he was furious at Kitchener's and Doughty-Wylie's presumption and disregard of procedure in unilaterally opening the talks. The Signer asserted that since Britain's interest in the Lake had been recognized by France and Italy, there was no need to inform them, and that the negotiations should indeed be kept secret until the last moment to prevent the French and Italian Legations from opposing the talks. It soon became clear that Italy did not, in fact, recognize Britain's claim to North-West Ethiopia. In talks in Rome the marchese de San Giuliano told Rodd that:

He had given the matter some attention himself, and ... so far as the question of actual rights were concerned ... he was of the opinion that the case for the Italian claim was very strong. The tripartite agreement maintained pre-existing protocols so far as they were not superseded by its terms, and that the fact that in Article 4 British interests were safeguarded in the Nile basin, especially as regarded the waters

1. FO 371/1880, Kitchener to Grey, No. 97, 17.5.14. The draft treaty was based on the 1902 Treaty, and provided for a 20 sq. mile enclave, quarry rights, and a £10,000/year subsidy, rising to £20,000 once work had begun.

of the Nile and its affluents, with the reserve of due consideration for local interests, seemed to be an argument in their favour. Why make a reserve in favour of local interests if that part of the Nile basin was to be in British territory? ... he was in any case only talking of the strict question of right according to the letter of the documents. There was the other question of interest, and there he admitted that our interest in all that concerned the Nile was a paramount one, and must be treated with every consideration.

When Doughty-Wylie finally opened formal negotiations on Lake Tsana with the Negadras Haile Giorgis and other chiefs on 20 July 1914 Paris and Rome were duly notified. Doughty-Wylie was pleased with his progress, and he promised that Lord Kitchener would attend Lij Yasu's coronation and also present him with a battery of mountain guns as well. However the Ethiopians soured on 28 July when some Italian engineers told them that the barrage would flood the entire province of Dembea. In the absence of a detailed survey the Foreign Office could not refute these allegations, but it guaranteed that on


1. FO 371/2005, Rodd to Grey, No. 259, 6 July 1914.

no account would the water level of the Lake ever exceed the limits that the Ethiopians should dictate.¹

Due to the outbreak of war in Europe negotiations were broken off, and only an Allied victory would now induce the Ethiopians to sign the treaty. Ethiopia would wait to see who won the war before agreeing to anything; and Rowland Sperling, the clerk in charge of Ethiopian affairs at the Foreign Office, sadly told Doughty-Wylie that any great Allied success would be telegraphed to him immediately.² However Doughty-Wylie did not want to give up, and he attempted to get the treaty signed before he left Adis Ababa for active service. He felt that with a new negotiator all the ground so far gained in discussion would be lost, and he hoped that the personal affection felt by Lij Yasu and the chiefs for him would induce the Government to sign. His initiative had no success, a fact perhaps due to a coincidental French proposal to provide a loan to Ethiopia in return for internal reforms.³ The Council preferred to stay

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3. FO 371/2227, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 3, 7.1.15. The FO liked the plan, but thought it would inflate French influence, and so they preferred to postpone Ethiopian reforms until after the war.
uncommitted and it decided that until the question of flooding around the Lake was settled no decision could be taken on the Tsana loan, and so Doughty-Wylie left Adis Ababa for Cairo unsatisfied.  

The Prime Minister said that with Lij Yasu still a boy, and not yet crowned, it would be unwise to make him an enemy to the priests, and to the turbulent Amhara living round the Lake, who were still in the hands of that political uncertainty, Ras Waldo Giorgis ... The Prime Minister had also told me that they were afraid to do anything while the issue of the war was still uncertain: that the Germans and Turks assured them that we should no longer rule the Nile valley ... [However] Ethiopia was really anxious to be friends with us, and that she would study any project, such as this treaty, which had our friendship as its basis, but that to sign the treaty under present circumstances, was unfortunately quite impossible.

Doughty-Wylie's attempt to get Yasu to sign something, in the belief that Ethiopia would respect a signed document, was a failure, but it did contribute to keeping the discussions open. In the ensuing months the efforts of the Legation on this problem were directed to assuring the Ethiopians that the barrage would not flood the valuable church lands surrounding the Lake, and in

1. He was awarded the posthumous V.C. for his valour at Cape Helles Gallipoli, 26.4.15. Cf. W. Churchill, *The World Crisis, 1911-1918*, (London, 1938), i, p. 628, ii, 762; also *The Times* 26.5.15, and 24.6.15.

2. FO 371/2227, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 6.2.15.
getting permission to appoint a survey commission. However, Yasu was not anxious to commit himself. In September 1915 Thesiger reported: "The Tsana question remains where it was, as neither the Bituaded nor I have so far been able to get any definite answer from Lij Yasu as regards his consent to the appointment of a joint commission which should start work in January".  

On 16 October 1915 Lij Yasu finally sanctioned the Tsana Survey Commission for January 1916. Thesiger cautioned Major Pearson, the chief of the British delegation, to make his mission as small as possible, as not to arouse the suspicions of the Ethiopians, and to bring presents for Ras Hailu, Ras Walda Giorgis, and Mikael, including "a good supply of Maria Theresa Dollars". Many were opposed to the mission including Mikael's German advisers, the Dragoman Jensen and Arnold Holtz, and Walda Giorgis; but the mission started on time. 

One can only speculate on what made Lij Yasu change his mind. During September and October he was occupied

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 49, 6.9.15.
2. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, T. 39, 16.10.15.
3. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 58, 16.10.15.
with several raids against the Danakil in Aussa, and he could not have given much thought to affairs of state. If he had wanted to postpone the Tsana agreement, without giving offence to Britain, then to acquiesce in the demand for a mission was a good move. The mission, especially if it were frequently and judiciously delayed, would be long in making its report, and then further delaying tactics could be employed until the situations in Ethiopia and Europe were clearer. Thesiger was at pains not to offend Lij Yasu or make him suspicious, since at Dese the Prince was subject to great anti-British influence, including that of Walda Giorgis, who stayed at Dese discussing problems in the North with Yasu and Mikael until 9 December.¹ P. Zaphiro, the Dragoman of the British Legation, persuaded Lij Yasu and Mikael on 11 January 1916 to allow the mission to proceed, but they insisted that the British commissioners return by the route they had arrived.² This was to prevent Pearson coming to Adis Ababa to report to Thesiger and to press for the signature of the treaty. Thesiger

1. FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, No. 83, 10.12.15.

2. FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, No. 6, 12.1.16. (trs. to Wingate, No. 4, 12.1.16).
envisaged much delay, and he said:

the further question of obtaining the Treaty will depend for its success or postponement entirely on the condition of affairs in Europe at the time of the discussion here.

Lij Yasu allowed the mission to proceed on 19 February 1916, but it was soon in trouble. The three Ethiopian commissioners were undistinguished in expertise or prestige; had been chosen from Adis Ababa, Gondar and Dese, the three centres of power in Ethiopia; and had been given conflicting sets of instructions. This was a form of Ethiopian "checks and balances", designed to delay the mission. The action of Likamaquas Abogaz, a former slave and now courtier to Mikael, who insisted on verifying every action of the mission, was the main reason for the delays. When, on 16 March, he forbade the survey of the point where the Abai issues from Lake Tsana - the most important single area - the mission seemed doomed. Thesiger's representations did not reach Lij Yasu, and Mikael held up all telegrams from the British Legation. Thesiger refused to countenance any further delay, and on 29 March he told the Betwoded Haile Giorgis that he

1. FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, No. 86, 23.12.15.
2. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 15, 3.2.16. Lik Abogaz, Tekla Hawariat, Fit Melki, and Tasfai.
3. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 19, 17.2.16.
intended to see Lij Yasu. The Betwoded begged him to telegraph instead, and when Thesiger refused he promised to have an answer within 48 hours. The Betwoded returned the answer that Ato Takla Hawariat was to replace Abogaz as head of the mission and that work was to continue. However, work remained at a standstill and on 3 April Thesiger left Adis Ababawithout a pass for Ankober. He was prevented from proceeding by young officers who reported that Yasu was in the Danakil country, but he later received a message that Yasu would see him at Adia Ababa by Easter.

Thesiger's journey was most uncharacteristic of a European Minister, and it was symptomatic of his

4. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 21, 19.2.16.

5. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 38, 23.3.16. In February Lij Yasu was in Ankober discussing with the local Galla the possibility of attacking the Isa Somali (FO 371/2595, Langley memo on a conversation with Borghese, 29.2.16.). This was probably in conjunction with plans to aid Sayyid Muhammad, since he recruited his Dervishes largely from the Darod Somali, and the Isa generally opposed him. In March he travelled to Danakil country with a small escort, and he did not receive messages (FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, No. 30, 7.3.16).

1. Future Ethiopian Ambassador to the League of Nations.

2. FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, No. 39, 29.3.16.

3. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 41, 14.4.16. The mission had completed the majority of the survey and made their report in July 1916.
impatience at Yasu's delaying tactics. By 1916 Thesiger was prepared for desperate and flamboyant measures, but this was not entirely caused by Ethiopia's *ishī naga* - "yes, but tomorrow" - attitude. Along with Britain's frustration at the lack of progress in obtaining the fruits of her policy was a dislike of the nature of Lij Yasu's regime. This regime, with its pro-German and pro-Muslim overtones, threatened not only Britain's policy in Ethiopia, but her war effort as well. Britain had made some limited progress on her important policy aims - the Tsana barrage and the Gambela wireless in particular - but Lij Yasu's basic anti-British attitude kept a complete solution in the distant future. However, it was a long time before the British Legation realized that it was Lij Yasu who was their nemesis in Ethiopia.

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Thesiger had reported on 19 December 1913:

The coming year will be a critical one for Abyssinia, as the responsibility for any continuation of the misgovernment of the past will fall on Lij Yasu, and he will have a difficult task before him if a crisis is to be avoided.

To this, J. Seymour, a Foreign Office clerk, minuted:

We can only hope that Lij Yasu will succeed in reducing the Administration to some sort of order. Hitherto he has been able to shelter himself to some extent owing to the doubt about what powers he possessed during the Emperor's life but in future the responsibility will fall on him.

Thesiger was convinced that if Yasu could gain Shoan support his succession would be secure, but his pessimism was so great that he ventured to state: "The close of the year 1913 ... will be dated the last period of the history of Abyssinia as an independent nation". ²

Furthermore, he did not think the Tripartite Powers could prevent the dissolution of the Empire. "The whole policy of France in Abyssinia", he stated, "turns on the trade in rifles and ammunition"; and the Italians were using every effort to extend their predominance in those areas that would presumably come under their control. Thesiger was very disturbed by the latter (he had given up long ago any hope of French co-operation), since Italy and Britain had often worked together on issues of mutual interest. Of the Italians, he said:

Their whole policy in both the North and the South is based on the idea that the day of the final division of Abyssinia

1. F.O. minute on ibid.
is not as far distant as we hope it may be. Italy has no wish to prolong the present situation indefinitely, as, until the Abyssinian hinterland is absorbed, their colonies of Erythrea and Benadir have no real commercial value, and the money which is now so lavishly spent on them can bring in no return until Abyssinia breaks up. Once they themselves are ready for action, it is more than likely that they will foment trouble in Abyssinia which it is to our interest to postpone, and therefore any efforts which we may make to strengthen the internal government of the country will meet with no real response from their side.

If Italy chose to pursue a forward policy in Ethiopia then Britain would have the choice of upholding Ethiopia against Italy, or of supporting Italian aggression. Even worse, if Italy so undermined the Ethiopian state so as to precipitate its break-up, then Britain would be obliged to participate in the partition of Ethiopia. This would be undesirable until Britain had built up her position around Lake Tsana and in the western provinces.

The Italians and Mikael both wanted to absorb Tigré into their own dominions: to this end they collaborated tactically, each intending to double-cross the other. The Italians often bribed Tigréan chiefs near the Eritrean border, since they felt this would ease their absorption of the North when Ethiopia broke up. Before the arms

1. Ibid.
embargo the Italians had shipped arms to the North, including 20,000 rifles to Ras Mikael, who was also attempting to divide the Tigré in order to make it easier to absorb into his own sphere of preponderance. Mikael induced Dej Gabra Selassie of Adua to challenge Ras Sibhat of Agamé and Dej Seyoum of Makalle. Sibhat was an independent-minded chief who had rebelled several times in the 1890's, and Seyoum was the son and heir of Ras Mangasha and a grandson of Asé Yohannes IV—both were supporters of an independent Tigré. Gabra Selassie was Italian-educated and had fought against Menelik at Adua, and he relied heavily on Italian advisers. In preparation for his attack on Sibhat he independently requested and received from Asmara a supply of about 2,000 rifles. Sibhat learned of this and accused him of being in the Italian pay. Lij Yasu, embarrassed by Sibhat's accusation and under pressure from the Council, asked Count Colli to use his influence and agents at Adua to recall Gabra Selassie to the capital. Gabra Selassie agreed to come if he was accompanied by Sibhat and Seyoum, but he changed his mind when he heard that his

2. FO 371/1878, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 47, 2.5.14.
3. These rifles were being stored in Asmara for Gabra Selassie until he was ready to pay for them.
enemies were mobilizing. Lij Yasu was determined to punish Gabra Selassie, and so he ordered Ras Walda Giorgis, Sibhat and Seyoum to march on Adua. Colli intervened once again and persuaded Gabra Selassie to leave Adua, but not before Sibhat made his move. Gabra Selassie hurriedly returned and met Sibhat in battle at Entiko on 25 February 1914 and thoroughly defeated him. He had accomplished what Mikael had wanted him to do, but in doing so he had forced Lij Yasu into tactical collaboration with the Italians.¹

Mikael mobilized and Seyoum marched on Adua and defeated Gabra Selassie on 4 March at Maiken. Gabra Selassie took refuge in the Tigréan mountains, and some believed he had fled to Eritrea.² The Tigré now seemed thoroughly divided, but there was a chance that the Shoan, Walda Giorgis, who was fast approaching Axum with 20,000 Amhara troops, would cause the Tigré to reunite. A confrontation between Shoa and the Tigré could spark rebellion in the whole empire.³ As Walda Giorgis neared Axum in early March, Yasu ordered all the major Shoan

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1. FO 371/1878, Dodds to Grey, T. 10, 3.3.14.
2. FO 371/1878, Dodds to Grey, No. 22, 1.3.14.
3. FO 371/1878, Dodds to Grey, No. 16, 15.2.14.
chiefs (who were then present at Adis Ababa) - Ras Demissie of Walega, Dej Kassa of Salale, Dej Balcha of Sidamo - to be ready to go North if Walda Giorgis dared to claim the Tigré. The danger now resided in a conflict between Walda Giorgis and Mikael. Walda Giorgis wanted as much of the Tigré as he could get, and he set out to appoint successors to Gabra Selassie and Sibhat. His power and influence did not last long however, since his army began to disintegrate due to desertions and dysentery.

Mikael did not move against Walda Giorgis when he realized that the latter's presence in the Tigré would only be temporary. The Italians, on the other hand, began to fear an attack by Walda Giorgis, Mikael or both against Eritrea. Just prior to Gabra Selassie's defeat the Italian Government had asked the Foreign Office to discuss joint action in Ethiopia. At the same time there were reports of Italian reinforcements arriving at Massowah, which prompted Sir Walter Langley to remark: "The Italians are extremely nervous of being caught

2. FO 371/1878, Rodd to Grey, T. 44, 3.3.14; Borghese to Langley, 6.3.14; Dodds to Grey, No. 13, 13.3.14.
unprepared when Abyssinia breaks up!"¹ Consul James Dodds at Adis Ababa said:

"In view of this fear one cannot but wonder to what extent the Erythrean authorities have been associated with Dej Gabra Selassie in the Tigrean trouble, and I can only think that they have meddled rather too far in Abyssinian politics, and when trouble broke out feared the results of their exhibition of sympathy and possibly of support to their old friend Gabra Selassie".²

Britain, though Italy's rival in the North, felt that an Italo-Ethiopian quarrel would soon raise the question of partition, which she was not anxious to consider at that moment.³ There were two points of contention:

1) Eritrea feared an attack by the Ethiopian armies in the North; 2) Ethiopia wanted Gabra Selassie extradited from his supposed hide-out in Eritrea. Both the Ethiopian Government and Count Colli tried futilely to persuade the Eritrean authorities of Ethiopia's pacific intentions. Eritrea wanted to clear its name of meddling in Ethiopian affairs, but they doubted whether Gabra Selassie would get a fair trial from Lij Yasu, so they

¹. FO 371/1878, Langley note on Dodds to Grey, No. 13, 13.3.14.
². FO 371/1878, Dodds to Grey, No. 25, 14.3.14.
³. FO 371/1878, Seymour note on Dodds to Grey, No. 23, 8.3.14; Borghese to FO (verbal), 24.3.14.
denied that he was in Eritrea. Ferdinando Martini, the Italian Minister of Colonies, maintained that the new troops that were pouring into Massowah were merely Eritrean troops returning from service in Libya, and that Italy planned no move against Ethiopia. Italy, in fact, had her hands full in Libya, and he suggested, on the contrary, that Lij Yasu might use the Tigré troubles and Italy's preoccupation in North Africa as an excuse for a war of national unification.

Mikael closely watched the disintegration of Ras Walda Giorgis' army in the vicinity of Adua, and Lij Yasu sent his father large amounts of arms from the Government stocks, including most of Menelik's treasure. On 5 May Walda Giorgis left Adua for Gondar, and a deputation including Ras Hailu of Godjam, Bajirond Igazu, and Likaba Walda Gabriel left Adis Ababa for Dese to prepare for


2. The Sudan had reported that men and animals were being collected by the Eritrean authorities, FO 371/1878, D.M.O. to FO, 23.4.14.

Negus Mikael of Wollo and Tigre
Mikael's coronation as Negus of Wollo and Tigre. Mikael was crowned by Abuna Petros on 1 June 1914, and he in turn appointed Seyoum Mangasha Ras of Tigré, and Jantara Haile Maria Serabion Ras of Sokota. Mikael was now ruler of everything north of Shoa and east of Gondar. His claim to Begemdir was disputed by Ras Walda Giorgis, who remained his one great rival in the North.

Though Lij Yasu had not been directly involved with intrigue in the North, the 'Tigré Revolt' was a fortunate event for him. What could have been a full-scale rebellion or the pretext for an Italian invasion instead removed two potential Tigréan troublemakers, neutralized Walda Giorgis, and made possible the coronation of Mikael as virtual overlord of the North. Thanks to the Eritrean authorities Lij Yasu could pose as the defender of the 'national territory', and even Count Colli, who was well respected in Adis Ababa, could not assuage the anti-

4. FO 371/1878, Rodd to Grey, No. 146, 22.4.14.

5. FO 371/1878, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, 49 Con., 16.5.14. He did not send however the famous war chest of Maria Theresa dollars.

Italian feeling. Ras Walda Giorgis, who had thought it time to put an end to Mikael's ambitions, was not adequately supported by his Shoan brethren, and his challenge soon collapsed. This enabled Mikael to establish himself in the North, with both Shoa and Italy discredited, as the protector of northern interests.  

The 'Tigré Revolt' also awakened Britain to Italy's ambitions, which began to be a new and constant problem. When the Italian Embassy enquired as to spheres of influence in southern Ethiopia at the time of the 'revolt', Herbert Read at the Colonial Office noted:

The partition of Abyssinia seems to obsess the Italians, but altho' the Abyssinians may fight among themselves, everything seems to point to their combining against foreign intruders & they will be a very hard nut to crack for a long time to come.

1. Due to a prophecy that he would die within 3 years of coronation Lij Yasu apparently preferred to postpone this ceremony. Guèbre Selassié, op. cit., ii, p. 626.

2. CO 533/145, FO to CO, 20.3.14. On the questions of the Southern and Somali borders the notes also said: Read: "We scarcely want to increase our commitments in the desolate country in the north of EAP, altho' we shd like some adjustments of the frontier so as to make it easier to patrol." Lewis Harcourt (Colonial Minister): "Are you quite sure? I have no land hunger - but Mr. Byatt tells me that the E. frontier of Abyssinia contains a wonderful country in which you can grow 2 crops of everything every year." Sir G. Fiddes (Assistant Under-Secretary): "Including dragon's teeth, I fear."
The Foreign Office had been surprised at the extent of Italian influence in the North; was still concerned over Italian claims to Lake Tsana and Godjam; and was anxious to gain a concession over the oil deposits that supposedly existed near Chelga on the Gallabat trade route.\textsuperscript{1} Reports that an Italian mason had dug some wells for the Shaikh Imām 'Alī of Nogara, near the Sudan border, raised fears of Italian penetration on the Gallabat route, and denials from Rome only emphasized the degree to which the Eritrean administration was independent of Roman control.\textsuperscript{2} Count Colli confided in Doughty-Wylie that he was personally at odds with the marquis Giuseppe di Salvaggo Raggi, the Governor of Eritrea, since the latter favoured a "forward policy" that Colli felt would lead to war.\textsuperscript{3}

The uneasy state of Italo-Ethiopian relations were exacerbated by the European War which broke out in August 1914. Italy, as part of the Triple Alliance, was expected by Ethiopia to join Germany against Britain and France, and her apparent neutrality made Ethiopia suspicious and watchful. Doughty-Wylie, rightly, predicted that Ethiopia would "do

\begin{enumerate}
\item FO 371/1880, Doughty-Wylie to Sperling, private, 1.3.14.
\item FO 371/1880, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, T.20, 4.4.14; Rodd to Grey, T. 62, 9.4.14, and No. 166, 6.5.14.
\item FO 371/1881, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 51, 21.5.14; Rodd to Grey, No. 260, 6.7.14.
\end{enumerate}
no European business" in the event of general war, and he offered his services to the War Office. Though he was told to remain in Adis Ababa, Sperling noted: "Our position in Abyssinia can be settled after the war, whatever Italy may do in the meantime." The Italians had closed their telegraph line since 28 July, and had refused to allow messages to go to Khartoum - emphasizing the need for a British line via Gambela. Doughty-Wylie hinted that if the Italians entered the war on Germany's side and attacked the Sudan, he was sure that he could persuade Lij Yasu to attack Eritrea. The Consul had a rather exaggerated idea of his influence over Yasu, and Sir Edward Grey quickly cabled:

> Italians have declared neutrality. They are very friendly & more likely to take sides with us than with Germany. Unless their attitude entirely changes it would be impolitic & wrong to incite Abyssinians against them.

Grey was trying desperately to hold on to Italy. He requested that the French enforce their arms regulations at Jibuti with a special strictness in order to help


2. During the 'Tigré Revolt' Ethiopia was dependent on the Italian line for information, and this also convinced the British that a Gambela line would be useful to them and welcome to the Ethiopians.

negotiations for Italian assistance. Doughty-Wylie believed that as long as Italy remained neutral Ethiopia would not attack Eritrea, and he informed Lij Yasu "that the probable result of this war would be closer friendship between the three Powers".¹

After the outbreak of war Karl Schwimmer, the Austrian Consul, began to stir up anti-Allied feeling and spread rumours that Germany had captured Nairobi and had armed the 'Blacks'. Though Doughty-Wylie denied the report, there was a danger that the Southern chiefs would mobilize and invade the N.F.D.² There were also reports that Shaikh Khojali of Banī Shanqul had arrived in Adis Ababa to renew his acquaintance with Lij Yasu and to get permission to raid the Sudan.³ Yasu had summoned Khojali to bring in his tribute of alluvial gold, and in return he declared him to be legal ruler of Banī Shanqul and Dul over his rivals, Wad Tur El Guri ('Abd al-Rahman Khojali, the former Shaikh) and Muhammad Wad Mahmūd.⁴ Yasu also provided him with an escort and arms when he returned to


the West in January 1915. In the meantime Khojali met often with German agents, and some of them followed him to the West when he returned. 1

The Italians feared an attack on Eritrea by Negus Mikael, and they claimed that this fear lessened their effectiveness in Europe. Rome asked Paris and London to assure Lij Yasu that Italy was a friendly neutral, since if Italian public opinion felt secure from an Ethiopian attack, then it would be easier to persuade the public to accept intervention on the Allied side. 2 Both Britain and France hastened to instruct their Legations to reassure Yasu, but the Prince was justifiably suspicious of Italian policy. 3 He claimed that Italy had armed Gabra Selassie without informing him, and therefore had been a party to rebellion and murder. Count Colli had received pledges of peace from Mikael, and had warned him that at the first


4. Menelik had acquired Banī Shanquīl in 1898 and it was confirmed by the Rodd Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty.


2. FO 371/1881, Rodd to Grey, T. 256, 10.9.14; Grey to Doughty-Wylie, T. 57, 11.9.14. Bertie heard that France had turned down Italy's request for Jibuti as the price of her entry, FO 800/173, Bertie to Grey, T. private & Con., 2.10.14.
sign of mobilization Italy would strike. Lord Eustace Percy, at the Foreign Office, noted: "If Abyssinian hostility to Italy arises out of Italy's own action long before the war, we are under no obligation to pull her chestnuts out of the fire". Doughty-Wylie proposed a comprehensive agreement that would include settlement of the border problems arising from the Tigré troubles of early 1914, and a Tripartite guarantee of Ethiopian independence. Both Colli and Brice were favourable, but the Foreign Office was suspicious. They thought that a specific guarantee of Ethiopian independence might prove embarrassing after the war, especially since Ethiopia was expected to collapse. At the Colonial Office Harcourt stated that "A further engagement to respect the integrity of Abyssinia might ... be made by the three Powers without disadvantage", but he agreed that a guarantee would not be wise. In a demonstration of his frustration at the inability of Britain to obtain redress on the Southern border he said: "If Italy joins us in the European war, and

3. Ferdinando Martino had already drawn up a list of cessions which would be Italy's "price": Jubaland, Franco-Ethiopian Railroad, and an Eritrea-Beheadir connection, R. L. Hess, "Italy and Africa: Colonial Ambitions in the First World War", J.A.H., 1963, iv, 1, p. 107.


when it is over, I should like to divide Abyssinia between U.K., France & Italy and have done with the thing! But it is not time to discuss this yet.¹ The Foreign Office, though in agreement with Doughty-Wylie's other points, could not undertake any further guarantees of Ethiopia, and was only willing to remind Lij Yasu of Articles I and IV of the Tripartite Agreement.² A post-war partition could not be hampered by a compromising guarantee, hastily given.

The Italians received many assurances from Ethiopia that she intended no harm,³ and by the end of October 1914 relations were more friendly. This coincided with an improvement in Tripartite relations due to the cessation of the arms traffic.⁴ The Powers could now deal with the small but growing Central Power propaganda menace with united action. Mazhar Bey,⁵ the Turkish Consul-General at Harar, was in league with Herr von Syborg, the German Minister, and they had adherents in

³ I.D.D.I., series 5, i, documents 429, p. 232; 504, p. 279; and 546, p. 306.
Mikael's Wollo and in Jimma Aba Jifar. "Emissaries of Mazhar and Germans are in relation with Abyssinian Moslem chiefs nearer to our frontier, such as Khojali, and that the propaganda is designed to spread to those regions and further", Doughty-Wylie cabled. ¹

Turkish propaganda was mainly religious in content, and prayers for the success of German arms had been said in mosques in Harar. However, there was not as yet a call for Jihad or for a union with Sayyid Muhammad, and Doughty-Wylie doubted the effect of religious propaganda: "In their hearts, Africa for the Africans is a far stronger cry in Abyssinia, than Christianity against Islam", he stated. "Always colour will be stronger than religion ... Nor must it be forgotten that Lij Yasu is himself half Moslem, and has been very careful to favour his father's Moslem subjects". ²

Foreign Office policy was to minimize risks in Ethiopia, since the country was strategically located between the East African and the Middle Eastern theatres.

5. Supposedly a cousin of Enver Bey, the Turkish War Minister. He died at Jibuti in 1920, Guèbrè Selassie, op. cit., ii, p. 627.

1. FO 371/1881, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 80, 24.10.14; S.A. 122/6, also has a copy of a similar telegram.

2. Ibid. Menelik had considered himself a Caucasian at times, and a Black at others, when convenient, Greenfield, op. cit., p. 109.
of war. Doughty-Wylie reported:

There remains the strong Moslem element in this country and the Africa for the Africans' party ... if there was a rising in the Sudan, Egypt or a serious reverse anywhere, they might have a try to do something.

He warned Wingate, the Sirdar, that German agents had frequently visited with Shaikh Khojali, and that he should watch Bani Shanqul. Aden reported that Arab opposition was mounting against Britain, and the Foreign Office felt that Ethiopia would also succumb to anglophobia. However, Nagadras Haile Giorgis, the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, did not favour the Turco-German cause, and after conferring with Doughty-Wylie he confined Mazhar Bey to Adis Ababa where he could be watched more closely.

There was a genuine danger that Ethiopia would side with the Central Powers. Doughty-Wylie had reported that anti-Tripartite feeling was high, and was capable of growing. When Italy had attacked Turkey and had mobilized against Yemen in 1911, there had been great hostility

1. FO 371/1881, Doughty-Wylie to Sperling, private, 7.11.14. Both Kitchener and the German General Staff shared the view that Egypt was vital to British prestige in the East, Sir G. Arthur, Life of Lord Kitchener, (London, 1920), iii, p. 95.

2. S.A. 122/6, Doughty-Wylie to Wingate, 7.11.14.


toward Italy among the chiefs. Ras Sibhat of Agame had mobilized 80,000 men against Eritrea, and many chiefs thought that Ethiopia would be Italy's next victim.¹

At that time Africa had all but been divided between the European Powers, and countries like Italy, which had been relatively unsuccessful in the 'scramble' were searching for unclaimed territory to annex. In February 1913 Lord Kitchener reported that Egyptian Muslims still considered Turkey as the chief nation of Islam, and considered the Ottoman Sultan as their Khalīfa. Furthermore, Britain, as the occupier of Egypt, the Sudan, and India was considered Islam's greatest enemy.² German influence had also been growing in Ethiopia in the years before the war.³ Ethiopians knew that Britain and Germany were imperial rivals, and they tended to favour Germany in preference to the Tripartite Powers when they could.⁴

Both the Hamburger Nachrichten of 31 December 1913 and the

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¹ FO 403/421, Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No. 78, 19.10.11; L. Villari, Storia Diplomatica Del Conflitto Italo-Etiopico, (Bologna, 1943), p. 30; Marcus, ubi supra, p. 233.

² FO 407/180, Kitchener to Grey, No. 17, 16.2.13.

Cologne Gazette of 3 January 1914 quoted rumours that Britain intended to annex Ethiopia, and they stated that Germany ought to be "compensated".\(^1\) The Vossische Zeitung also called upon Germany to direct its attention to Ethiopia, where the Tripartite Powers seemed to be on the verge of deposing Lij Yasu and partitioning the Empire.

Seymour, a Foreign Office clerk, noted:

It is to be hoped that the contingency referred to will not occur. If Abysn. should eventually fall to pieces it would be interesting to see on what grounds a German claim for compensation could be based.

Germany, as witnessed by her actions in Angra Pequena in 1884, in the Transvaal in 1896, and in Morocco in 1905 and 1911 did not need very strong grounds to intervene in African affairs. Ethiopia was a valuable piece of territory which might even welcome German aid against the sometimes ambitious policies of the Tripartite Powers. With the coming of war in 1914, German, and later Turkish agents, took the opportunity to disrupt the 'special

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1. FO 371/1878, Goschen to Grey, No. 3, 2.1.14 and No. 8, 5.1.14.

2. FO 371/1878, Seymour note on Goschen to Grey, No. 36, 22.1.14.
relationship' between Ethiopia and the Tripartite Powers. The Germans had nothing to lose. At least they could hope for a slight diversion of Allied troops on the colonial borders - which might take off some pressure from General von Lettow-Vorbeck in German East Africa. At best there was the possibility of an Ethio-Central Powers alliance which would threaten the Suez Canal and Allied possessions in Africa.

The Allied cause received additional blows from Lij Yasu, whose affinity for Muslim friends and advisers had hitherto only disturbed the more religious among the Christian highlanders. Although Mazhar Bey had been confined to Adis Ababa, Yasu appointed in early December 1914 "that notorious Harrar Arab Abdullahi Sadik" as Governor of the Ogaden Somali under Dej Tafari. Sadik was virtually Mazhar's replacement in the Muslim stronghold of Harar. Tafari had learned from Somali prisoners in November 1914 that Mazhar was in frequent contact with the Mullah's agents in the Ogaden. Not knowing that Lij Yasu was also involved in these intrigues, Tafari requested permission to arrest Mazhar. Lij Yasu answered by appointing Sadik.¹ *Al-Hāj 'Abdallāhi Sadik was a*

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former wekil - deputy or director of customs - and Governor of Harari Muslims. He had been employed by Menelik on several diplomatic missions to the Ottoman Sultan, to the Amīr of Afghanistan, and to Sayyid Muhammad. He had been deported from India by the C.I.D., and he was thought to be anti-British and very corrupt. 1 Sadık apparently gained favour with Lij Yasu by enticing him with variety of sensual and spiritual experiences. Most importantly, he told Yasu of a prophecy that a new Mahdi, descended from Fatima, was expected to arise in a "new quarter" and conquer all of North-East Africa. 2 Count Colli believed that Germany and Turkey had provided Sadik with thousands of pounds to supply Sayyid Muhammad with munitions and protection. The Foreign Office hastened to replace Consul Dodds in Harar (who had volunteered for military service) with Major A. S. Lawrance of the Somaliland Camel Constabulary. Doughty-Wylie, however, was unperturbed: "When victory is plain even to an African mind, Abdullah [sic] and his kind will accept the


Doughty-Wylie, therefore, did not feel that a formal protest against Sadik's appointment was advisable, since it would draw too much attention to Britain's weakness on the Somali question. Haile Giorgis had assured him that Sadik had been appointed to placate the Harari Muslims, not to incite them. Sadik was under Haile Giorgis' direct control, and he would be confined to Harar and Jijiga and he would not be allowed to meddle in the Ogaden. Haile Giorgis lamented that Lij Yasu "was personally under Moslem influence, \[but\] ... his wiser counsellors are trying to restrain him". Doughty-Wylie felt that Britain could still rely on the support of Dej Tafari of Harar, and he hopefully predicted that "an approaching victory will put this matter right".² Doughty-Wylie reported:

Taffari's private interest as opposed to Lij Yasu's, whose heir he is, is Christian Shoa as against Moslem Wollo. As Governor of Harar he will dislike a powerful and intriguing subordinate \[i.e., Sadik\]. He will not I hope be anxious to arm the Mullah, nor to quarrel with England and France whose support he may someday want.

Doughty-Wylie's appreciation of the Ethiopian internal situation was remarkably accurate, though he also believed that the European War would be over before any pro-Muslim movement could mature: "Our victory would have a corresponding power for calm. A few intrigues and flirtations with Germany and Turkey are not much if all goes well."\(^1\)

In December 1914 Ethiopia seemed to be assailed by both external and internal threats: an Italian forward policy developing in Eritrea, and Muslim intrigue undermining the Christian character of the empire.\(^2\)

The Turco-German propaganda had some effect in the early days of the War, but tales of atrocities, especially the destruction of churches in Belgium and France, turned Ethiopian opinion against the Central Powers.\(^3\) In the meantime Yasu's position had improved after the 'Tigré' Revolt', the dissolution of Ras Walda Giorgis' army, and the coronation of Negus Mikael. The Shoans, without a leader, took to mere underground opposition. Lij Yasu's dislike for the Christian highlanders and the Tripartite Powers found him allies in Sayyid Muhammad and the Central

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1. Ibid.

2. S.I.R. No. 245, December 1914. £600,000 had been voted for the already quite adequate Eritrean defences. In Ethiopia Yasu continued to receive high-ranking Muslims, including Shaikh Khojali, supra, p. 137.

Powers. He had removed Fit Hapta Giorgis as President of the Council, and replaced him with Haile Giorgis, with the title of Betwoded and with control over Sidamo.¹

Haile Giorgis was pro-Allied, but he was a pragmatic politician of considerable skill, sometimes very corrupt and not as impartial as the Fitwary. It was a sad impasse for Britain to have to rely on Haile Giorgis, the man they had detested when the Council was first formed in 1907,² to represent their interests.

German propaganda had convinced many Ethiopians that Germany had accepted Islam and had imposed it upon Serbia, Poland and Belgium. Some believed that Germany had offered Ethiopia the port of Jibuti if she would join the Central Powers.³ German agents had assured Ethiopians that with Turkish aid they would soon occupy Cairo, Khartoum, Berbera and India. Doughty-Wylie said that Yasu was susceptible to these rumours since "Lij Yasu himself by birth and tradition, as well as by certain personal friendships, has many links with Islam".⁴

2. Supra, Ch. I, p. 33.
4. Ibid.
Doughty-Wylie had received assurances from Haile Giorgis that Sadik would be closely watched, and from Brice that Jibuti would be closed if Sadik was found to be trading with Sayyid Muhammad. Berbera felt that Sadik, with Turco-German assistance, could well increase the munitions that Sayyid Muhammad already received from Ba Geri Somalis in the Ogaden and Arusi. Influential Somalis believed that Lij Yasu wanted a friendly African government on his border, and that he would invite Sayyid Muhammad to retreat into the Ogaden. This agreed somewhat with the Doughty-Wylie's view that "the prevailing sentiment in Abyssinia was 'Africa for the Africans' rather than any pan-islamic or anti-Mahomedan feeling - a distinction of colour, in fact, rather than religion."¹

On 21 January 1915 Sadik called at the British Legation to ask for a letter of introduction to Consul Lawrance at Harar, and this gave Doughty-Wylie the opportunity to lecture him on the importance to which Britain applied to the arms traffic. Sadik replied that Yasu wanted him to co-operate with the British Government, but a confidential agent later informed the Legation that

Herr Jensen, the Dragoman at the German Legation and an adviser to Negus Mikael, planned to follow Sadik to Harar after the Kaiser's birthday celebration.¹ The birthday, which was celebrated on 5 February, was a "curious fiasco". It was largely attended by Arab camel drivers from Aden and Lahej, but Gan Bayena Yimar, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Hasib Ydlibi, of the Baro Concession, were also there. Ydlibi had been named Governor of Yambo in the Anuak country in January, with instructions to stop the arms traffic in the West. In February he was also given the title of Nagadras of Harar and Dire Dawa, with complete control over customs and police.² He had promised to increase revenues and reduce European influence (mainly French) in the railway districts, but Walker, the British charge d'affaires, reported:

"There is no money and little glory to be obtained from the position and Ydlibi must have an ulterior motive".³

Ydlibi, before moving to Harar, had unofficially been

1. FO 371/2227, Walker to Grey, No. 6, 24.1.15.
2. S.I.R. Nos. 246-7, January-February 1915; FO 371/2228, Walker to Grey, No. 7, 5.2.15. Ydlibi had returned from London in October 1914 on a Turkish passport, and the India Office had tried unsuccessfully to keep him out of Ethiopia, FO 371/1878, IO to FO, (Ferard to Sperling), 5.10.14.
3. Dej Ganami of Gore, a staunch supporter of Lij Yasu, was incensed at losing Yambo to Ydlibi.
promised assistance by the British Legation to halt the Anuak arms trade, in return for a first option on the purchase of his shares of the Baro Lands concession.\(^1\) Ydlibi, in general, was considered a nuisance by the Legation (they had evidence he was selling rubber to the Germans), but he had a long history of contact with the British - his father had been Turkish Consul-General in London; he had served in the British forces in Cyprus, Egypt and the Sudan; he had business dealings with the Sudan; his wife and daughter had British nationality.\(^2\) It was not usual for foreigners to rise so rapidly or so far in the Ethiopian hierarchy,\(^3\) and it prompted Sir Walter Langley to remark: "Ydlibi is becoming a regular Poohbah of Abyssinia".\(^4\) Though Ethiopian Governments from Tewodros onward made use of foreign 'advisers' they were rarely allowed to govern. Ydlibi was a Levantine

1. FO 371/2227, Doughty-Wylie, No. 6, 23.1.15; Thesiger to Grey, No. 12, 12.3.15. Ydlibi owned a one-quarter share and was manager of the concession. The Director was Roberto Compagnoni, an Italian banker, who worked with a Belgian group.

2. FO 371/2594, CO to FO, Con., 10.11.16.

3. "In Shoa, race, birth, or religion was in itself neither a passport nor a barrier to a position of importance and confidence ... every individual inhabitant could rise to an eminent position in society", Darkwah, \textit{ubi supra}, 257. In any case, Ethiopians considered Europeans as their servants most of the time, Levine, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 149.
Christian of many loyalties, none of which (except perhaps the commercial motive) were very strong or permanent. His appointments were made through the intercession of the Betwoded, with whom he probably shared any profits he made. Both the Harar and Gambela regions, to which he was appointed, were trading regions that, with good management, could have afforded handsome profits. That Ydlibi was pro-Turkish made him suspect to the British Legation; his appointment coming on the heels of that of Sadik, pointed to conspiracy.

In January 1915 Negus Mikael, either in an attempt to gain Shoan favour or to split the Ethiopian Church, came out in support of the Shoan Sost Lidet interpretation of the incarnation of Christ. Axumites, supporters of the Wold Quib, rioted, and the Abun declared the authenticity of the Sost Lidet. Yasu supported the Abun (and Mikael), and made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Takla Haymanot at Debra Libanos, the stronghold of the Sost Lidet, to demonstrate his piety and orthodoxy. However on 25 January

4. FO 371/2228, Langley note on Walker to Grey, No.7,5.2.15.

1. Abir, op. cit., pp. 39-41, 157-9. The Shoan Sost Lidet - Three Births - were "the eternal generation by the father, the birth from the Virgin Mary, and the unction of the Holy Spirit" (Jones and Monroe, op. cit., pp 109-10); the Tigrean Wold Quib - son anointing - held that Christ was born divine, anointed himself and was born of his own divine wish.
1915 he returned to his retreat at Fil Wuja on the outskirts of Adis Ababa in preparation for a journey to Dire Dawa, and he failed to attend Church services at Adis Alem on the 27th. Thesiger had returned from service in France on 22 January, and although he did not get an interview with Yasu, he reported:

So far as can be ascertained there is no important purpose underlying this journey, but a certain apprehension exists lest he may be tempted to take some action against Dejaz. Taffari, the son of the late Ras Makonnen, who is generally regarded as heir to the throne in the event of anything happening to Lij Yasu himself. On the whole the political situation appears calm but there seems little prospect of transacting any business with the Abyssinian Government for some time to come.¹

The only responsible member of the Government had been Fit Hapta Giorgis, but much of his power had been usurped by the Betwoded Haile Giorgis, who avoided decisions on matters that were not accompanied by a heavy bribe.²

The presence of Turkish and German agents increased the


3. S.I.R. No. 245-6, December 1914 and January 1915.

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 10, 27.1.15.

2. "One might render the basic principle that informs communication among the Amhara as: Avoid binding commitments; maximize the degree of freedom left after an utterance", Levine, op. cit., p. 251.
always large volume of intrigues in the capital. There was great anxiety during February 1915 due to reports that the Turks had captured the Suez Canal, and since the Italian Telegraph line was broken the British Legation had no information to refute these rumours.¹

Lij Yasu spent Easter in Harar and Dire Dawa, where he often prayed in the mosques. This could not have failed to have insulted and angered his Christian subjects. However Yasu's daily experiences were lived in Muslim fashion among Muslims. 'Abdallāhi Sadik was his constant companion, and most of his retainers were Muslim.² He had 'married' Sadik's daughter, as well as the daughters of several other Muslim notables, but there is no evidence that these 'marriages' had any more Islamic canonical validity than the ones he had entered in Gimira in 1912.³ It seems that

Eyasu had, in true Solomonic tradition, deliberately set out to raise sons from families of as many chieftains as possible and had perhaps sought to establish a new aristocracy to replace members of the traditional ruling families especially those of Shewa.

1. FO 371/2227, Walker to Grey, T. 7, 8.2.15. This refers to Djemal Pasha's offensive.

2. FO 371/2227, Thesiger to Grey, No. 17, 10.4.15. One of his most favoured retainers was the shifta Gan Kidani Imām Magūsa, who terrorized the Haud.
Yasu's preoccupation with his Muslim policy forced him to neglect the rest of his empire, and minor revolts broke out in many places. The British Legation had all but given up hope of dealing with Yasu's Government.¹

Germany intensified her intrigues in Ethiopia in February 1915, by despatching a mission, ostensibly archeological and ethnographical, under the command of Geheimrath Leo Frobenius (with the title of "Plenipotentiary of His Imperial Ottoman Majesty in Arabia").² According to Lord Eustace Percy of the Foreign Office, Frobenius was a well-known "scamp" who had caused the Colonial Office some trouble in Nigeria with "larceny and lying".³ The original mission of five Germans had left Berlin in November 1914, travelled by land to Constantinople and Damascus, where they recruited

3. He had also married the daughters of "the Ras of Adal"; 'Abdallah, the grandson of the last Amīr of Harar; and Nag Muhammad Abū Bakr, son of Shaikh Mutar, the Danakil Ughaz of Hargeisa.


1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 18, 28.4.15.


3. FO 371/2227, Rodd to Grey, T. 91, 21.3.15 with Percy note. Frobenius was also a well-known author, traveller and Africanist.
an additional thirteen "orientals". They continued to Arabia, crossed the Red Sea by dhow, and disembarked at Massowah. Their chief object was to encourage the loyalty of the Arabs to the Ottoman Government, and they held that they only wished to deliver some letters to the German Embassy at Adis Ababa. Frobenius later reported that British prestige was low in the Middle East, and that the Allied Red Sea patrol was of little effect.

Martini, the Italian Minister of Colonies, could not expel the mission without compromising Italian neutrality, but he could prevent them from continuing to Adis Ababa. Paris and London quickly agreed to give the mission safe conduct back to Germany, via Suez and Italy. Prince von Bülow, German Ambassador in Rome, knowing nothing about the mission and wishing to be as co-operative as possible with the Italians, ordered it home on 26 March 1915. Most of the Ethiopian chiefs were visibly relieved by the recall of the Frobenius mission,

1. The Times, 10 April 1915.
2. Ethiopians feared the mission would compromise their neutrality as well, FO 371/2227, Rodd to Grey, T. 66, 22.2.15.
and Ras Walda Giorgis had even warned Negus Mikael not to seek or accept German support, since Mikael's sympathies for Germany were by this time well known.\(^1\)

Thesiger believed that Germany relied too heavily on pan-Islamic propaganda. Even Muslims felt that Yasu's responsiveness to Pan-Islamic propaganda injured his position as Ethiopian Head of State; while Christians were of course increasingly dismayed by his Islamizing tendencies. "The defeat of the Turkish army on the Suez Canal and the fall of the forts on the Dardenelles", Thesiger confidently and erroneously predicted, "will gradually calm any desire of the Mohammedan population of Abyssinia to follow a nation which had obviously been unable to assist or protect her Turkish ally". Thesiger persuaded the Foreign Office that the Muslim threat would come, if at all, from a popular insurrection following the news of the Turkish invasion of Egypt. Thus Britain was willing to dismiss Lij Yasu's flirtations with Islam as rudimentary, temporary and eccentric.

The British Legation was completely puzzled by Lij Yasu's behaviour, and since it could find no political

\(^1\) FO 371/2227, Thesiger to Grey, No. 11, 7.3.15.
motive in his actions it put them down to "the attraction of the moment". However the Legation was taking an increasingly anti-Yasu stance. While in Harar Yasu kept a tight hold on his "heir", Dej Tafari.

At Adis Ababa comments on the Prince's debauched habits are even more outspoken and many of the officers openly say that if Dejaz Tafari does not seize the opportunity of chaining up Lij Yasu and putting himself on the throne it will be a pity. There is no chance that Dejaz Tafari will be strong-minded enough to follow this course, but it is fairly certain that these reports will come to the ears of Lij Yasu and considerable anxiety is felt here as to Dejaz Tafari's safety.

As Lij Yasu left Dire Dawa for Adis Ababa he ordered a Somali servant to assassinate Tafari. The servant caused Tafari's boat to sink while he and several of his friends were relaxing on Lake Aramayo, drowning all but Tafari and his cousin Imru. Though Tafari did not immediately retaliate, his resolve to avenge himself on Lij Yasu and save Ethiopia from Islam is usually dated from the 'Aramayo incident'. But Tafari was patient, and he had no intention of precipitating his own arrest and death by rash action.

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 14, 31.3.15.

Though Yasu concentrated on an alliance with the Somali Muslims he did not neglect his other interests. The War Office reported in April 1915 that he had dispatched several spies to the Sudan to report on the extent of discontent, and the possibilities of common action with the disaffected. The War Office assumed that this was connected with Yasu's Islamic leanings and with Shaikh Khojali's continuing quarrels in Banī Shanqul. The Shaikh was reported to be buying Sudanese allies with gold, and with Lij Yasu's support he gained some ascendancy over his rival, Tur El Guri. But apart from Banī Shanqul and Darfur, where 'Ali Dīnār had received messages from Enver Pasha, the Turkish War Minister, on 3 February 1915 to rise up against the British, the Sudan was in fact remarkably quiet and loyal during the War.

Lij Yasu's personal policy was becoming clearer to the British Legation, but Yasu was not the only factor they had to deal with. The Council of Ministers shared control, especially in the field of foreign affairs, and


their eyes were fixed on the European War. They believed that Germany would win, and they feared that this would mean the German occupation of Jibuti and the Turkish occupation of Cairo and Khartoum: "they are not anxious to see the often conflicting interests of England and France replaced ... by the sole power of Germany. While they further believe that Italy, even as the price of her neutrality, would secure a free hand in the North". This might "open a door for closer friendship with Great Britain", but there was no evidence of an imminent Allied victory; and without a victory Ethiopia would do nothing - much less sign the Tsana Treaty.¹

However, the Ethiopians were convinced that Italy would join Germany in return for concessions on the Adriatic, and since this would ensure the defeat of the Allies Haile Giorgis claimed that Ethiopia would be willing to throw herself on Eritrea in a desperate attempt to divert Italian troops. Thesiger thought that in time Ethiopia would be convinced of Italian neutrality and of German defeat, and that the Tsana agreement would be settled with the Allied victory.

¹. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 16, 14.4.15.
In this respect it is curious to notice that, while the Ethiopian Government, out of fear that our power may be on the wane, decline to discuss important matters, they are at the same time insuring their risks by acceding, in an indirect way, to our demands in smaller affairs.

This was a reference to the Ethiopian Government's agreement to keep Sadik out of the Ogaden, to confine Mazhar Bey to Adis Ababa, and to the recent arrests of four men for the murder of Captain Aylmer in 1913. Thesiger believed that Ethiopia was manifesting her friendship in this way.

If when this change in Europe comes Italy is still neutral we shall be a very strong position; while if on the other hand Italy has by then joined the Allies Abyssinia will still fear that we may have bought the alliance at a price and Ethiopia will be anxious to assure herself that it is not at her expense by signing a treaty which to a certain extent guarantees her against this fear, so that patience for the present will I hope in either case meet with its reward in due time.

The Council could not know how close their assessment was to the truth, since in London terms for the Italian entry into the war were in fact being discussed. Article XII of the "Agreement providing for Italian cooperation in the European War", which was signed in London on 26 April 1915, states:

1. Ibid.
2. Supra, Ch. I, p.83.
Dans le cas où la France et la Grande-Bretagne augmenteraient leurs domaines coloniaux d'Afrique aux dépens de l'Allemagne, ces deux Puissances reconnaissent en principe que l'Italie pourrait réclamer quelques compensations équitables, notamment dans le règlement en sa faveur des questions concernant les frontières des colonies italiennes de l'Erythrée, de la Somalie et de la Lybie et des colonies voisines de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne.

This was later interpreted by the Italian colonial party and the Colonial Ministry as a blueprint for the establishment of a protectorate over Ethiopia.2

Lij Yasu visited the Legations on his return from Dire Dawa at the end of April to learn of the latest developments in the European War. He expressed some anxiety at the Allied misfortunes, and he desired a guarantee of the future independence of Ethiopia. Thesiger could only disclaim any British interest in the acquisition of Ethiopian territory. Yasu reported that Count Colli had "staked his life" on the assurance that the war would end in deadlock, and that peace would be made on the status quo ante bellum. Von Syborg had said that Turkey would regain Egypt, and that Germany would take Jibuti and the Sudan. Even the

3. Thesiger, op. cit.

1. FO 93/48, No. 56. For an earlier draft cf. FO 899/2, Imperiali to Grey, 28275, 4.3.15, with General Cabinet Memorandum, April 1915, by Sir Edward Grey.
Russian Legation was of the opinion that the Allies would fail to breach the Dardanelles. However Thesiger was optimistic:

Our position with regard to the Ethiopian Government seems to be slowly improving and a definite success on one front or the other should have a considerable effect. Lij Yasu appears to be undoubtedly in favour of an understanding with Great Britain but he is fatally weak and disinclined to make the necessary effort to take up his proper position with regard to his ministers and chiefs. If he would do so matters would be very much easier.

Thesiger invited Haile Giorgis to return to the Legation a week after Yasu's visit, and he explained to him how a German victory would be fatal to Ethiopia and how a neutral Italy would be free to continue her plan to subjugate Ethiopia. The Betwoded was very impressed with the interview, and especially with the point that Ethiopia would have to rely on either France or Britain to guarantee her independence; Britain's price, of course, would be agreement on the Tsana Treaty and a reduction of the administrative chaos in Adis Ababa.

Two days later, 7 May 1915, Haile Giorgis brought Yasu

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1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 19, 1.5.15.
back to the Legation, and Thesiger stressed to him the need to stay in Adis Ababa and to administer the Government. Thesiger disregarded Yasu's Muslim affiliations and his inability to govern effectively, and he tried to persuade him to act with political and emotional maturity. This had been Thesiger's policy ever since his arrival in Ethiopia in 1909. The religious convictions of the House of Manz were of no political interest to Great Britain, and in fact Lij Yasu was not yet as harmful to the Church as Tewodros had been in the 1860's. Administrative chaos had been a familiar feature of Ethiopian government, and it was quite prevalent even in the days of Menelik. As far as the war was concerned, Thesiger wanted to reduce Turco-German propaganda, not so much for its effect on Ethiopia but for the surrounding colonies. The work of the British Legation was, in effect, not much different from pre-August 1914 - i.e. to get as much as possible out of Ethiopia, legally and without trouble. Unfortunately, Thesiger's words of 7 May failed to impress Lij Yasu. All work halted in Adis Ababa in mid-May while Yasu prepared to leave for Dese. France could not get an agreement on a site for the Adis Ababa Railway Station, and Britain could

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 20, 8.5.15.
not get agreement on the Tsana Treaty, not at least until a commission had determined the flood level to be caused by the proposed barrage.

The Italian declaration of war against Austria-Hungary on 23 May 1915 met with approval in Hapta Giorgis, who said: "Now that means three or four more years peace for Abyssinia, Italy will go to war and her legs will be broken".\(^2\) Count Colli told Lij Yasu that the war would be a short one, since Italy would sue for peace once she acquired Trieste.\(^3\)

Though the withdrawal of the Italian threat at Eritrea eased pressure in the North, it did not result in any change in Ethiopia. Lij Yasu continued building his forces, and he summoned Ras Hailu of Godjam and Ras Walda Giorgis to Dese in preparation for Mikael's declaration of a "Kingdom of the North". But Walda Giorgis never showed up, and the declaration was never made. Walda Giorgis feigned illness, but he was more than likely not ready to abdicate his authority to Mikael.\(^4\)

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1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 22, 20.5.15.
2. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 23, 26.5.15.
3. Cf. Langley note on *ibid*.
4. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 26, 2.6.15.
In the meantime Lij Yasu's Muslim behaviour was alienating him from his Christian subjects. Thesiger confessed:

I am coming to the opinion that the heir of the throne of Solomon is at heart a Moslem and is entertaining dreams of one day putting himself at the head of the Mahomedan Abyssinians, who considerably outnumber the Abyssinian Christians, and of proclaiming a Moslem kingdom which will stretch far beyond the frontiers of the present empire.

A. S. Lawrance, the Consul at Harar, agreed with Thesiger and said:

Lij Yasu's one idea is, as soon as he is crowned, to declare himself a Moslem in the belief that, if he expresses the wish, all the country will follow him, this intention being probably strengthened by the conviction of an ultimate Turco-German victory.

Still, Thesiger thought that this would not be in the near future, and that Britain would receive sufficient warning from her own Muslim border tribes. Sir Arthur Nicolson, the Permanent Under-Secretary, who rarely took an interest in Ethiopian matters, minuted: "It would indeed be a strange & novel evolution if one of the most ancient Christian countries were to become Moslam in the XX century." This "evolution", however, would not be

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 28, 16.6.15.
2. Ibid.
quite that strange, as J. Shuckburgh of the India Office pointed out:

The success of Lij Yasu's policy - if such it be - wd be a most serious step forward in the Islamisation of Africa, which is already proceeding at an alarming rate.

Islam as a political force was not something to be ignored. It was only the European intervention of the late nineteenth century that had halted the march of Islam in Africa, and Ethiopia was not shielded from islamization by a European 'protector'. Islam had shown its force in North-East Africa in the Mahdiya and in the rebellion of Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdille Hasan. Britain was particularly sensitive to Muslim ferment since so many of her subjects in Africa, India and East Asia were of that faith. Hodson, the Consul at Mega, hypothesized:

Lij Yasu ... realised that, hitherto, Abyssinia had not fallen into the hands of European countries during the scramble for Africa simply because rival plans had luckily cancelled one another, that Islam was the one religion which was making great headway in Africa, and that therefore an Islamic Empire would offer the best chance of successful resistance to European Powers.

Hodson ultimately rejected this analysis since he believed that Yasu was incapable of high political thinking. This is probably a mistake, and underestimates Yasu's not inconsiderable political gifts and the advice and encouragement of his Muslim advisers, notably Sadik and Mazhar. All around Yasu were evidences of the weakness of the Allies. On the east shore of the Red Sea the Turks had had some success against the Anglo-Indian forces at Aden, and Germany was utilizing Muslim ferment to raise revolts in North Africa from Morocco to Egypt. This news did not go unheeded in Ethiopia. Sayyid Muhammad was now on the defensive in Somaliland, but Berbera was afraid that an Ethio-Dervish alliance would rejuvenate the Muslim forces in the Horn of Africa.

Since Yasu was drawn to the Turks through religious


1. CAB 37/131/9, G.O.C. Aden Brigade to C.G.S. India, 2248/18/60, 7.7.15, and Political Resident Aden to C.G.S., 2258/60, 8.7.15.

2. FO 371/2379, Sir A. Hardinge to Grey, No. 216 Con, 19.8.15.

3. Archer thought that Sadik and Kidani would intercede to induce the Mullah to retreat to safety to Shilabo in the Ogaden, FO 371/2228, CO to FO, Secret, 2.8.15, (trs. Archer to Law, 30.6.15.).
affinity, the Germans used the opportunity to exaggerate their diplomatic influence at Dese. In Eritrea it was believed that they had convinced Mikael, now virtual lord of all the North, to lead a 'preemptive attack' on the Italians. Most Ethiopians disbelieved the German propaganda, and they recognized that they were helpless while surrounded by the colonies of the now allied Tripartite Powers. Thesiger believed Ethiopia would do nothing unless there was a complete German victory. Nevertheless, Mikael was strongly influenced by German agents, and their effect on his thinking should not be minimized.

A more likely target for Mikael's army however was Ras Walda Giorgis, who still refused to demonstrate his fealty to Yasu and Mikael. Thesiger reported:

There seems to be a vague feeling of uneasiness abroad among the people that, thanks to the disorder into which the Government has fallen, Abyssinia is slowly drifting towards a crisis which may be precipitated by the jealousies of Ras [sic] Michael or Ras Waldo Giorgis, or by the death of the former who is not in a good state of health, and this uneasiness is fomented by the German Legation who try to persuade the people that England, France, and Italy are raising difficulties with the Government in order to have an excuse for aggressive action ...

1. FO 371/2228, Imperiali to Grey, 13.8.15; Thesiger to Grey, No. 42, 23.8.15.
Under the circumstances ... it would be preferable to drop all contentious questions and merely mark time until the European situation had cleared.

However the completion of the Gambela wireless in September 1915 cleared the air between the Council and the British Legation. Haile Giorgis hoped to follow up his success in that affair by dismissing Bayena and Telahoun for being in German pay. With an equal lack of success Fit Hapta Giorgis tried to get the Turkish Consul expelled for stirring up the Rer 'AlI Ogaden to attack some highland tax collectors. The Rer 'AlI had murdered about 100 (out of 140) taxmen at the end of September 1915 as they tried, as usual, to collect more tax than was due. Tafari mobilized thousands of his troops to avenge the attack, and Berbera moved up its Camel Constabulary to the border to cut off the Rer 'AlI retreat.

Archer thought that Tafari's expedition could be the answer to a "second front" against Sayyid Muhammad. He had been worried by visits by Ethiopians (accompanied by a Turkish agent) to the Dervish haroun at Tale.

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 49, 6.9.15.
2. Supra, p. 111.
3. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 57, 12.10.15.
4. FO 371/2228, CO to FO, 3.11.15, (trs. Archer to Law, No. 4956/5, 6.10.15, Thesiger to Archer, Tel., 23.9.15, and Archer to Thesiger, 23.9.15). Cf. infra p.181.
Apparently they had offered Sayyid Muhammad asylum at Gorrahei in B a Geri country, but he had refused to leave his allies in East Nogal. Sayyid Muhammad had accumulated considerable wealth at Tale, and he probably did not want to unite British, Italian and Ethiopian opposition to him.¹

On 23 November 1915 Ras Walda Giorgis finally arrived in Dese, and the prospect of a northern settlement finally came into view.² For a while it was rumoured that Yasu would be crowned Emperor with the pro-German Afa Negus Telahoun as Regent, and Walda Giorgis as Negus of Shoa and Kaffa with jurisdiction over the Council and foreign affairs. This would divide the empire between Walda Giorgis and Mikael and stabilize the Government, though not necessarily in Britain's favour. However this was only one part of an unsettled situation that currently included the revolt by the Rer 'Ali and Muslim ferment in Arusi. Thesiger reported:

It all ... shows a general feeling of unrest and, I think, the Abyssinians are somewhat nervous of the Moslem propaganda producing results which will

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2. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 74, 25.11.15.
be to there own detriment. Fitaurari Hapta Giorgis is certainly alive to this danger, and it will not be a bad thing if experience shows them the danger of playing with fire. I do not think there is the slightest possibility of any general Mohammedan movement, as the Abyssinian Moslems have no union or understanding among themselves.

Thesiger's statement contains some truth. The Somali and Danakil had been united at the time of Imam Ahmad Grañ, in the sixteenth century, and they proved to be a formidable fighting force. Since the defeat of Grañ, however, the two groups had been implacable enemies, yet Lij Yasu attempted to gain precedence over both groups: the Somalis by alliance, the Danakil by conquest, and both groups by marriage. Of the other Ethiopian Muslims, the Gallas were divided into several minor tribes and clans with no real cohesion among them; the Jabarti were scattered over the highland, devoid of power or influence (except perhaps in trade); the Arabs were either confined to the shops of the major towns, or were in the western provinces, cut off from the mainstream of internal politics. A coalition based on these groups would be a powerful force, in so far as they penetrated into every part of Ethiopia, but it would take a great deal of time and skill to make it work smoothly.

1. FO 371/2228, Thesiger to Grey, No. 70, 19.11.15.
The Italians, still fearful of Mikael's and Walda Giorgis' designs, continued their 'peaceful penetration' of the North - though their attempts to win oil and alcohol concessions were defeated by Adis Ababa's refusal to make any decisions. Fears that Mikael would attack Eritrea were soothed by Hapta Giorgis, who stated that the young chiefs, though pro-German, were under the control of Adis Ababa and the older chiefs; and that as long as Egypt remained firmly in Britain's hands the young chiefs would remain quiet. If the young chiefs were under control, then they were the only things in Ethiopia that were. By the end of 1915 the country had virtually no effective government; in 1916 it ran mostly on inertia. There was no central authority; the Council attended to foreign affairs and referred most decisions to Lij Yasu, who, after conferring with Mikael and his German and Muslim advisers, usually returned negative or vague replies. Internal affairs were taken care of by local chiefs who, as long as they did not interfere with Yasu, were allowed their own way. In addition, Allied prestige was at its

1. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, Nos. 16 & 24, 7 & 28. 2.15.

nadir. It had taken a beating in August 1915 when the Russian charge d'affaires, R. K. Vinogradov, tried to purchase 20,000 old Russian rifles that Ethiopia had ordered from Japan in 1910. That Russia had to go begging to Ethiopia for arms was a sign that the Allies were in dire straits.¹ By the end of 1915 a British army under General Townshend was besieged at Kut-el-Amara; an Anglo-French army was bottled up at Salonika; the Italian General Cadorna was having trouble in the Isonzo hills; Russia was doing nothing; Muslim ferment was rife in India, among the Senussi, and in Darfur; and General von Lettow-Vorbeck was still active in German East Africa.² The withdrawal from Gallipoli, started on 10 December 1915, was the bombshell that crushed pro-Allied feeling in Ethiopia.

In January 1916 there were reports that a second German mission had landed from Arabia at Tajura, and had proceeded to Dese. The French denied the reports, but the incident was never satisfactorily settled.³ Both the

¹. FO 371/2228, Borghese (verbal), 24.8.15; Thesiger to Grey, No. 65, 2.11.15. Ethiopia had never paid for the rifles and they were not theirs, but it did give Germany the opportunity to protest.


³. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, T. 2, 9.1.16; Cambon to Grey, 18.1.16.
Italian and British Legations were afraid that another German mission would worsen the rapidly deteriorating situation by aiding nationalist feeling and Turco-German propaganda.\footnote{1} Though the purported German mission was not found, the Italians managed to intercept a letter at Assab from the Vali of Yemen to Mazhar Bey, the Turkish Consul-General, which named Turkish agents at Jibuti and Dire Dawa and acknowledged receipt of a genealogical tree, forwarded to him by the Consul and showing Lij Yasu's descent from the Prophet Muhammad. The Vali had had the tree verified by the Imam of San'a, "who found it correct of detail and of great interest and had forwarded it to Constantinople".\footnote{2} Action of this nature by a Christian was usually preparatory to a declaration of conversion, and by a Muslim to a declaration of major religious importance.\footnote{3} Hitherto, "Most of the Shoan chiefs (and the Allied diplomats) had contrived to believe that Lij Yasu's sole interest in Moslems was confined to flogging Danakil tribesmen, raping Galla girls, and selling Somali children".

\footnote{1}{FO 371/2593, Imperiali to Grey, 18.1.16.}

\footnote{2}{FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 7, 12.1.16. The Wollo are the only Galla to make pretension of Arab descent with the title of Sharīf, Trimingham, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 198-9; the Hararīs claim descent from Arab and Persian immigrants in the 13th century, Somali Republic, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 24.}
However, the captured letter, in itself, proves nothing. Lij Yasu wanted to impress his Muslim subjects, and proof that he was descended from Muhammad would be essential for this. To Thesiger this was a point of considerable confusion.

There is little doubt that, acting under German suggestion the Turkish Consul will, if need be, be able to prove that Lij Yasu, through his father, is of the blood of the prophet which, with his recognized descent from King Soloman on his mother's side, should make an interesting pedigree. So far no one has been able to discover any clue to the meaning and purpose underlying Lij Yasu's leaning to the Moslem religion.

This is not quite true; both Thesiger and Consul Lawrance hinted that Yasu intended to build a Muslim empire in the Horn of Africa based upon the Ethiopian Muslims. Why Lij Yasu wanted to do this would be difficult for Thesiger to understand. Ever since Lij Yasu had been declared Menelik's successor he had been in conflict with the Shoan chiefs. Shoa, though defeated by Tewodros and Yohannes,


4. Mosley, op. cit., p. 77 is a very much anti-Lij Yasu.

1. Thesiger, op. cit.

had never been subjugated like the Galla country or Harar, and with the coming of Menelik Shoans were sent to rule all corners of the empire. They had ruled Ethiopia for a quarter of a century, and they could not be removed unless by a great national movement. Lij Yasu could never be his own man in a Shoan-ruled empire, but he was aware that the title King of Kings had passed from the Gondar-Galla line, via Tigré, to the ruling house of Shewa but recently. He saw that on these grounds alone he might rally the whole north, but, moreover, if it could be created, a union of the Muslim and Galla peoples of the empire would give a force equal to anything Shewa could put in the field. On the international front he believed that through shrewd alliances he might even be able to expand the frontiers of Ethiopian rule still farther.

The British Legation was concerned that Lij Yasu secure the throne, but they only considered succession in conventional terms. Thesiger had been in Africa long enough to appreciate its indigenous customs and history, but he thought of succession only in Christian Orthodox terms. Ethiopia was no stranger to religious war, but he and the


2. He had been Consul in the Congo from 1907-9 before he came to Ethiopia, and he was something of an amateur archeologist, Rey, p. 170, Blue Nile.
Legation seemed to ignore the probability of a Muslim 'revival' and *jihād*. The Arab revolt in the Hejaz and the continuing rebellion of Sayyid Muhammad in Somaliland were partial evidence of the power of Islam in the twentieth century, and the British should have realized that Ethiopia, almost since the *Hegira*, had been fighting off the threat of Islam.\(^1\) Perhaps it was even the Christian-Muslim struggle that was the strength of the Coptic Church in Ethiopia,\(^2\) but Islam, particularly in combination with Galla influences, had constantly attacked Ethiopian traditions. It was fashionable to think that Tewedros had founded a national state, and that Menelik had transformed that state into a Power; but the Galla-Muslim threat did not die in 1855 or 1888 or 1896 or even 1916.

The German Legation attempted to force Yasu to enter the war on the side of the Central Powers, by threatening to annex Eritrea at the end of the war if he refused. Von Syborg claimed there was a huge Turco-German army on the Suez Canal ready to take Egypt. Egypt was the closest

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front to Ethiopia, and an invasion there could hardly fail to affect the situation in Ethiopia. Thesiger wrote:

Eritrea is to the Abyssinians what the Trentino is to Italy, and the prospects of recovering their lost provinces would be hailed here with the same enthusiasm as was raised in Italy by the declaration of war against Austria.

Lij Yasu, in the typical way he treated all disagreeable requests, referred the German Minister's demand to the Council, which opted on 9 January 1916 for complete neutrality. The feeling in Adis Ababa was that von Syborg had stepped out of line, and the Italians in particular wanted to protest against his "misuse of authority". At the same time Franco-Italian relations deteriorated over the issue of the phantom German mission, which the Italians insisted had landed and which the French said could not have possibly done so.

Trouble soon came from another corner, when James Dodds, now back as Consul at Harar, reported that a delegation from Sayyid Muhammad, bearing a captured British machine-gun, had arrived in Harar on 3 February 1916. The weapon was a present for Lij Yasu, and Archer was very anxious to have it returned to Berbera. The mission

1. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 1, 3.1.16; Borghese (verbal), 18.1.16.
was headed by Abdi Surin, who had been dispatched by Lij Yasu to Tale' eighteen months earlier. His entourage included followers of Sayyid Muhammad (Dervishes) and sympathetic Ogaden Somalis. This visit was the high point in Ethio-Dervish relations, which also included arms shipments to the Tale' in August and October 1915. 'Abdallahi Sadik was the agent for Lij Yasu's intrigues with Sayyid Muhammad, and Tafari and Fit Gabra, the commanders of the highland garrison at Harar, were unable or unwilling to stop him. Thesiger was reluctant to protest against the Dervish mission, since Yasu might have taken the opportunity to remove Tafari, on the excuse that he allowed something that displeased the British Legation. Furthermore Thesiger doubted whether the Council would condemn what seemed to be Lij Yasu's personal intrigues.¹

Tafari's punitive expedition against the Rer 'AlI Ogaden was cancelled, and this could have been a contributory cause to the irascibility of that tribe, since on 2 February 1916 1,000 of the Rer Afwa Aulihan Ogaden attacked Serenli in Jubaland and killed the District Commissioner, Elliot, and 65 of his men. Serenli was destroyed, and several other nearby villages were attacked by

¹. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 11, 27.1.16.
'Abd-al Rahman Mursal's Rer Afwa. 'Abd-al Rahman was thought to be a potential 'Mullah', and it was thought that he might have had Ethiopian support. He had a son fighting with the Germans in East Africa, and Turkish agents, working through Shaikh 'Ali Nairobi, another potential 'Mullah', were suspected of aiding 'Abd-al Rahman. The danger - though it did not materialize - was that all the disaffected Somalis would unite with Turco-German support against the preoccupied European colonizers.2

The Somali question was one of great importance to the British Legation. Sayyid Muhammad and the Ogaden Somali were being supplied, supported and incited by Yasu and Muslim agents. This prevented caravans from reaching Berbera, encouraged violence against British subjects in Harar and on the frontier, and exacerbated differences between border tribes.3 Similar situations were common in other parts of Ethiopia. "All authority", Thesiger said, "is in the hands of a set of low born Abyssinians,

1. FO 371/2595, CO to FO, 9.2.16, (trs. Bowring to Law, 7.2.16); Rodd to Grey, T. 255, 19.2.16; Turton, ubi supra, p. 654; Hodson, op. cit., p. 94.

2. CO 533/173, FO to CO, 3.4.16, (trs. Thesiger to Grey, No. 26, 1.3.16).

3. FO 371/2595, CO to FO, 27.3.16, (trs. Dodds to Archer, No. 31, 14.2.16).
who thrive on corruption and share the spoils with a clique of the worse type of European adventurers".  

Even the pro-Allied group was often in conflict. Tafari had only contempt for Haile Giorgis, who he described as "A man with one thought, to fill his pockets, and with not a care for the good of his country".  

By mid-1916 Lij Yasu was the centre of authority in Ethiopia (the Council being helpless), but the British Legation considered him interested only in his own pleasures. Even the provincial chiefs no longer blamed the Council for its corruption - just Yasu. His associates, both Ethiopian and ferenji, aroused universal resentment. "As regards personal character", said Thesiger, "cruelty and arrogance seem to preponderate in his nature which, given all lack of control and his despotic power, are not likely to diminish with time". However, revolution was not likely. "The only real danger for the future lies, in my opinion, in the possibility of the Prince losing all sense of proportion and of coming to believe that he can defy European opinion as he does that of his own people".

1. FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, No. 25, 28.2.16.
2. Ibid.
3. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 42, 14.4.16.
4. Ibid.
A Foreign Office clerk noted: "Our only hope seems to lie in the early death of Lij Yasu. Luckily his mode of life makes this not unlikely".¹

The Foreign Office was convinced that Yasu had lost his mind, as well as his usefulness to Britain. When they learned that the Prince had shaved his head and was living with the Danakil, Langley commented: "His mode of life has not made for sanity", and Sperling noted: "Lij Yasu seems to be going off his head. It is to be hoped that we shall not have a partition of Abyssinia thrown on our hands during the war. Hardly any question is better calculated to breed friction with the Italians & perhaps the French".² The Foreign Office could make little of Yasu's behaviour since up to September 1915 he had been burning Danakil villages, murdering their tribesmen, and enslaving their women and children. London did not realize that this was another of Yasu's attempts to ally with a war-like anti-Christian force. In Greenfield's Ethiopia, A New Political History, it is stated:

that [Yasu] was young and impulsive cannot be denied; that he was inclined to be a playboy may also have been true ... but he must be given credit for a certain political shrewdness ... 

¹ Note by L. Collier on ibid.
To dismiss Yasu as insane is to miss the point, and it shows just how out of touch London was at this time. As Jones and Monroe have stated:

Lij Yasu was not a force to be despised; he was shrewd, and in some ways far sighted, and quick to deduce the factors in a situation which were capable of development to his advantage. This Turkish policy was not mere foolhardiness. Had it succeeded he would have created a Galla-Moslem backing which would have rendered him as powerful as any living Ras.

Lij Yasu was attempting to take advantage of the friendliness of the Turco-German coalition, and the helplessness of the Allies, to construct a new power basis in Ethiopia, centred on Wollo, and with outposts in the Muslim provinces of Banī Shanqul, Jimma, Harar and the Danakil country. He did this with promises, alliances, marriages, conversions, by force and ruthlessness, and even by aping tribal customs - in short, by every means possible.

2. FO 2595/371, Thesiger to Grey, No. 30, 7.3.16.


1. Jones and Monroe, op. cit., p. 188.
Chapter III
The Shoan Coup d'Etat of September 1916

The British Legation had given up all hope of dealing with Lij Yasu's Government while the war was in progress, and perhaps this gave them more opportunity to study Lij Yasu's policies. The more they saw of his policies the more they were convinced that his deposition would cure their problems in Ethiopia. The war prevented Britain from contributing more than just verbal support to Yasu's opponents, but it is unlikely that she would have meddled more actively in Ethiopian internal politics even in peacetime.

The Shoan coup is not merely important because it raised Ras Tafari to national prominence. He had been involved in politics for seven years, and he would have in any case been a major figure in modern Ethiopian history - if not in modern world history. Its importance is that it got rid of Lij Yasu, or rather, that it failed to get rid of Lij Yasu completely, and therefore put the future of Ethiopia in doubt for the next five years. It also helped preserve Ethiopian independence. Had Lij Yasu been allowed to continue his intrigues he would probably have compromised his country so totally, that on
the conclusion of the war the Peace Conference would have felt it necessary to consider the problem of the future of Ethiopia. The coup saved Ethiopia from the clutches of the eventually victorious Allies; but it threw Ethiopian politics into great confusion for the next fourteen years.

Though the British Legation was largely concerned with Lij Yasu during the summer of 1916, a few matters of general interest to Great Britain also passed through its hands. The Tsana Mission, though it did not complete the survey, reported its findings in July 1916. Major Pearson stated that the prospects for a barrage were excellent, and that the flood level of the lake would not harm the surrounding countryside. He wrote:

One can not help feeling that it only requires a stable and just government to convert this part of Abyssinia into the fertile and wealthy province which nature intended it to be.

Such a report could have only whetted the Foreign Office's appetite for a barrage, but they were to be frustrated

2. FO 371/2593, MacMahon to Grey, No. 172, 22.7.16.
since the state of affairs in Ethiopia made further negotiations impossible. Thesiger, in fact, was concerned with other issues. He again urged that Britain open negotiations for the acquisition of Jibuti, especially before Italy asked for it as part of her war compensation.\(^1\)

Jibuti was the key to the Horn of Africa, and since France had no extensive territorial interest in Ethiopia she did not mind using it as an arms depot. France's interest was based on the railroad, and the railroad profit came from arms transport. Ethiopia would not reform without pressure, and France would not join with Italy and Britain in pressuring Ethiopia. Since the closing of Muscat Ethiopia was the only open market for France's surplus arms; moreover arms were sure to be used as bait in order to obtain a site for the Adis Ababa railway station, and to obtain the signature on the Franco-Ethiopian Commercial Treaty (to be renewed in January 1918). But Sir Arthur Nicolson was sceptical of Britain's chance of acquiring Jibuti: "Unfortunately we have nothing to bargain with, either in the Kameroons or in Togoland".\(^2\) The advantages of acquiring Jibuti were that it would stop the arms trade

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1. FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, No. 33, 13.3.16, and No. 34, 16.3.16.

2. FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, No. 34, 16.3.16.
(since it seemed unlikely that France would do it herself); it would enhance the value of British Somaliland; and it would eliminate France from Ethiopian affairs, giving Britain a better strategic position and making it easier to deal with Adis Ababa, and incidentally with Rome.

The disadvantages were that it was in itself a poor colony (though the Admiralty thought it had some strategic value); and that France would ask for heavy compensation.¹ Both Wingate and Sir A. H. MacMahon, the High Commissioner at Cairo, favoured buying France out, largely because of the effect of the arms traffic to Arabia and India. The Foreign Office also favoured this policy, and they did not care to wait until after the war when Italy could claim Jibuti. Sir G. Clerk doubted that France would give up her railroad, and Langley stated: "There will be no cession without a quid pro quo and I do not know where that is to come from until the war ends".² Unfortunately French Somaliland was not intrinsically valuable enough to warrant great sacrifices for the sake of controlling the Ethiopian arms trade.

1. CO 535/44, FO to CO, 18.4.16, and FO to CO, No. W.107959, 26.6.16, (trs. Admiralty to FO, 10.6.16, Memo on strategic value of Jibuti in relation to Red Sea. Since Britain had Aden and Perim, however, the relative "Strategic value of Jibuti is not very great".)
Sir Arthur Nicolson put an end to the discussion for the moment in an uncharacteristically long minute:

I do not think that we should raise the question of even the prospective cession of Jibuti.... This ... course would lead to intermittent & prolonged discussions. I would prefer to lay before the French very forcibly the evils resulting from the arms traffic to the endangering of British, French & Italian interests & urge the French to make really serious & effective measures for its suppression. We might get Italy to support us.

This too was a question for a time when both Ethiopia and Europe were less occupied.

The Somali troubles in Jubaland\(^2\) diminished in April - May 1916, and the prospects for a Somali rebellion disappeared.\(^3\) E. G. Machtig, at the Colonial Office, blamed troubles in both Somaliland and Jubaland on Lij Yasu, but he was unable to suggest a solution and he hoped for an early victory over the Germans in East Africa to free Britain's hands.\(^4\) At Harar Tafari was obliged to send the Dervish mission's present of a machine-gun\(^5\) to

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2. FO 371/2595, MacMahon, No. 112, 24.5.16.
1. Ibid.
2. Supra, Ch. II, p. 181.
3. FO 371/2595, CO to FO, 10.5.16; Thesiger to Grey, No. 45, 26.4.16.
4. CO 535/44, FO to CO, 7.4.16, (trs. Thesiger to Grey, No. 30, 7.3.16.
Adis Ababa, though he confided to Dodds that he would have liked to return it to the British. Tafari expressed ignorance as to Yasu's dealings with the Sayyid Muhammad, but then most chiefs usually professed ignorance at Yasu's intrigues, which they affected to consider as his personal affair.¹

On 27 April 1916 'Abdi Surin and the Dervish Mission attended the Ottoman Sultan's birthday celebration at Adis Ababa when Lij Yasu presented to Mazhar Bey an Ethiopian flag embroidered with the Turkish crescent and the Muslim Shahādā: ۸۳ ilāha illa 'llāh muhammadun rasūlu 'llāh - "There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Prophet of God".² When Count Colli challenged Yasu a week later as to the significance of his gift he denied all responsibility, and a certain Shaikh Muhammad Farriss, who seems to have been one of his Somali entourage, was put in chains as a scapegoat.³

Lij Yasu's personal policy was already bringing him into more acute conflict with Great Britain than with the other Powers, and his policy caused new fears at the

¹. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 40, 13.4.16.
². FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, T. 21, 3.5.16, No. 46, 4.5.16, and No. 51, 16.5.16; also Guèbrè Selassie, op. cit., ii, p. 628.
³. FO 2593/271, Thesiger to Grey, No. 46, 4.5.16.
Foreign Office. The Somali problem affected Britain almost exclusively, and the Turkish propaganda from Harar was directed chiefly against Britain. Compared to Britain, France and Italy were comparatively unaffected by Yasu's policy. Hitherto, Thesiger had only anticipated trouble in the event of an invasion of Egypt; now Muslim intrigue with German help seemed alone sufficient to precipitate a Jihad and civil war.¹ In response to this change in opinion the tactics of the British Legation underwent a change in May 1916. Thesiger had tried to persuade Lij Yasu of the folly of his actions, and of the profit in co-operation with Britain and her allies. Slowly it became clear to Thesiger, Archer and the Foreign and Colonial Offices that this was a futile hope. British policy now took on a double aspect: 1) to take precautions in the adjacent colonies for an imminent disturbance in Ethiopia, and 2) to openly oppose Lij Yasu and his policies. The latter also included giving tacit, and sometimes active, support to those who opposed the Prince. As increasing evidence of Yasu's disaffection from Christianity and the Allied cause mounted, the British and Italians became determined to face Lij Yasu and oppose him.

¹. FO 371/2593, Langley note on Borghese interviews, 6.5.16.
On 7 May 1916 Count Colli showed Thesiger further intercepted letters from Lij Yasu to Sultan 'Alī Yūsuf of Obbia and Las Khorai and to Sultan Osman Mahmūd of the Mijjertein Somali, "saying he has appointed a certain Yahia Effendi who will represent him at Dire Dawa". The Ministers contributed great importance to the fact that the letters were written in Arabic, had traced Yasu's descent from Negus Mikael to Hussein son of Fatima, and that they were sealed with an "arabic seal". Lij Yasu, however, was apt to act in this way since it was traditional to communicate with Muslim leaders using conventional Muslim forms. Similar letters, written in Arabic, were sent to Muslim leaders by Yohannes and Menelik. In 1888 Yohannes had written to a Mahdist chief:

"... let us unite against our common enemies the Europeans. If these conquer me, they will not spare you, but will destroy your country ... It is therefore in our common interest to agree to fight and destroy them."

Menelik probably had also written to the Mahdists, but no one could have accused Yohannes and Menelik of being pro-Muslim,


2. Sanderson, "Contributions", p. 70.
though they were certainly great nationalists and patriots. Europeans tended to forget that Ethiopia was a long established state, and in her own way was capable of highly sophisticated diplomatic manoeuvring. The preservation of their independence was not entirely an accident, nor was it a result of European goodwill.

Most of Lij Yasu's letters were in fact no more than offers of "friendship", not of alliance or aid. Thesiger, however, was impressed by these letters and he arranged to meet with his French and Italian colleagues on 8 May. Brice, as usual, was unwilling to co-operate, and preferred to wait for the pro-Allied Ethiopian Ministers to act. He did not want to jeopardize Franco-Ethiopian relations by declaring himself against the Ethiopian 'Emperor', and he excused himself by reminding his colleagues that they could not back up a protest and that Yasu had a right to deal with Sayyid Muhammad since the latter was of Ba Geri stock and the Ba Geri were a tribe subject to Ethiopia.¹ To Thesiger this was all the more reason to press Lij Yasu, and he outlined a four-point protest that the Ministers could submit to the Council individually, to be

followed by an official joint representation if the preliminary démarche failed. The points included the dismissal of Sadik, the return of the British machine-gun to Berbera, a ban on future Dervish missions, and a purge of the Turks (under Yahya Effendi) in the Dire Dawa municipal offices. Though Brice tried to steer his colleagues clear of involvement in Ethiopian internal affairs, he eventually co-operated, if unenthusiastically, with the Anglo-Italian protests against Yasu's policy.

The Tripartite Powers had good reason to concert their policy. According to their intelligence sources, Ethiopian feeling against Lij Yasu was growing and would eventually erupt into some sort of civil war - either Muslim v. Christian or Wollo v. Shoa. Lij Yasu's intrigues with Sayyid Muhammad, and his pro-Muslim policy in Ethiopia had alienated most elements in the highland

1. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 46, 4.5.16. Muhammad's Ba Geri allies were led by his brother, Khalîfa 'Abdille Hasan, Hess, ubi supra, p. 429.

2. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 49, 9.5.16.

3. Munitions caravans had reached Muhammad's haroun at Tale, and Turkish agents were active in the Ogaden, CO 535/42, Summers to Law, 13.5.16. It is possible that Yasu may have asked Ydlibi to arrange an alliance with Turkey on 12 May 1916, Mosley, op. cit., p. 86.

4. He had given church land for the construction of mosques in Harar and Worra Hailu, FO 371/2595 Thesiger to Grey, No. 30, 7.3.16; Archer, op. cit., p. 84.
provinces and in the garrisons throughout the empire. The Italian Legation was attacked for the second time in a few months on 16 May by bandits, and although Lij Yasu apologized for the damage and laid the blame on the German Legation, there was little doubt that it was the Prince's attitude towards the Allies that was at fault in the deterioration of Ethio-Tripartite relations. Yasu apologized to Colli on 23 May, and he denied emphatically that he was a Muslim. He said he only wished to keep the peace in the Danakil country and the Ogaden, and that his deputations and despatches to Sayyid Muhammad had also been merely in the interests of peace. He denied relying on Germany, and he excused his friendship with Mazhar Bey as the result of personal pity for the man. Thesiger remained unconvinced: "His excuses for his external Moslem policy are too weak for credence and need further explanation". However he doubted whether a protest would be effective since it now seemed that Yasu had committed himself too deeply.

It was clear that some sort of explosion would soon occur in Ethiopia. Lij Yasu could not continue to support

1. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, T. 24, 22.5.16; The Times, 21 May and 25 May 1916; The Italo-Ethiopian Dispute, p. 8.
2. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 55, 24.5.16.
the Muslims without encouraging a Jihad, and he could not continue to insult the Christians without inviting united opposition. Since he would not listen to the Legations there was little Thesiger could do in an official capacity. However there were preventive measures that could be taken in the event of civil disturbance breaking out. In Harar in April 1916 the Ughaz of the Ba Hawadleh Ogaden (a Darod tribe in league with Sayyid Muhammad) asked Dodds to mediate between them and the Habr Yunis Ishaak (a British tribe). The Ughaz was tired of Ethiopian administration, which usually consisted of an expedition by rabble soldiery, and he wanted the British to settle claims between the two tribes. ¹ This was an excellent opportunity, which the British could not afford to ignore, to settle long term disputes in the Ogaden and reduce Lij Yasu's influence in that area. The Ughaz's request was apparently spontaneous and unsolicited, and was probably due to the decline in the prestige of Sayyid Muhammad, who had been held in check by the British Protectorate forces.

Many of the Somali tribes that had flirted with alliance with Sayyid Muhammad were now disenchanted. A

¹. FO 371/2595, Dodds to Thesiger, No. 54, 13.4.16; CO to FO, 16.6.16, (trs. Dodds to Archer, No. 57, 13.4.16).
mission from the Warsangeli had complained to Dodds of Ethiopian aid to the Dervishes (through the agency of Sadik),¹ and the Sultans of Obbia and Mijjertein had pledged their loyalty to their European protectors. Sayyid Muhammad revenged himself on Sultan 'Ali Yusuf of Obbia by attacking Las Khorai on 6 May. H.M.S. Northbrook was sent to the spot and bombarded the Dervishes, causing many casualties, and the Italians sent a man-of-war to the Mijjertein coast to protect that tribe from attack.² The situation in Somaliland looked so much more hopeful that Dodds believed that Britain could reaffirm her hold on the "friendlies" and establish control over the peripheral tribes quite easily. He met with Colonel A. S. Lawrance at Hargeisa on 8 July, and was instrumental in making peace between the Ishaak and the Ogaden, thereby cutting off a potential supply of disaffected from Lij Yasu's Somali army.³

In Adis Ababa Thesiger had all but given up hope of dealing with the Government. The evacuation of Gallipoli

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1. FO 371/2595, CO to FO, Secret, 12.5.16, (trs. Summers to Law, 20.3.16 and Dodds to Archer, No. 39, 23.2.16.

2. FO 371/2595, WO to FO, Secret, 13.5.16, (trs. Resident Aden, No. 205, 12.5.16); Rodd to Grey, T. 537, 20.5.16 and T. 658, 20.6.16.

3. FO 371/2595, CO to FO, 21.6.16, (trs. Dodds to Archer, Tel. 15.6.16); IO L/P&S/11/94/2674, Archer to Law, Con., 20.7.16.
(which Kitchener had predicted would harm British prestige in Egypt and the East), and the surrender of General Townshend at Kut-el-Amara on 29 April 1916 caused a decline in British prestige in Ethiopia. In addition, the Betwoded Haile Giorgis did not want to jeopardize his position by appearing to be too intimate with the Allied Legations; therefore he left most decisions to Gan Bayena, the Foreign Minister. Bayena was pro-German, but he was also jealous of the Betwoded's 'special relationship' with the European Legations, and so he sabotaged Allied requests whenever possible.

The Foreign Office's hope for the deposition of Lij Yasu was fed by Thesiger's report that:

The feeling among Abyssinians against Lij Yasu is growing stronger, and there is no doubt that plans are being discussed to remove him from the throne ... Thesiger does not identify the conspirators, but one can guess that the Fit Hapta Giorgis and the Itchege - the guardians of neutral statesmanship and a strong church, respectively - were among the most prominent. Disaffected


2. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 80, 11.5.16.

3. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 51, 16.5.16, No. 52, 17.5.16, and No. 53, 18.5.16.
The British Legation

Tafari centre, Campbell is behind, and Thesiger is on the far right
Shoan chiefs and courtiers were probably not hard to find, in a country where revolt was a recognized tool for the ambitious. Rumours of Yasu's planned deposition brought Dej Tafari to Adis Ababa on 20 May 1916. He entrusted his pregnant wife Manen and his young daughter to his friend, Consul Dodds, but left his province in less capable hands. Fit Gabra, the highland commander, was afraid to oppose Sadik who virtually ran Harar. Thesiger feared that the Somali shaikhs who were then at Harar would cause unrest once they returned to their tribes and reported on the state of affairs in Adis Ababa. It was imperative, he thought, that Britain take action to prevent Yasu from succeeding in his designs. In Somaliland, as has been stated, progress had been made in separating the Ogaden, Mijjertein and Warsangeli Somalis from Sayyid Muhammad, though Lij Yasu still corresponded with the Sultans of Obbia and Mijjertein. Giacomo de Martino, Governor of Italian Somaliland, offered on 11 May to cooperate with Berbera and Nairobi in the event of war with Ethiopia, but the suggestion was received coolly in London. The Foreign Office felt that any preparation to

1. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, T. 23, 20.5.16.
2. FO 371/2593, Rodd to Grey, No. 151, 12.5.16.
forcibly oppose Ethiopia might give the Italians the impression that Britain was anxious for its partition.\(^1\) Still, Anglo-Italian co-operation was established, if for different reasons. Furthermore, cypher communication between Berbera and Jibuti was established in June to facilitate links between those two colonies.\(^2\)

Marquis Imperiali, the Italian Ambassador to London, suggested that the Allies mount a counter-propaganda campaign intended to support the Ethiopian Church.\(^3\) This idea was enthusiastically supported by S. Gaselee in the Foreign Office News Department, but the difficulties in composing and printing Amharic propaganda led him to suggest sending a Coptic mission from Egypt to the Abun, who was partial to his former homeland and was considered to be fervently pro-British.\(^4\) Thesiger felt that such propaganda would be a waste of time since the Church and a majority of the chiefs were already bitterly hostile to Yasu's Muslim policy, but were also suspicious of Egyptian copts.\(^5\) Lij Yasu, he

\(^1\) FO 371/2593, CO to FO, Secret and Immed., 24.5.16, (trs. Law to Archer, No. 24214, 23.5.16), with note by Sperling.

\(^2\) FO 371/2593, CO to FO, Secret and Immed., 5.6.16, (trs. Summers to Law, Tel. 26.5.16); Bertie to Grey, No. 246, Secret, 30.6.16.

\(^3\) FO 371/2593, Italian Embassy Memo, 20.5.16.

said, was "feared and detested by the chiefs, and hated by the priests whose daily prayer is 'Since we can do nothing, may God kill him soon'."

The only solution Theiger wired would be for the Entente Legations at opportune moment to denounce Prince as Moslem; proclamation of firm determination of their Governments to proclaim the integrity of Abyssinia, asking country to proclaim new Emperor and to decline all further dealing with Government until it is done. In this way they would have the support of Church chiefs and people.

Lord Hardinge, the Permanent Under-Secretary, thought Thesiger's suggestion too drastic, but the situation was fast deteriorating. Lij Yasu had ordered forts built in the heart of the Ogaden at Imei, Gorrahei and Dagabur. Proclamations were found posted in Harar naming Sayyid Muhammad "as the representative of the Khalifa in Somaliland", and calling on Somalis to respect Lij Yasu's Government and to "concentrate your force". MacMahon, the High Commissioner, felt that Coptic counter-propaganda was ineffective.

5. "If Abyssinians hate Moslems, dislike dissident Christians, and despise even their own Copts, it appears to me that we shall make little appeal to them by way of their religious sympathies", Gaselee on FO 395/1, Thesiger to Grey, T. 33, 31.7.16. Thesiger relied on a free, weekly Amharic newsheet. The C.O. also agreed to emphasize war news instead of religious propaganda, Machtig and Bottomley notes on CO 535/44, FO to C0, 3.6.16.

1. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Wingate, No. 33, 14.4.16.
would be of little value, but also believed that the
denunciation of Lij Yasu as a Muslim would be equally
unsuitable, since it would offend Muslims in Egypt and
the Sudan. Gaselee reluctantly agreed, but said:

The only way to get hold of the Abyssinian
is (I exclude strong waters and raw meat)
by his religion, and it is a difficult affair
if consideration for Moslems - I admit its
importance in the present state of the
world's history - is always to prevent an
appeal to his strong, and even violent,
Christianity. ¹

Gaselee was referring not only to the sentiments of the
Muslims in Africa and India, but also to the Arabs of
Sharīf Hussein, who had broken out in revolt at Mecca on
10 June 1916. No matter how dangerous Yasu's policy
might seem, it was still merely a hypothesis. Britain
could not afford to offend Egypt, and now Arabia, by a
display of anti-Muslim sentiment so near the Middle
Eastern theatre of war. Though Gaselee continued to

2. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Wingate, T. 26, 4.6.16.
3. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Wingate, No. 59, 1.6.16.

¹. FO 371/2593, Note on MacMahon to Grey, T. 452, 12.6.16,
and T. 462, 15.6.16.
emphasize the need for Coptic counter-propaganda, the
Arab revolt gave Britain another card to play. Wingate
suggested that Thesiger point out to Lij Yasu, in con-
fidence,

that in allying himself with the Mohammedan
influences as represented by the Turks and
the Mullah he is backing the wrong horse as
the Sharif of Mecca who is admittedly, the
most direct descendant of the Prophet\textsuperscript{1} has
unfurled the banner of revolt against
Turkish misrule in Arabia and already Mecca,\textsuperscript{2}
Taif and a number of towns are in his hands.\textsuperscript{3}

Thesiger did not hesitate to put Wingate's information
to work. Lij Yasu had gone to the Legation on 19 June to
express his condolences on the death of Lord Kitchener,\textsuperscript{4}
and he even suggested that he would meet with Thesiger and
Archer at Harar in a few weeks. Thesiger thought that the
news of the Allied successes at Verdun, Jutland and Galicia
may have convinced Lij Yasu of his errors, and he went with
hope to an interview with the Prince on 21 June.\textsuperscript{5} He
showed Yasu a letter from the Sharif, which enumerated his

\textsuperscript{1} Probably a reference to Yasu's claim to be of the
Sharifian family.

\textsuperscript{2} S.A. 122/7, Wingate to Thesiger, Tel. Priv and Secret,
19.6.16. In S.A. 122/8, Wingate to Basset, 6.7.16,
he said: "I am very hopeful that the successful move-
ment against the Turks in the Hedjaz will have its due
effect on the mind of Lij Yasu,..."

\textsuperscript{3} Kitchener had been very well respected in Ethiopia, cf.
\textsuperscript{ supra} Ch. II, p. 117.

\textsuperscript{4} FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 64, 20.6.16.
victories and implied that the Turks no longer spoke for Islam. Yasu explained that he had been very concerned when the Turks had entered the war in November 1914, since he feared that the Muslims (which he believed outnumbered the Christians in Ethiopia) would embark on a Jihād. Recalling Ahmad Grañ, he only wished to placate the Muslims so that they should not feel isolated from influence. His only interest in Sayyid Muhammad, he declared, was in keeping him out of Ethiopia, and that as a loyal Christian he was anxious to remain friends with Britain. This seemingly heartfelt explanation convinced Thesiger that Yasu was in control of the situation and that he would curb some of his activities. Thesiger is not to be blamed for being gullible, since most of the evidence for Lij Yasu's 'conversion' to Islam and his 'alliance' with the Turks was circumstantial. As Emperor-designate of Ethiopia, Lij Yasu was ruler of all Ethiopians, and those that needed special consideration - in view of the years of persecution and neglect and the peculiar situation of the war - were the Muslims. The Prince need not have been a convert to Islam or a Turcophile to have wanted to improve the political and economic position of his Muslim subjects, especially considering that he was
descended from Muslims. Thus his appointments of Sadik, Ydlibi and Yahya can be viewed as an attempt to pacify, not to foment, the Ethiopian Muslims. In the end, it must have been difficult to imagine — regardless of the evidence — that the ruler of Ethiopia would ever contemplate rejecting his religion. Tewodros had had his quarrels with the Church, and Za Dengel and Susneyos had given up Coptic Christianity for Roman Catholicism, but none had embraced Islam — the archenemy of highland civilization.

Yasu sent Haile Giorgis to the British Legation on 5 July to get a preview of the questions to be discussed at Harar. The three points Thesiger had in mind were 1) the cessation of communication between Yasu and the Dervishes; 2) the cessation of arms shipments to the Dervishes; and 3) the cessation of Turkish propaganda. Thesiger also wanted Yasu to speak with Major Pearson about the Tsana survey, and to return the British machine-gun to Berbera. Whatever induced Lij Yasu to agree to meet Thesiger and Archer at Harar, he soon regretted the offer. Yasu refused to see Thesiger during July, probably

1. Yasu appointed al-Hāj 'Abdallāhi, grandson of the last Amir of Harar and his "father-in-law", to a "high position" in August 1916, FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Dodds, 2.8.16.

2. FO 371/2593, Thesiger to Grey, No. 66, 6.7.16.
realizing that intimacy with the British would compromise him in the eyes of his Somali allies. At Adis Ababa Lij Yasu now wore Muslim dress and lived in Muslim homes; he circulated among the Somali tribes a photograph of himself in a fez, surrounded by six Muslim ancestors; and at the same time he increased the tensions between himself and the Council, often degrading its members in public.

Archer, who had high hopes for the Somali gathering at Hargeisa on 26 June, suggested that a small group of Somali elders might be taken to Suez to counteract Turkish claims that Britain had lost Egypt. Turkish agents continued to publish statements in Harar, calling on Muslims to support Turkey and Sayyid Muhammad, but Allied propaganda (which relied heavily on statements from the Sharif of Mecca) largely negated their effect. Turkish propaganda was as much anti-British as it was anti-Christian: it claimed that Britain had bribed the Sharif and the Bedouin, had defiled Mecca and Medina, and had insulted the Q'ran.


2. FO 371/2593, CO to FO, Secret, 17.7.16 and 18.7.16, (trs. Archer to Law, 17.6.16).
'Umar Auni Effendi, the Turkish agent in Harar, was the chief source of these tales, but he had the complete assistance of the Harari chief of police, one Ato Mabrouko, and several highland collaborators.¹

Without replying to Thesiger's three questions, Lij Yasu left Adis Ababa at midnight on 28 July for Dire Dawa with Ras Lul Seged and Dej Balcha.² It is not entirely clear why these two chiefs accompanied the Prince, but 1) Lul Seged coveted Tafari's wife Manen to whom he was once married, and 2) Balcha was a former Governor of Harar who detested Tafari and later described him as being "half man, half snake". The centre of Muslim intrigue shifted to Harar with the arrival of the Prince, and it was thought that he might meet Sayyid Muhammad there. Archer was now convinced that Yasu was intent on creating a Muslim Empire,³ and the Arab Bureau at Cairo tended to agree.

The latter said that the Lij Yasu's intention was to "lay the Mullah under such obligation to himself that he and all

¹. IO L/P&S/10/756, A.R. No. 12, 19.7.16, pp. 5-7, and 11/94/2674, CO to IO, 10.11.16; Dodds to Thesiger, No. 83, 24.7.16, No. 87, 28.7.16 and No. 80, 21.7.16.

². FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 74, Con., 3.8.16.

³. IO L/P&S/11/94/2674, Archer to Law, Con., 15.6.16.
Somaliland will eventually accept Abyssinian sovereignty, should the Abyssinian dynasty become definitely Moslem.  

Tafari was not permitted to return to Harar where his wife expected to give birth any day. Fit Gabra would not attempt to halt the Turkish propaganda, and he claimed "the Muslim population in the Harar Province were no more dangerous than a pack of women, and that in fact women were the stronger". This was a dangerous attitude, but neither Tafari nor Haile Giorgis would take any responsibility without the Prince's sanction. Thesiger reported:

Lij Yasu, during his three months' stay in Adis Ababa, has succeeded in destroying even the semblance of a central Government and in dragging down the prestige of the individual Ministers so that there is no authority to whom the Legations can appeal.  

Thesiger, by the end of July, had decided that Lij Yasu must go, and he had prepared a list of reforms to be imposed upon Ethiopia on the return of peace.

By that time I firmly believe that the position will be much the same as before the Magdala expedition, when the mis-government of Theodore had wearied out the people and this secured for us the good will of many of the chiefs.

1. IO L/P&S/10/756, A.B. No. 12, 19.7.16.
2. IO L/P&S/11/2674, Dodds to Thesiger, No. 87, 28.7.16.
3. FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, No. 75, Con., 10.8.16.
4. Ibid.
The proposed reforms had a broad scope. To some members of the Foreign Office they seemed to approach a Tripartite "condominium" or "joint control". However they all agreed that radical reform was the only alternative to a Tripartite partition.

The reforms were divided into three categories: judicial, financial and commercial. The judicial reforms aimed at regularizing the legal system, reforming certain archaic practices, especially in reference to the prisons, and, in particular, assuring that foreigners were not victimized by Ethiopian justice. The financial and commercial reforms called for the appointment of European advisers to supervise the treasury, tax collection, customs houses, public works and trade.¹ Thesiger's reforms were not particularly related to the political situation of August 1916. It was not because Ethiopians were incapable of running their own politico-economic system or that there was a dearth of European "advice" that worried Thesiger; it was that Lij Yasu had no intention of bothering with European matters at all. But Thesiger probably had an idea that Yasu would not be on the throne forever, and he wanted to be prepared to squeeze all that was possible from the Prince's successors. Sir Walter Langley had commented:

¹. Memo on reforms in ibid.
"The scheme which [Thesiger] proposes would be almost as difficult to force upon Abyssinia with Lij Yasu still in power as would [be] the deposition of Lij Yasu himself". This was quite true, but Britain did not have to depose Lij Yasu by herself, and those who were to succeed him were thought to be more amenable to European ideas of reform.

In the meantime Lij Yasu observed Bayram at a Dire Dawa mosque, and presented a Harari mosque with a gift of livestock. The Dervish deputation left Harar and returned to Tale with arms and ammunition and a promise from Yasu of more to come. The Prince, supposedly, was waiting for Muhammad's son, al-Haj Ahmed, and one of his daughters to seal an alliance, whereby Ethiopia would provide the Muhammad with protection in return for a pledge of loyalty.1 The Prince was also negotiating for an alliance with the Gadabursi Somali.2 Yasu refused Tafari permission to return to Harar to see his new-born son, and he threatened to give Woizero Manen to her former husband, Lui Seged.3

2. He had given one of his relatives to its ex-Ughaz, Robleh Nur.
3. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 76, 10 August 1916. There is some confusion as to whether Tafari's son, Asfa Wossen, was born on the 27th or the 31st of July. Tafari managed to spirit his family away to the capital, and deposited them, along with his will and savings,
He finally broke with Tafari on 13 August 1916, and removed him from his governorship at Harar and transferred him to Kaffa, where Yasu nominally ruled as Negus. He made Harar into a Crown Domain under the control of Muslim administrators. The Muslim Gallas of Tcher-tcher district were exempted from taxes and were being armed. The Danakil chief, Muhammad Abū Bakr, was made Governor of Dire Dawa, with Fit Ydlibi as his financial administrator. Yasu also had his pedigree sent to the Sharīf of Mecca, and it looked as if he was taking Sadik's Mahdī prophecy seriously. The Prince then left for Jijiga, where caravans of munitions had been arriving from Harar. Rumours, prevalent in Adis Ababa, saying that he was to be overthrown obviously reached his ears in Harar, and he began preparing his forces for the eventual confrontation with the Shoan conspirators.


1. Supra, Ch. II, p. 146.

2. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 79, 23.8.16; CO to FO, 2.10.16, (trs. Archer to Law, precis No. 2, 2.9.16).

3. Yasu had asked Brice and Simoni, the Governor of Jibuti, for 18,000 rifles. They refused. FO 371/2595, Thesiger, T. 30, 13.7.16.
Dodds, who was in the midst of the Somali ferment in Harar, wrote:

As regards Lij Yasu's real aims and intentions we are still in the dark. That he is a Moslem at heart may be taken for certain: that he is also hostile to the Entente Powers seems equally sure, but this feeling is traceable, less to any real friendship for Germany and Turkey or to a conviction that they will win the war, than to his resentment at the controlling influence which he feels the three Legations exercise here and which he recognizes is a check on the autocratic power he wishes to assume.

Nevertheless, the Foreign Office still believed "that Lij Yasu's proceedings were ... part of a comprehensive Turkish-German scheme", and the myth survives still. Many authorities believe that Lij Yasu was overthrown "because he was pro-German in the War, and planned to march at the head of his army into East Africa and help Von Lettow-Vorbeck". As Greenfield rightly asserts, there is no evidence for such a belief:

To the Allied powers it seemed clear that Eyasu's attitudes were dangerous. His religious leanings were towards Islam, and therefore Turkey, and his political ones towards Germany. A

1. FO 371/2594, Dodds to Thesiger, 21.8.16, in Thesiger No. 79.

new Jehad in north eastern Africa could conceivably have tremendous repercussions in the Middle East and India and completely change the world balance of power in favour of the central powers.

However tempting it is for historians to assume that Lij Yasu was planning a second East African front, Thesiger was convinced that he was for the moment planning only local trouble. Thesiger suggested that the Legations should let the Prince insult and anger the highlanders until the latter begged the Legations to help them remove Yasu. He would let Yasu impale himself on his own ambition, and then rescue the "good Abyssinians" with guarantees of independence and demands for reform.

During August while Yasu was gathering his forces at Jijiga, the conspirators were preparing at the capital. Foremost among them was Tafari and his cousins, Gan Imru and Dej Kassa, and his adviser, Ato Herui. Perhaps more importantly they also included Fit Hapta Giorgis and the Itchege Walda Giorgis, without whose prestige the plot would have never gotten under way. Tafari had been stripped of his power and had nothing to lose by opposing Yasu. Doubtless Yasu's regime and goals were also repugnant to him. Hapta Giorgis had also suffered under Yasu, and he

had no liking for his policies. The Itchege, and to a certain extent Tafari and Hapta Giorgis, wanted to restore the power and prestige of the Christian church.

The other conspirators were: Fit Takla Hawariat, who would later represent Ethiopia at the League of Nations; Kantiba Gabru, Mayor of Adis Ababa, adviser to Woizero Zauditu and former interpreter at the German Legation; Nagadras Gabra-Hiwot Baykedagn, former private secretary to Menelik, and one of those who helped overthrow Taitu in 1910. In addition the conspirators could call upon the host of Ministers, officials and courtiers who had lost their positions due to Lij Yasu's preference for Muslims.

In Ethiopia a revolt would always attract support from disaffected elements hoping to better themselves. Yasu's reign created many malcontents: unemployed governors, powerless Shoan Ministers, insulted churchmen and bankrupt merchants. When Yasu decided to defy the Shoan power structure he made himself many enemies.

Conspicuous by their absences were Ras Walda Giorgis, who had remained in Gondar since his return from Dese in December 1915; Ras Hailu, who likewise had not moved from

1. Ibid., p. 139.

2. The conspirators hoped to make use of imprisoned chiefs, such as Ras Wolye's sons, Ras Gugsa and Dej Amadi, to divide the loyalty of the North when Mikael made his move to support his son.
Godjam; and Ras Seyoum, Mikael's viceroy in the Tigre. In any case, the conspirators found it difficult to contact them, by wire or courier, without giving themselves away to the Italians on the one hand, or Mikael on the other. Two others who knew of the plot, but who were not anxious to support it, were the Betwoded and the Abun. Neither Haile Giorgis, who epitomized the Ethiopian tradition of non-committal ambiguity, nor Matewos, who was intensely conservative and who had an unnatural fear of Mikael, had any love for Lij Yasu; however they felt that the time was not right for a successful coup.

In the last week of August the conspirators called two meetings with the Shoan chiefs where it was decided to summon Lij Yasu to Adis Ababa to answer charges of infidelity to his religion and country. The Betwoded wanted to wait for more proof of Yasu's conversion, but he was persuaded to agree.¹ Thesiger saw him and the Fitwary on 28 August to complain about the arrest of Dodds' Somali interpreter, Abd'Allah Dahir, by Fit Ydlibi,² and it seemed to him that the Fitwary was more alive to the consequences of Lij Yasu's policy than the Betwoded.³ On 30 August the

¹. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 81, 31.8.16.

². He had been gathering evidence of Turkish propaganda in Harar.
Abun and the Itchege were scheduled to release the chiefs from their oaths of allegiance to the Prince, but the two old churchmen excused themselves because of a sudden downpour. A subsequent meeting at the Abun's compound only attracted the Betwoded and 400 of his soldiers, who shortly left for some light entertainment. "It is typical of the present condition of Adis Ababa", sighed Thesiger, "that a thunderstorm should be sufficient to overthrow a conspiracy, and that a movement which was intended to inaugurate the regeneration of Abyssinia should end in a performance at the cinematograph".¹ Thesiger may be pardoned for his disappointment at Ethiopian priorities, for the situation, in Lord Harding's words, did have elements of "opéra bouffe". The truth, however, was less amusing. The Betwoded had accidently learned from Kabada Mangasha, a former Governor of Gore and one of the inner circle, that the conspirators intended not only to recall Yasu to Adis Ababa, but to depose him. Thinking that the conspirators could not possibly succeed, he surrounded the Abun's and Itchege's compounds with troops to prevent them from attending the

3. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 80, 28.8.16.

1. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 81, 31.8.16.
meeting. The Betwoded was a man of infinite discretion, and he was not prepared to jeopardize his position. Through a life of intrigue and hard work he had built himself — the son of Ato Walda Mikael, a debtera and secretary to Menelik's granary — from a poor secretary to the highest administrative post in the empire. He was probably the richest man in Ethiopia and he was married to Lij Yasu's half-sister. He would not throw this away for the benefit of Dej Tafari, a man whom he knew despised him. The Betwoded had no sympathy with Yasu's Muslim or German policies; his action on 30 August is best interpreted in a purely personal light.

The Betwoded Haile Giorgis demanded Tafari's arrest, but Tafari had barricaded himself in his house, and declared that he would kill anyone that came to apprehend him because he believed firmly that "prison for him meant an end by poison". The Fitwary was not willing to test Tafari's determination, and he dryly suggested that the Betwoded could arrest Tafari himself if he liked.¹

The chiefs had revealed their plans, but there was no one in the capital who could stop them.² On the collapse

¹ FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Sperling, private, 31.8.16.
² Hodson, op. cit., pp. 126-7.
of the conspiracy Thesiger urged the Abun and the Betwoded to unite with the Fitwary and Tafari, and turn the revolt into a legal action combining Church, Council and chiefs. He also arranged with his colleagues to meet at the French Legation on 3 September to prepare a "joint demand for an explanation of the Moslem policy of Lij Yasu and a protest against arming the Somalis and sending the Mullah arms and ammunition". The protest was drafted in a friendly tone, the Ministers affecting to believe that Lij Yasu might still return to Adis Ababa and put aside his Muslim policy. The démarche was "pour attirer son attention sur les périls intérieurs et extérieurs auxquels la politique du jeune souverain exposait l'empire de Ménelik". It included:

a joint demand by the four Legations (including Russia) for an explanation of Lij Yasu's Moslem policy and a protest
1 against his ending arms to the Mullah,
2 the arming of the Somali tribes
3 the allowing of the Turkish propaganda against us, by means of proclamations openly stuck up in the streets of Harar and Dire Dawa, (4) the arrest of a Consulate interpreter in the execution of his duty (5) his tampering with our tribes.

1. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 82, 4.9.16.
2. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, T. 40, 1.9.16.
4. FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, No. 83, 5.9.16 and T. 44, 15.9.16; Thesiger to Sperling, private, 31.8.16.
France was only concerned with the third point, and Italy to a certain extent with the points dealing with Sayyid Muhammad; but all five points had a direct bearing on the British position in Ethiopia. Britain was affected by the Dervishes more than her partners; she was more susceptible to border incidents; she was more harassed and embarrassed by Lij Yasu's clique. In short, Britain had the most to gain from Lij Yasu's deposition of reform.

The Allied démarche was delivered by Brice (after a windy speech minimizing France's responsibility for the protest) on 12 September 1916 and was received favourably by the Council. The conspirators found it convenient to hide behind the protest of the Powers' and some even desired a harsher note by the Entente.¹

Contrary to popular belief the Allied representation of 12 September was the extent of their help to the conspiracy (beyond verbal support to individual chiefs). Colonel A. S. Lawrance of the Somaliland Camel Constabulary was ready near Hargeisa with 120 rifles to protect Britain's "friendlies" from attack by Lij Yasu's allies,² but reports that troops had been called up to Massowah, Jibuti and Berbera³ are exaggerated.⁴ Furthermore the belief that

1. FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, No. 88, 14.9.16.
2. FO 371/2594, CO to FO, Secret, 2.9.16, (trs. Archer to Law, Tel. 1.9.16).
Colonel T. E. Lawrence and the British Secret Service staged the whole plot is similarly without basis.¹

Archer believed that Yasu's forces at Jijiga, which were guarding the Harar road against foreigners and flying the Turkish flag, were to be used against the British "friendlies".² Among Yasu's entourage were four "Austro-Germans", including an officer and a small arms manufacturer. The prince, now dressed alternately as a Somali or a Danakil, ignored cables from Mikael to return to the capital and restore order. He told his Somali allies that the Ottoman Sultan had entrusted him with all the land from Berbera to Massowah and that he would "quietly and tactfully" regain Ethiopia for Islam. He "ended the meeting by swearing on the Koran that he was a Moslem in heart, soul, and deed", and he distributed among them replicas of the Muslim-Ethiopian flag he once presented to Mazhar Bey.³

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3. Jones and Monroe, op. cit., p. 159; Conti Rossini, op. cit., p. 110.

4. Archer had asked for reinforcements from Egypt on 4 September, but none could be spared, FO 37/2594, CO to FO, Secret, 5.9.16 and 12.9.16.

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Lij Yasu's schemes appear to be on a scale which at least commands admiration but, to carry them through successfully, he must prove himself a pastmaster in intrigue, as he must hoodwink his countrymen until the time comes for striking; utilize the hostility of the Turks against us for his own ends without permitting them to succeed in embroiling Abyssinia and Great Britain; and lastly overcome the suspicions of the Mullah and divert his influence to his own ends. That he will ultimately succeed, is I consider, out of the question; the suspicions of his countrymen are already aroused and sooner or later he must either abandon his scheme or lose his throne.

Lij Yasu arrived at Harar on 5 September and stayed with Ydlibi, and on 14 September he prayed with 3000 others at an Indian mosque. He distributed Maria Theresa dollars among the Gadabursi and Issa Somali and Tafari's Harari troops in order to recruit supporters. He also provided the Somalis with camels and clothing, and they now addressed him as "Father of Peace". He had declared himself a Muslim of the Qadirriya tariqa and the Shafi'ite madhaab, and he ate, dressed and lived as a Muslim.

3. FO 371/2594, CO to FO, Secret, 19.10.16, (trs. Archer to Law, 16.9.16); IO L/P&S/10/756, A.B. No. 26, 16.10.16.

1. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 85, 8.9.16.

2. IO L/P&S/10/756, A.B. No. 20, 14.9.16, p. 236; Mosley, op. cit., p. 93.

Ydlibi was hinted as a possible successor to Tafari, but Fit Gabra served Yasu well enough. Caravans of arms and supplies continued to go to Jijiga and to Tale, and one of the latter was accompanied by Emil Kirsch, a German mechanic, whom Yasu arranged for Muhammad to employ as an armourer at his haroun at Tale. Yasu also prepared an answer to the Allied démarche with the aid of Mazhar Bey - though he never delivered it.

Though Lij Yasu had declared himself a Muslim and the Mullah of Jijiga had declared him Hadi - forerunner of the Mahdi - it is not clear if his conversion was canonical.

Wingate, for one, did not take his declaration seriously:

*A dynastic reactionary with strong Moslem inclinations is a strange successor to the Negus Negusti of my day in Abyssinia! I infer that religious conviction is alien to Lij Yasu's character and that his pro-Moslem courses are actuated by political considerations coupled with the superficial attraction (of a freethinking sensualist) to Islam.*

4. Ibid.; FO 371/2594, CO to FO, Secret, 2.9.16; Dodds to Grey, T.1, 3.10.16; CO to FO, Con., 10.11.16, (trs. Archer to Law, 30.9.16). Most Ethiopian Muslim were of this religious brotherhood (tariqa) and legal system (madhaab), though Sayyid Muhammad was of the Salihyya tariqa, and "vehemently denounced" the Qadiriyya; Archer, op. cit., p. 57, Trimingham, op. cit., pp. 231, 234; Lewis, op. cit., p. 63.

1. IO L/P&S/10/756, A.B. No. 24, 5.10.16, p. 315; Jardine, op. cit., p. 247; Lewis, op. cit., p. 78; Rey, Real Abyssinia, p. 145; CO 535/43, Archer to Law, 30.9.16.
However, Thesiger was more convinced at Yasu's commitment to Islam: "Every thing tends to prove that the foundation of a new Moslem empire, which shall include Christian Abyssinia, is the end and aim of Lij Yasu's policy and, at present, he is on a fair road to success". Such a confederation, in league with the Dervishes would mean nothing but trouble for the British in North-East Africa. 1 Thesiger was committed to the conspirators, and he made it clear that Britain should back them and not Lij Yasu.

The visit of the Somali elders to the Suez Canal 2 was a success, and went a long way in calming Somaliland; however the threat to Berbera did not come from Sayyid Muhammad any longer:

One cardinal fact, perhaps not fully realized outside the Protectorate [reported Archer is that the Mullah long since ceased to be a religious leader, but is, in fact, the head of a band of freebooters, held together solely by the hope of material gain in the shape of camels looted from the surrounding country-side ... the unrestrained activities of the Prince of Abyssinia directly across our borders are a cause of much more anxiety to this Administration than the avowed hostility of the Mullah, who is now definitely checked and held. 3

2. FO 800/48, Wingate to Thesiger, 14.9.16; IO L/P&S/10/756, A.B. No. 26, 16.10.16.

1. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 91, 20.9.16.

2. Supra, p. 203.
The British had done all they could do in good conscience to depose Lij Yasu. The Allied démarche gave backbone to the unorganized plots of the Shoan chiefs, and their advice may have helped to support some half-hearted plotters. The frontiers of B.E.A. and Somaliland were prepared for either an attack by Yasu or a dissolution of order, and attempts were made to calm the anxieties of the tribesmen within British borders. Allied co-operation was officially at an unprecedented level, and even Brice was convinced of the need to depose Yasu. However, all had to wait on the Shoan conspirators, who had the inevitable task of reconciling the opinions of the various officials, chiefs and churchmen, who though united in their dislike of Lij Yasu, were divided on the means of dealing with him and of governing Ethiopia after he was removed. The Europeans did not inaugurate the conspiracy, and they could not carry it out. This was an Ethiopian affair, and the conspirators probably would not have welcomed active European support.

The movement to depose Lij Yasu was known only to Thesiger and Colli in the diplomatic community. Brice was

3. FO 371/2594, MacMahon to Grey, No. 257, 10.10.16; FO 371/2596, CO to FO, Secret, 2.11.16, (trs. Archer to Law, Con., 25.9.16).
not outspoken in his support for the conspirators, and the plotters did not need the use of the railroad, while they did need the use of the British and Italian telegraph systems to contact Gondar and the Tigré. The Shoans did not need help from Ras Walda Giorgis or Ras Seyoum, but they wanted to remain neutral. The biggest question was what Negus Mikael would do. According to British sources\(^1\) the Shoans could mobilize 120,000 men including 80 guns and 120 machine-guns; and with the Imperial Army under Fit Hapta Giorgis their numbers could be brought up to 170,000 men. However much of the Imperial Army was in Yasu's hands, and the loyalties of the garrisons in Jimma, Harar and the Galla-Sidama South-West put another 30-40,000 troops in doubt. Against this Mikael could raise 80,000 infantry and 50,000 Galla cavalry, with 20-24 guns. Seyoum could contribute an additional 120,000 men if he decided to join his chief, and Ras Hailu could provide 40,000 more. The Shoans only had 60,000 Amharas under Ras Walda Giorgis as their reserve. It was essential to the conspirators that should Mikael decide to support Yasu that the rest of the North remain neutral. This would leave virtually a fair fight between Shoa and

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1. All figures are from the Abyssinian Handbook, pp. 288, 350, 352.
Wollo, with Walda Giorgis holding the ring for Shoa, and 
Seyoum (and possibly Hailu)¹ for Wollo.

Tafari and the Itchege called the principal Shoan 
chiefs and Ministers to the Ghebbi early Wednesday morn-
ing, 27 September 1916. When the Betwoded arrived he was 
ordered by Fit Hapta Giorgis to dismiss his troops and to 
allow the Abun to attend. When the Betwoded returned 
Hapta Giorgis read a long proclamation, written by the 
Council which asked:

Release us from our oath of allegiance.
We will never submit to Islam. We do not 
wish for our country to be delivered to 
the foreigner through the malice of Ledj 
Iyasu, who is leading our kingdom to ruin. 
We will never permit a King who has denied 
his Faith to rule over us. As for us, 
never, never, never, will we agree to change our 
religion.²

The proclamation detailed Lij Yasu's offences as an enemy 
of Christianity and Ethiopia; it mentioned his lack of 
respect to the memory of Menelik and to Christian traditions; 
his destruction of churches and his hareem of Muslim women.

¹ There was a fair chance that Hailu, though allied to 
Mikael and married to one of his daughters, would 
remain neutral, since he had been insulted when Yasu 
returned his daughter Sabela Wangel in favour of his 
Muslim hareem. Hailu's granddaughter was Yasu's only 
legitimate heir.

² Wallis Budge, op. cit., ii, p. 546; Also cf. S.A. 122/7, 
"Documents Relatifs Au Coup D'Etat D'Addis-Abeba du 27 
Septembre 1916", (Dire Dawa, 1917) p. 10, and Zoli, op. 
In particular, it condemned the gift of the Ethiopian flag to Mazhar Bey, the decoration of Somali shaikhs, and the intrigues which led to the Allied démarche of 12 September. The Manifesto ended:

Alors que notre royaume a été évangélisé avant l'Europe et qu'il est toujours demeuré ferme dans sa foi, alors que l'empire turc agonise et est réduit aux abois, ce serait à ce moment que notre pays passerait au musulmanisme? ce serait à cette minute que le drapeau musulman flotterait sur le sol l'Ethiopie arrosé si souvent par des torrents de sang chrétien? Non, il n'en sera pas ainsi; avec l'aide de Dieu nous jurons plutôt de verser jusqu'à la dernière goutte notre sang pour notre religion et notre pays.

The Betwoded, upon hearing the charges, tried to dissociate himself from the plot, but he was held captive in the hall until the meeting was concluded.

The Abun was now called upon, and he hesitantly declared, "I have listened to the charges which have been made against Menelik's heir. If these things are true..." - he got no further since the Ghebbi was engulfed in protests and demands that the Abun accept the proof of the conspirators. Itchege Walda Giorgis was urged to take command of the situation: "From this day forth, oh

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1. Documents, op. cit., p. 11.
2. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 95, 28.9.16.
chiefs,' he intoned, 'you are freed from your oath to the apostate Liy Yasu. Let us all take a new oath to be true to our religion'; Abuna Matewos reluctantly murmured the Itchege's words after him.

One of the many chiefs who had not heard the Abun's repetition, challenged the authority of the Itchege to absolve the Rases from their oath to Yasu. This raised another cry

Ligaba Bayenna seizing his rifle, called out "Let those who are Mohammedans stand on one side, and then we shall see" ...

A scene of indescribable confusion followed; a shot was fired and immediately the excited crowd of soldiers began to fire their rifles in all directions without knowing why or wherefore. In the congested space few bullets can have missed their mark, and the slaughter would have probably continued but for the presence of mind of the officer in charge of the war drums, who ordered them to beat the signal for silence, when the madness ceased as suddenly as it had arisen.

As the smoke cleared many of the chiefs were in tears, and 100 casualties were counted. The meeting was adjourned until the afternoon when Woizero Zauditu, Menelik's daughter, was named Empress, and Tafari was raised to the rank of Ras and proclaimed "Regent and Heir to the Throne". The news was taken quietly by the capital, and the Abun was able to "overpersuade" the few loyalists. Dej Balcha,

1. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 97, 29.9.16.
with 10,000 highlanders, was ordered to Harar "to form a cordon around the town" and to arrest Lij Yasu. Proclamations were circulated saying:

Hear, O Christian people of Abyssinia: our religion and Government were suffering and being destroyed; therefore for the protection and benefit of our religion and Government the people of Ethiopia assembled and appointed the daughter of the Emperor Menelik as Empress and Ras Tafari as heir to the Throne. Because this has been done with the consent of all, go and rejoice.

And so they did - most of them - and not least among them was Thesiger, who wrote:

The Government is now in the hands of those who are friendly to our cause, and it remains for us to use our influence in guiding the Council in the way most likely to lead to the peace and tranquility of the country.

However peace and tranquility were not to be vouchsafed for many years to come. The Shoans had found one voice, but it issued from three mouths, for Zauditu and Tafari ruled Ethiopia under the watchful eye of Fitwary Hapta Giorgis. For the moment the danger of attack made a common cause. On 29 September the Abun sent Fit Gabra at Harar an order to arrest Yasu. The chief telegraph

1. Ibid.
2. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 95, 28.9.16.
Itegue Zauditu
officer, Garaz Bellati, however delivered the message to Yasu, who then ordered the wire cut. Meanwhile, Gan Imru, Tafari's personal representative, arrived at Harar ahead of Balcha to try to negotiate Yasu's peaceful surrender. Yasu imprisoned Imru, and he forced the priests of Harar to excommunicate all who opposed him and swore his allegiance to Christianity on cross and Bible. He also raised the Fitwaries Gabra, Iyeleh, Sa'id and Ydlibi to the rank of Dejazmatch, and 29 others were promoted to Fitwary.

Zauditu arrived with her step-mother Taitu at Adis Ababa from Mount Entoto on 30 September, and she accepted the Shoan offer of the throne. She related her pain at the treatment of Menelik by Lij Yasu, and she stated:

May God pitch his tent among you. You have chosen me, and I pray that you have chosen wisely. Your faith is my faith, your sorrow my sorrow. All the love which I bore Menelik your Emperor I now give freely to you. Henceforth it is you who are my glory, for when I bade farewell to Menelik did I not lose all that was splendid in this world?

Thesiger justified Yasu's removal in the light of evidence from Khartoum and from a certain Fit Merdassa

(a brother-in-law of Yasu's) that the Prince intended to cause trouble in the Sudan. He also advised Tafari to arrest Shaikh Khojali and Medjied Abūd as German agents. The Shoans notified Tigré (with Colli's help by way of Asmara) and Gondar (with Thesiger's help by way of the Sudan) of the deposition, and they sent an emissary, Ras Abata, to Dese to inform Mikael. Mikael imprisoned Abata and replied, before cutting the telegraph line, that the Shoans should not have punished Yasu so severely.

It would take time for Mikael to mobilize, and in the meantime the Shoans had the more important task of capturing Lij Yasu. With him in their hands, opposition in the rest of the empire would collapse. However Fit Gabra dared not arrest Yasu on his own, and he left Harar on Yasu's orders to engage the Shoans. Balcha had already occupied most of Harar province; 2000 Shoans were stationed on the Hawash Bridge; a further group under Likamaquas Abebe Atnafe Seged were sent out to hold the Danakil. Yasu hurriedly ordered two mixed forces of Turks

1. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 96, 29.9.16.

2. Abūd had been Ydlibi's assistant at the Baro Concession, and was a former employee of Arnold Holtz, one of the German Legation's agents. Lij Yasu had made him Governor of Gimira in 1914 and of Yambo when Ydlibi left there for Harar. It was Abūd who received Bayemed's order to wreck the Gambela wireless station (supra, Ch. II, p.10), Gruehl, op. cit. pp. 37, 69, 72, 77-8, 81 and FO 800/48, Thesiger to Wingate, 5.10.16.
and Arabs to prepare for battle, one under Ydlibi at Dire Dawa, and one under 'Umar Auni Effendi, a Turkish agent, at Harar. On 29 September, Fit Merdassa approached Dodds with an offer from Lij Yasu to seek British protection for Ethiopia. Dodds was sceptical, but he agreed to meet Yasu to discuss the matter. He talked with Yasu on the 30th and on the 2nd of October, but the Prince merely declared his friendship for Britain and his surprise at the way the Legations had treated him.

On 1 October the Europeans at Dire Dawa left for Jibuti, and Dodds evacuated the Greek, Armenian and Indian communities of Harar on 5 October. At noon, on 1 October, Gabra and Iyelel, after swearing allegiance to Yasu, marched out of Harar, but they defected to Balcha on 7 October at Chalanko. This swelled the slow moving Shoan forces, which were being daily reinforced with units from Kambata and the South. Lij Yasu, who hitherto was probably unaware of the magnitude of the rising, began to get worried when his Ogaden Somali allies failed to join him at Harar. At 4 p.m.

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1. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 98, 3.10.16; Sandford, Lion of Judah, p. 39.
on 8 October Sadik called at the British Consulate at Harar, and arranged to meet Dodds at the local branch of the Bank of Abyssinia. There, in the presence of the Bank manager, Sadik appealed for British protection for Ethiopia. He threatened to raise the Harar Somalis if Dodds refused, but the Consul saw this rightly as a bluff. In the meantime, Lij Yasu, realizing that his Christian troops would not support him, called upon the Somalis to fight to the finish, and he fled the Town. He must have been the last one to leave, for Balcha’s troops reached Harar that night, and his Gondarais captured the main gates of the town. They positioned themselves on the wall and refused to allow the Somalis to leave. They stayed until 9 a.m. the next day, when a force under Gan Belacha entered the town and took the Faras Magala - the market square - and another took the town Ghebi. Imru was released from prison, and Sadik, Ughaz Hashi (Rer Dalal Ogaden), Ughaz 'Umar (Malingoor) and ex-Ughaz Robleh Nur (Gadabursi) were arrested. At 11 a.m. the main force entered through the Shoan Gate. Dodds described it:

1. FO 371/2594, Dodds to Grey, T. 1, 3.10.16.

2. Ydlibi was later arrested at Jibuti and interned for the duration of the war (FO 371/2594, CO to FO, Secret, 30.10.16 – trs. Archer to Law, 30.10.16); Yahya Effendi, who had absconded with Government funds, was arrested on his arrival at Zeila.
Soon afterwards a fanfare of trumpets proclaimed the approach of the chief. Seated on a gaily caparisoned mule, clothed in rich silk, and protected from the sun by a light Cambridge blue parasol, Dejazmatch Balcha entered the Faras Magala and took possession of the town. The entrance was impressive and was carried out in the most orderly and inspiring manner; but the orderly spectacle was not to last long. As soon as the Dejazmatch entered the Ghebi courtyard, squads of soldiers were sent to every quarter of the town to search for Somalis and the massacre began. Somalis were bolted from their hiding places like rabbits from their holes, and, like rabbits, were shot as they ran for their lives, naked, down the streets and across the market place. Bullets were flying everywhere and anywhere and several Abyssinians were killed and wounded by the fire of their comrades. It was a disgusting sight... The Abyssinians were fast becoming mad and a general massacre of Mohammedans was likely.

It continued until 4 p.m. when Dodds persuaded Balcha to halt the slaughter. The day ended with the return of Fit Gabra, and the departure of the captives (the four chiefs, plus 'Umar Effendi and his Greek assistant) to the capital.²

The victory was a hollow one with Lij Yasu free. He and his small entourage fled to the North to join Mikael. News, however, travelled slowly, and the death or capture

1. FO 371/2594, Dodds to Grey, T. 1, 3.10.16.

2. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 107, 31.10.16, (trs. Dodds to Thesiger, No. 95, 15.10.16); Abyssinian Handbook, p. 357.
of the Prince was thought certain by those in Adis Ababa and Dese. Had Mikael known that his son was safe he might have reconsidered his plans and tried to bargain with Shoa. Thinking that his son was dead he could only, in honour, avenge his death. The old Negus had not many more years to live, and to die in battle facing a despised enemy would have been a fitting end to a life-long warrior. However, it must be emphasized that the Shoan rebels believed that only the death of Lij Yasu would prevent Mikael from attacking. The Prince's escape or capture in their view would induce Mikael to advance.

By 1 October Demissie, Hailu and Dej Ganami had sworn allegiance to the new Government, and most of the chiefs of the South-West had done likewise. Hapta Giorgis had been given Jimma and Gurage as an additional fief; Ras Lul Seged was released from prison in Debra Berhan, where the rebels had first caught him, and he was ordered to proceed to Gishe, in North-East Shoa, to hold Mikael. His 7000 men were joined on 7 October by a small force under Likamaquas Abebe, who had just returned from several

1. He called Tafari, "the feared one", a pun on his name.

2. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 98, 3.10.16; Guebre Selassie, op. cit., ii, p. 629.
successes over the Danakil. On 4 October the rebels received word that the Rases Walda Giorgis and Seyoum had declared for Shoa, which meant that Mikael was completely isolated.

Walda Giorgis named his nephew, Lij Haile Mariam, as his heir and sent him with an army of 10,000 to the Wollo frontier. Ras Wolye and his son Dej Amadi were reinstated in Lasta and Yejju, and their supporters raised revolts in those districts against Mikael on 13 October. Curiously in Adis Ababa the new Government rejoiced at the news of Lij Yasu's escape. To them this meant that Mikael would fight, and that they would have the opportunity, once and for all, to crush the Wollo party. With new allies arriving almost every hour, the Shoans were extremely confident of their success. However there was a big difference between obtaining allies and mobilizing and transporting troops. Walda Giorgis and Hailu could not be expected to reinforce the capital, though they forced Mikael to leave 20-30,000 troops in Wollo to defend his flank. Seyoum had not mobilized and presumably would keep the Tigre neutral.

1. 500 Danakil were killed at Meisso and Afdem near the Hawash Bridge, FO 800/48, Thesiger to Wingate, 5.10.16.
2. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 100, 11.10.16.
Balcha had a considerable force in Harar preparing for an attack by Yasu's Somali allies. The only dependable troops available were the Imperial Army and those of the chiefs in and around the capital. The soldiers in the West and South would be a valuable reserve, but Shoa desperately needed a front line.

The Shoans thought they could force Mikael's hand by tempting him to attack before he was fully mobilized and had been joined by Lij Yasu - though before Shoa was fully mobilized as well. Itegue Taitu devised a ruse; a message was sent saying that Lij Yasu was imprisoned in Adis Ababa. It worked and Mikael's army rushed down from Wollo to occupy the heights of Gishe before Lul Seged's advance guard could arrive. In the meantime Dej Kassa was raised to Ras and sent with 5000 troops to occupy two important passes between Salale and Wollo. The rebels were waiting for 20,000 troops under Demissie and Ganami, and 13,000 more under Walda Gabriel and Nado before they committed the bulk of their forces.

Godjami troops occupied Worra Hailu on 13 October,

1. Greenfield, *op. cit.*, p. 141. The rebels must have changed their reasoning because on 10 October they were cheering at the news that Lij Yasu escaped, ibid.

and Lul Seged advanced to Sahala Dingai. As Mikael marched, burning and pillaging through Manz, the very heartland of Shoa, Fit Hapta Giorgis left Adis Ababa for the North with the main Shoan army.¹ Mikael continued his advance through the valleys of the Adabai and the Mofer Rivers, the defensive frontier of Shoa, and occupied Sahala Dingai on 14 October and Tegulet on the 15th. Lul Seged, with his pitiful force of no more than 8000 (and probably not much more than 3000) was retreating as fast as possible upon Ankober, where a Fit Gelli² joined him with 6000 more men. Hapta Giorgis was still, unfortunately, two days march from Debra Berhan.

It seemed likely to the European Legations that Mikael would be able to defeat both Shoan armies separately, and then advance upon Adis Ababa. Though Shoan reinforcements would have arrived by the time Mikael had reached the capital, it was decided to collect all Europeans at their Legations, and hope that a responsible officer could be found to protect them. At 3 p.m. on 17 October Mikael attacked Ankober. Lul Seged and Gelli put up a valiant

¹. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 101, 16.10.16.
². Gelli had been defeated on 10 October 1916 by Muhammad Abū Bakr, Yasu's agent, and Dej Saleh, and could not have been much help to Lul Seged.
SHOA v. WOLLO
THE CAMPAIGNS OF OCTOBER 1916

SHOAN FORCES

WOLLO FORCES

SCALE

Pro-Shoan revolt 13 Oct.

Waldia →YEJU pro-Shoan revolts 13 Oct.

Gondari force under Haile Mariam

Tenta • Amba Sel • Defeats Ent Tasso

Worra Himanot • Boro media

Debre

Kossa

Asselli Pass

Grezzell Pass passes 14 Oct.

MANZ

GISHE 9 Oct.

Worra Hadi

Kossa coplerse

Debre Birhan

Enda Wuchu

Shano

Lul Seged • Josia

Hapa and Tafari

Sagale

Mikael's force

Debre Markos

GODJAM

Salale

Addabai

Washit

Gedadmis

Reinforcements: -

Debre Libanos

Demissie

Oromi

Reinforcements: -

Adis Ababa

Harar

Reinforcements: -

Wolda Gabriel

Nado

Reinforcements: -

Kambata

Haloosh Station

Atid

Defeats Ondaqil

Abebe 

Defeats Segi

Segi

Defeats Dondil
defence, and on the following day drove the Wollo force from the outskirts of the town. Tafari entrusted the capital to Balcha, who had just returned from Harar, and after releasing all the prisoners from gaol he took his Harari cavalry and the Adis Ababa Arada Zabagnock - the night watchmen - to the North. Criminals and the Legation servants joined the army, and reinforcements poured into the capital. The Legations stockpiled food, and withdrew their savings from the bank in case they had to "buy a good Wollo officer".¹

On 19 October Hapta Giorgis encamped at Bulga, south of Endod Waschia, and Fit Makonnen Wasani, commander of the Imperial Cavalry, occupied the mountain passes between the Adabai and the Muger Rivers on Ras Kassa's right flank. To the east Mikael counter-attacked against Ankober and overwhelmed Lul Seged's force. He now turned to face the main Shoan body which was entrenched at Shano. Mikael's position was not as good as it appeared. Though he might have steamrollered over the Fitwary's army, the capital was full of eager reinforcements. In addition, Fit Makonnen, who was marching up the Washit River to Worra Hailu, and Ras Kassa, with 5000 men and Galla cavalry,

¹. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 104, 22.10.16.
were both threatening his communications and rear.  

Reinforcements were being sent to the Fitwary as soon as they had arrived in the capital, and almost every chief of stature was on his way to the main Shoan force at Shano. Tafari, Bayena, Igazu, Demissie, Hailu, Nado, Kabada Mangasha, Afa Negus Telahoun and Stephanos all took what soldiers, mules and arms they could find and joined the procession northwards. The Fitwary needed time to allow these men to join him, and so again he decided on a ruse, this time to delay Mikael's inevitable attack. He ordered his chiefs to send Mikael denunciatory letters, while he alone sent one professing friendship for the Negus and hatred for Tafari. He offered Mikael a mule train of ammunition as a token of good faith, and Mikael was fooled long enough to allow Tafari and the others to reach Shano with a precious cargo of machine-guns.

Thesiger wrote on 21 October:

The big battle may come off at any moment & if the Shoans are beaten nothing can prevent the Negus from occupying Adis Ababa and the civil war may then drag on for months. If Shoa „wins it all is over except the shouting.

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In the meantime, on 22 October Ras Kassa secured the strategic mountain passes at Mikael’s rear, and Gondari troops occupied Wollo, entered Dese and moved into Yeju.¹

On 24 October Fit Makonnen reached Worra Hailu and defeated a Wollo force that was going to reinforce Mikael.² The French and Italian Legations, anxious to ingratiate themselves with Tafari, were wholeheartedly in support of the rebels, and the Secretary of the Italian Legation went to the Tigré to persuade Seyoum to remain neutral. Sperling noted: "As we can not do the same we must resign ourselves to unfavourable comparisons in the future".³ He suggested that Britain send troops from Aden to help the Shoans, since a "comparatively small force which could turn the balance in Tafari’s favour now might avert the danger of a big rising later on". The idea was vetoed by Lord Hardinge who preferred to relegate British commitments to the Somali Coast and "let Abyssinia rip".⁴ Thesiger’s request for two planes to help Tafari ("For our own interests revolution


¹ Abyssinian Handbook, p. 359.
² FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 105, 23.10.16 and No. 106, 26.10.16; IO L/P&S/10/756, A.B. No. 36, 26.10.16.
³ FO 371/2594, D.M.I. to FO, 24.10.16, with note by Sperling.
must succeed")¹ was similarly dismissed. The War Office said a flight of six was the minimum capable of work, and that they could not be spared.² The Foreign Office was going very slow on the question of recognition for the new regime. Mikael was quite capable of destroying the Fitwary's unorganized army, and even if the Negus did not go on to sack Adis Ababa, he could well force a compromise solution, perhaps with Lij Yasu retaining the nominal title of Negus Negasti. The French, however, were anxious to recognize the rebels, perhaps as a preliminary to offering them arms. France had not much to lose regardless of the outcome of the civil war, but she probably leaned towards Tafari's government since 1) he was the de facto authority; 2) he was known to be pro-French; 3) his success had the best chance of keeping Ethiopia out of the hands of the Central Powers. Italy preferred to postpone recognition until Mikael had made his move. They did not want to compromise themselves in case Mikael won, and they did not

4. FO 371/2594, Hardinge note on Thesiger to Grey, T. 54, 20.10.16.

¹. FO 371/2596, MacMahon to Grey, T. 898, 14.10.16, (trs. Thesiger to MacMahon, T., 5.10.16).

². FO 371/2596, WO to FO, 21.10.16; Grey to Thesiger, T. 45, 23.10.16.
want to give Tafari an irreversible guarantee of Ethiopia's sovereignty, lest it hamper Italy's post-war plans for expansion. Meanwhile she wished the three Representatives to concert to protect "les intérêts respectifs des trois Puissances".¹ To this Sir Edward Grey noted: "It would be premature to recognize officially the new Abyssinian Govt. yet".² By a hasty recognition and undue publicization of the anti-Muslim nature of the coup Britain could hurt her relations with Sharîf Hussein and other Muslims, and so the Foreign Office tried to keep information about Ethiopia down to a minimum.³

In North-East Shoa Hapta Giorgis, Tafari and Kassa were now joined. On the night of 26 October Mikael's cavalry tried to outflank the Shoan right wing on the Sagale plain, but his troops lost their way and got caught in a swamp. The element of surprise was lost, and at daybreak his cavalry were attacked by the Arada Zabagnock. At the same time Ras 'Ali, Mikael's commander-in-chief, attacked the left flank of the Shoan army and was beaten off by

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1. FO 371/2594, Rodd to Grey, T. 982, 6.10.16; FO 371/2596, Cambon to Grey, 12.10.16, (trs. Ruspoli to Briand, 7.10.16), and Cambon to Grey, 18.10.16.

2. FO 371/2594, Grey on IO to FO, 16.10.16.

3. FO 371/2594, Sir E. Cornwall questioned Lord Robert Cecil on events in Ethiopia and received little information, 18.10.16.
machine-gun fire. 'Ali counter-attacked and managed to reach Kassa's front line for in-fighting. Tafari sent in cavalry to support the crumbling Shoan left, while Hapta Giorgis, in the centre, was being battered by Mikael's Wollo horsemen. The battle lasted for five hours before the Wollo line broke. 'Ali was forced back by Kassa, and he was captured by Tafari's cavalry. At that point Mikael's men began loading the dummy ammunition that Hapta Giorgis had presented in "good faith" several days before. The Fitwary ordered a charge, Mikael was surrounded, and he surrendered on a guarantee of safe conduct. ¹

During the battle Lij Yasu was in Aussa awaiting the outcome. When he heard the news of his father's defeat he fled to Axum, where he was hidden by Ras Seyoum. Since the coup's success was now assured, Thesiger and his colleagues recognized the new Government, and the House of Commons was notified of the fact on 8 November. ² It had been a very close call for the Shoans; Mikael had concentrated his forces ten days earlier than the Shoans, and if he had continued to Adis Ababa after destroying Lul Seged at Ankober he probably could have caught Hapta Giorgis by surprise. ³

2. FO 371/2594, Question by Sir E. Cornwall, 11.11.16; Thesiger to Grey, No. 113, 10.11.16; FO 371/2596, Grey to Thesiger, T. 46, 28.10.16; The Times, 9.11.16.
Hapta Giorgis and Tafari returned to the capital with 20,000 troops and paraded their army on the Jan Medr - the racecourse - in front of the Empress on 3 November.

The review lasted for three and a half hours and was a most wonderful sight. All the chiefs and soldiers were in full dress and the incoming army wild with triumph. As was customary, the cavalry and mounted men, in passing, dashed at full gallop up to the Empress' tent, yelling their war songs, the horses and mules decorated with streaming many-coloured ribbons and the blood-stained "shamas" and trophies of the men the rider killed, and then wheeled round to make room for others.

Abuna Petros, the bishop of Dese, was pardoned by Zauditu, but Mikael was led, on foot and in chains, into the Jan Medr by Ras Kassa. There he made his obeisance to the Empress, and was then imprisoned in the Ghebi. He was later exiled to Lake Zwai under the guardianship of Hapta Giorgis.

His presence created a great impression. He had fought in the first line and had risked everything for his son, who had not even the courage to support him, and his bearing and conduct were in every way worthy of one who had been the proudest man in Abyssinia.

3. FO 371/2594, Theaiger to Grey, No. 109, 1.11.16.

1. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 110, 3.11.16.

2. Ibid.
Mikael's three lieutenants, Ras 'Ali, Haile Mariam, and Gabra were led past the Imperial tent with stones on their shoulders. The most moving incident of the day was when the 150 survivors of the Battle of Ankober marched past, led by Lul Seged's young son, and still clad in their fighting clothes.1

The Allied Legations had attended in ceremonial dress, but the Germany and Turkey ones were represented only by their Consuls. Thesiger recognized that the Entente Legations, and especially Britain, now had an unequalled opportunity to settle their outstanding problems in Ethiopia. The Legations had contributed little to the initiation or to the success of the Shoan coup; but their support allowed the conspirators freedom of action to deal with Mikael, without fear that the Powers would intervene. Thus Tripartite prestige was very high with the Shoans, and the prestige of the Shoans was high in the country. Now was the time for the long overdue revision of the Tripartite Agreement on the lines that Thesiger had suggested in August 1916. Because of war commitments France and Italy could not pursue expansion (commercial or territorial), and so rivalry

1. Hodson, op. cit., p. 132; Greenfield, op. cit., p. 144; S.A. 122/7, Aibur to G.C. Khartoum, 10.11.16; The Times, 24.1.17.
between the Powers was reduced. Furthermore Charles-
Édouard Brice was leaving Adis Ababa to be succeeded by
Louis-Jules-Maurice de Coppet, the French Consul at London,
who, it was hoped, would be more amenable to Tripartite
friendship. Thesiger had in mind a guarantee of Ethiopia,
in return for internal reforms, including restriction of
the arms trade.¹ The Italians agreed that the arms trade
needed restriction, but they preferred "retarder la
solution du problème Ethiopien". Reforms might strengthen
Ethiopia, and Tripartite control might give Ethiopia an
irreversible guarantee of sovereignty. Italy was only
prepared to intervene "En cas de changement du statu-quo
politique et territorial", when presumably the partition
clauses of the 1906 Agreement would be invoked.²

Hopes of internal reform rested on Ras Tafari. As
the motivating force behind the coup and as a progressive-
minded, popular chief, he held the imagination of the
British Legation as well as the youth of his country. The
Legation realized that his one great fault was what they
called his weakness and indecision, and what he probably
termed his 'patience'. What the British Legation did not
realize was that Tafari was only one part of a three-man

¹. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 108, 1.11.16.
². FO 371/3596, Cambon to Grey, 12.10.16, (trs. Ruspoli
to Briand, 7.10.16).
Government. The nominal head of state was Zauditu, intensely religious and conservative, and still largely influenced by the old Itegue Taitu. Tafari had forced her to divorce Ras Gugsa Wolye and he had exiled him to the North, but her politics were definitely anti-reform, and she went as far as to employ a German adviser. On the other side was Fitwary Hapta Giorgis, still Minister of War and commander of the Imperial Army, and the buffer between Tafari and Zauditu. His position in the Government was to represent the interests of the Shoan chiefs, who had no use for the 'upstart' from Harar, or for the woman ruler with an affinity for the North. Also, as a Galla the Fitwary presumably did not harbour imperial ambitions. Though power had been diffused during Lij Yasu's 'reign', the Prince had still been recognized as the ultimate authority and the source of power. Under the Triumvirate there were three authorities and three centres of power, and the Legations could rarely deal with one without the advice and consent of the others. The Legations were drawn to help the rebels largely by a feeling that the Ethiopian polity could not deteriorate further without dissolving; and because the Powers did not want to deal with the partition of Ethiopia, with all its problems, during the
war. Under the Triumvirate they were to get a glimpse of Ethiopia's amazing ability to absorb confusion and its power to postpone change.
Chapter IV

The Future of Ethiopia:

The Internal Situation and Reform 1916 to 1918

The threat of Lij Yasu's movement to the Allied war effort produced a Tripartite unity unique in recent Ethiopian affairs. Moreover, the temptation to depose the irresponsible Prince in favour of an 'enlightened' ruler, Ras Tafari, was irresistible. Tafari, fluent in French, with progressive ideas on land and administrative reforms that he had pioneered during his governorships in Sidamo and Harar, was the closest approach to a 'liberal' yet produced by Ethiopia, and he captured the imaginations of the Allied Ministers.¹ The young Regent, once he had settled in his position, claimed that Lij Yasu's master plan had called for the simultaneous invasion of the Allies' colonies.² This was produced as a justification for the deposition, though Lij Yasu was overthrown more for his anti-Shoan bias, than for his anti-Allied or anti-Christian attitudes. The Allies' mistake was in assuming that a change in government would necessarily mean a change in

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Allied-Ethiopian relations. The Shoan chiefs, ably led by the Fitwary Hapta Giorgis, were no progressives or "ferenji-lovers". They nominated a woman and a boy to rule them, in the certain knowledge that the Fitwary and his Council would hold the balance. Barring Makeda of Sheba, Ethiopians had little respect for a female ruler; and they had even less respect for youths and European-style 'progressives' like Tafari. Zauditu placated the dynasts and followers of Menelik (in addition to several northern interests represented by Taitu's family), and Tafari satisfied the younger army officers and, to a certain extent, the Allied Legations who were very influential in Adis Ababa. The "Triumvirate" was more sympathetic to the Allied cause, but it was to prove no more anxious than Lij Yasu to satisfy the aims of Allied policies.

After the defeat of Negus Mikael the Ethiopian situation remained unstable. Yasu was still at large, and anti-Shoan and discontented elements rallied to his support. The counter-revolution in Wollo was matched by intrigues and attempted coups in the capital. The chaotic nature of Ethiopian politics reached depths not attained in the days of the Taitu-Tesamma conflict, or during Lij Yasu's brief

2. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, 52 Con., 3.7.17, citing Tafari's memorandum on Lij Yasu's schemes.
reign. The Allied Legations found it increasingly difficult to deal with the Shoan regime, and they soon doubted its viability. The British Legation hoped to strengthen the Ethiopian Government by the introduction of administrative reforms – on the lines of Thesiger's memorandum of 10 August 1916; however it received little support from France, Italy and Ethiopia. Italy was not willing to reform and modernize Ethiopia, since she hoped to obtain a protectorate over her at the end of the war. France, conscious of her limited interest in Ethiopia, would only agree to reforms if they favoured French influence. Ethiopia was preoccupied with internal problems and neither had the time nor the inclination to accept European-imposed reforms.

Following the return of the victorious Shoan army in November 1916 Tafari and Hapta Giorgis prepared to mop up the remaining pockets of resistance in Wollo. Friendly chiefs were reinstated in Yejju and Lasta to rally popular support for the Shoan in the North, and troops were sent to

1. Marcus, ubi supra, p. 234 disagrees and states that Tafari immediately brought stability.
2. Supra, Ch. III, p. 211.
Harar to keep a watch on the Danakil, and Issa and Ogaden Somalis. The main Shoan target was Dese; though briefly occupied by troops of Ras Walda Giorgis, the town was now in the hands of Ras Imre, Mikael's lieutenant and successor. Imre had warned Lij Yasu to return to the Danakil country, and he had not yet given his allegiance to the new Government. In the meantime Tafari was swamped with petitions, litigations, and claims for patronage; in the midst of this he was also trying to reorganize the Government after seven years of neglect.

Tafari wanted British aircraft to spearhead his expedition, but Thesiger wanted reforms instituted and stability returned before he would commit himself. Thesiger specifically suggested that Tafari form a "Privy Council" with two Ministers, two chiefs; and although he was powerless to take up the idea then, it stayed in his mind for the future. "Ras Tafari certainly means well", wrote Thesiger, "and undoubtedly intends to try to reform his country, but it remains to be seen whether he has sufficient strength of character to accomplish his ends" — and political power, he might have added.

1. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 112, 9.11.16 and No. 113, 10.11.16.

2. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 118, 28.11.16 (trs. Thesiger to Archer) and No. 119, 30.11.16.

3. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Grey, No. 116, 22.11.16.
Ras Walda Giorgis, who had shown his displeasure with Lij Yasu by an attack on Wollo in October 1916, was considered an unknown quantity in Adis Ababa. Tafari wanted to come to an agreement with him before moving on Wollo, in case Yasu surrendered to him and cheated the Government of its victory. Walda Giorgis finally declared for the new regime by defeating a Wollo force and occupying Yejju, while Ras Demissie, on 8 December, advanced and took Worra Hailu. Walda Giorgis reached Dese before Demissie, but the latter defeated Imre on 28 December near Tanta. Unfortunately Lij Yasu had taken the precaution of deserting Imre two days before the battle, and had fled to the Danakil. Walda Giorgis was angry because Yejju and Lasta had been put under the influence of Ras Wolye's family, and he took his revenge by looting Wollo. His presence in Dese, separated from Adis Ababa only by Demissie's forces, was a source of concern to the Shoans who were preoccupied with other concerns.

When Zauditu returned from her exile on Mount Entoto she brought with her Taitu and her family. Taitu proved helpful initially by dividing the loyalties of the northerners, and by inducing revolts against Mikael in Yejju and Lasta. However her political ambitions were as acute as

1. FO 371/2594, Thesiger to Grey, No. 124, 8.12.16.
2. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 2, 3.1.17; IO L/P&S/10/756, A.E. 40, 29.1.17, p. 48; The Times, 15.2.17.
ever. Her nephews, Gugsa and Amadi, were given Sayint, Yejju and Lasta, and part of Wollo, and she also wanted Gugsa to live with her and Zauditu in the Ghebi. It was obvious that the Taitu was picking up where she had left off in 1910, and was aiming for supreme control through her puppet Gugsa. This was something that Tafari could not countenance, and he encouraged Ras Abata, one of Zauditu's former lovers, to wean the Empress away from Gugsa. The recrudescence of Taitu's influence led Tafari to more drastic measures. Before Zauditu's coronation he had forced her to divorce Gugsa, and to exile him to Sayint; Taitu was likewise returned, for good, to Entoto.

The coup against Tafari was temporarily postponed; the Wollo armies were defeated; and Lij Yasu was driven into the Danakil desert. Although pockets of resistance and discontent continued to erupt, the attention of all turned to the coronation.

Britain accredited Thesiger as HMG's representative to the coronation and she arranged with Italy to keep their respective delegations small and equal. The problem of presents perplexed the Foreign Office, since they did not

want to be outdone by their Tripartite partners. George V prescribed that the gifts be "British made", and he suggested presenting Zauditu with the O.B.E., but the Foreign Office thought this decoration quite inadequate, especially since the French were presenting the Legion of Honour. It was soon decided that Major Pearson of the Tsana mission would go to Adis Ababa after the coronation in order to deliver the presents that were being bought in Cairo; and this would give him the opportunity to discuss the Tsana Treaty with Tafari. France planned to send a large delegation to the coronation, including the Governor of Jibuti, M. Fillon. Sir Francis Bertie was told to inform Monsieur Briand that His Majesty's Government are seriously concerned to learn that the French Government have taken steps which will enable them to make considerably more display than is now possible for His Majesty's Government. They hope that Monsieur Briand,

3. FO 371/2854, CO to FO, Secret, 13.1.17 (trs. Dodds to Thesiger, No. 100, 9.11.16); Hawiyeh Somalis shouted, as they defeated a highland column, "We are the soldiers of Lij Yasu".

1. FO 372/982, FO memo 1.2.17; Ponsonby to FO, n.d.; Wingate to Balfour, T. 79, 2.2.17.


3. FO 372/982, Wingate to Balfour, T. 55, 19.1.17, No. 68, 24.1.17, and No. 84, 30.1.17; Balfour to Wingate, T. 85, 3.2.17 and No. 69, 3.1.17; Rodd to Balfour, T. 64, 20.1.17.
recognizing the importance of the Governments conforming their action, will even yet be able to cancel the arrangements made.

In the end the affair was settled by Tafari who had invited not only the Governor of Jibuti, but Commissioner Archer as well - though no one from Eritrea. "As things have turned out", noted a clerk in the News Department, "we had a more imposing representation than we expected. It is the unfortunate Italians who have been left in the lurch."²

The coronation took place on 11 February 1917 at the church of Giorgis.³ At about 8.30 a.m. the crowned Empress emerged from the church supported by Tafari and Ras Kassa, who then led her to a divan in the church courtyard. After the diplomats had paid their respects (the German and Turkish Representatives were not present), the Abun made a speech in which he compared Zauditu to Queen Victoria, a personage for whom she had much admiration.⁴ Lt.-Col. Pearson (temporarily raised from the rank of Major for the occasion) arrived several weeks later with the coronation

1. FO 372/982, Balfour to Bertie, Urgent T. 318, 5.2.17; Rodd to Balfour, T. 96 and T. 97, 29.1.17; Cambon to Balfour, 27.1.17 and 5.2.17.

2. Langley minuted: "They will certainly think that we have sold them". FO 371/2853, CO to F0, 9.2.17 (trs. Archer to Long, 30.1.17); FO 372/982, Memo by Light on Thesiger to Balfour, T. 11, 10.2.17; Balfour to Rodd, T. 332, 15.2.17.

3. Hodson, op. cit., p. 133.
gifts and decorations, which were all well received,\(^1\) and on 6 April Tafari was invested with the GCMG in the Audience Hall of the Ghebi. All the Ethiopian dignitaries were present in full dress, and were obviously very much impressed. The Fitwary even knelt before Tafari and kissed his knee, a sign of homage given to Menelik, but hitherto withheld from Tafari.\(^2\)

Except for the Tripartite rivalry over representation and gifts, the most significant part of the coronation was the crowning of Ras Walda Giorgis as Negus of "Amhara". It had been customary for the Emperor to nominate a Negus upon his coronation, though Menelik had neglected to do so. Theoretically the honour would have gone to Tafari as Regent and Heir to the Throne, but he was still very young, and already possessed more power than Zauditu cared to admit. The other main candidate was the Fitwary, but since he was a Galla he did not qualify, and one suspects that he preferred his position as Minister for War to any titles. The only alternative to Walda Giorgis for the kingship were Hailu (whose father, Ras Adal, had been crowned Negus Takla


\(^1\) FO 372/982, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 9, 28.2.17, and No. 25, 13.4.17.
Haimanot by ረስ የካለวา, and Seyoum, who was a grandson of Yohannes. However these two chiefs were only late converts to the Shoan banner, and were of alien royal houses; Walda Giorgis was a Shoan of the House of Manz and of the line of Sahela Selassie, and the most powerful chief in the North. The double coronation (the Negus was crowned on 12 February) did not do much, however, to calm the country. There were revolts in Simien, Wolkait, Wojju and Woggara against the Negus; Wollo Gallas had raided Dese and, though they were defeated, they remained active; the Arussi, Ginir and Dolo districts, which were denuded of highland troops during the revolution, were in revolt; and the Tigré was expected to erupt at any moment. Lij Yasu and Ras Imre had retreated to Magdala, and Muslims in Wollo and the Ogaden expected his imminent return at the head of a Turkish army. The Empress and the Council vied for power, and neither cooperated with Tafari; the unpaid troops were discontented; and the northern peasants were tired of being looted. This perhaps was not an unusual situation, but it was one that would take some time to rectify. The revolts were due to

2. FO 372/982, Wingate to Balfour, Con. T. 437, 15.4.17; Thesiger to Balfour, No. 24, 13.4.17.

1. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 8, 27.2.17; IO L/P&S/10/756, A.B., 46, 30.3.17, p. 150.
the absence of the chiefs and the garrisons, and presumably would end when the troops returned; the troops were often unpaid, and the peasants were often looted, but peasant revolts and army mutinies are hard to find in Ethiopian history.\(^1\) At this time, Demissie with four dejazmatch were besieging Magdala, but Negus Walda Giorgis (perhaps sulking because he did not receive Godjam or Tigré) refused to come to their aid. The situation at the end of February was such that Thesiger believed that Tafari would ask for a British protectorate over Ethiopia; G. Clerk at the Foreign Office minuted: "I devoutly trust that we may be spared this additional burden."\(^2\)

Tafari and the British Legation were on good terms and the Regent often confided his problems to Thesiger, and to Dodds who was particularly close with Tafari and could often get preferential treatment.\(^3\) Thesiger wrote: "We must support Tafari by all means in our power if law and

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2. FO 371/2854, Clerk minute on Thesiger, No. 8, 27.2.17; It is said that Lij Yasu could have been captured early in the siege but for the neglect of his friends, Demissie and Dej Merid: FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, No. 10A, 7.2.18.

3. FO 800/30, Campbell to Langley, Private, 23.2.17.
order are to be preserved here";¹ "All the future of this country depends ... on Taffari and the group he is collecting around him getting the full power into their own hands and we must support them now to the utmost".²

The situation in the North remained tense, but by April 1917 it had begun to improve.³ On 6 June the Fitwary and Ras Kassa arrived at Magdala with the main Shoan force, and declared that the fortress was impregnable. They offered Ras Imre and his 25,000 men a full pardon and a reward for the surrender of Lij Yasu, but Imre's reply was the murder and mutilation of the Shoan emissary. The rains had already begun and all except the Fitwary's and Kassa's troops now returned to their home districts.⁴ As the stalemate continued at Magdala Tafari faced a new threat in the capital. Afa Negus Telahoun, Baj Igazu, and Gan Bayenna - the pro-German faction - were opposing Tafari's extension of power. Tafari was handicapped because his main ally, Ras Kassa, was at Magdala, and he could not move against

1. S.A., 295/1, Thesiger to Wingate, 16.3.17.
2. S.A., 295/1, Thesiger to Wingate, 9.3.17.
3. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 26, 23.4.17; IO L/P&S/10/756, A.B., No. 50, 13.5.17, p. 221.
his opponents without jeopardizing the capture of Lij Yasu. Thesiger said, "The day must ultimately come when he will have to choose between resignation and a coup d'État by which he will abolish the Council of Ministers and create a new form of Government". ¹ This was undoubtedly true, but such a coup was impossible while the Empire remained unsettled. Troops were needed at Magdala, and Ginir, Arusi and the North, where revolts still flickered. ² In addition, Muhammad Abū Bakr and Kedani Imām Magūsa, former followers of Lij Yasu, had taken up the cause of the deposed Prince, the former near Tajura, and the latter in the Ogaden, where he was the "ipso facto authority". ³ Both men kept the memory of Lij Yasu alive among tribes which hated Shoan rule. Sir Walter Langley correctly predicted: "We shall have no peace as long as L.Y. is at large and there seems no prospect at the present of taking him."

Though on 11 July Tafari was able to dismiss the master-intriguer Betwoded Haile Giorgis, this was merely a temporary victory. ⁴ The Betwoded was at times a useful man,

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¹. Ibid.
³. FO 371/2854, CO to FO, 3.7.17, (trs. Archer to Long, 25.5.17).
⁴. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 56, 12.7.17: Tafari called upon the troops of Ras Demissie; IO L/P&S/10/756, A.B. 59, 12.6.17, p. 340; The Times, 27.8.17.
intelligent and knowledgeable of European ways; but he was thoroughly disliked by all parties for his lack of scruples. His fall was perhaps the only united action by the Shoan Triumvirate. On other matters Tafari was powerless, especially outside the capital. The Empress was advised by Telahoun and Igazu, who were anti-Allied and anti-Tafari. However, a break in the stalemate came on 31 July when Lij Yasu, Ras Imre and 1500 escaped from Magdala. Hapta Giorgis' 30,000 man army was tired and rapidly deserting, and Yasu called upon the Muslim tribes of Wollo who were being encouraged by Turco-German propaganda. The Shoans were not aware that Yasu had escaped until they heard reports several days later of raids on the Wollo countryside. By this time the Wollo force had grown to about 5000 men. The Shoans reoccupied Dese and took up positions opposite the Wollo force. Wollo peasantry were flocking to Lij Yasu's banner, and although Adis Ababa was confident of victory some feared that the discontented Tigre would join Wollo.

Throughout August Lij Yasu extended his influence in

1. FO 800/30, Thesiger to Langley, Private, 27.7.17.
2. FO 371/2853, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 66, 8.8.17; and Mosley, op. cit., pp. 120-1.
3. Tafari made Seyoum swear three separate oaths of loyalty to Shoa before he allowed him to return to Tigre, FO 371/2853, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 66, 8.8.17; The Times, 20 June and 27 Aug 1917.
Yejju and Wollo until his army numbered 40,000 cavalry and spearmen. Before Tafari's reinforcements could depart, the battle began, and on 27 August the Shoans defeated Imre. The Wollo army was destroyed, and Ras Imre and Lij Yasu's likamaquas were killed. Yasu, however, was nowhere to be found. 18,000 in all died, and prisoners were mutilated in the traditional way with the loss of a hand and a foot. The slaughter continued for eight days in which Wollo was devastated.¹

Lij Yasu once more took refuge in Adal and the Danakil country, and some believed that he wanted to make his way to Arabia. The Danakil and Somalis were prepared to support the Prince had he been victorious, and Herr von Syborg, the German Minister, had warned Lij Yasu's adherents in the capital on 26 August that "important events would be taking place" - i.e. the return of Lij Yasu. Tafari wanted to join Kassa and the Fitwary in the pacification of Wollo, but he was at the mercy of intrigues with the chiefs, Ministers, and the Empress "whose vanity and ignorance of state affairs [was] played upon by unscrupulous persons of the type of Dejaz Igazu for their own purposes".² Igazu

¹ FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 75, 29.8.17 and T. 54, 28.8.17; The Times, 8.9.17.
along with his father-in-law Ras Demissie, Dej Merid, and the commander of the Mahal Safari, were planning to depose Tafari. During the absence of the Fitwary, Igazu was the leader of the Council, and he had convinced the Empress that Tafari was exceeding his authority and was "selling the country to the Europeans". The Regent knew of the plot, had placed all potential opponents under house arrest, and had called up his 4000 replacement bodyguard from Harar without dismissing the old guard. He ordered all troops out of Adis Ababa by 21 September which virtually disarmed the conspiracy, which had been scheduled for Mascal on the 27th.¹ The success of the coup was problematical in any case. Neither the Fitwary nor Kassa approved of Igazu, and his main supporter, Ras Abata, had died several days before.

As Lij Yasu wandered through the Danakil wastes the Shoan army finally took Magdala. After a triumphal entry and feast the town was ordered destroyed and the fortifications levelled.² Wollo and the adjacent country of Ras Abata

2. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 79, 6.9.17.

1. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 86, 27.9.17 and No. 84 Con., 2.9.17; T0 L/P&S/10/756, A.B. 66, p. 419; Igazu was also supported by Azaj Gizau, Telahoun, Bayenna, and Lij Wasani, Minister for Posts; also cf. Mosley, op. cit., pp. 122-3.

2. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 94, 31.10.17; The Times, 7.12.17.
was given to Ras Kassa and the Shoans returned to Adis Ababa leaving a garrison of only 1000 in Wollo. This was "indicative of the slaughter, mutilation and devastation wrought by the Shoan army. The Fitaurari said that it was unlikely that the Wollo country and people would recover for a hundred years". ¹ Lij Yasu continued to wander between Wollo and Harar, with an entourage ranging from 100 to 1000 followers. The Shoan Government however made no effort to effect his capture, excusing their inaction on the grounds that the Prince was no longer a threat and therefore not worth an expedition. ² They probably preferred the Prince alive, since his death or capture might have provoked revenge by his sympathizers throughout Ethiopia. ³ This was curious reasoning to the Foreign Office which had hesitated to support Tafari for the simple reason that Lij Yasu was still free. The Prince had come close to defeating the

1. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, No. 99, 30.10.17; S.I.R. No. 281, December 1917.

2. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, No. 104, 19.12.17; T. 4, 8.1.17; No. 3, 10.1.18; No. 10A, 7.2.18; Memo by Capt. J. E. Philipps, 6.1.18. On 7.2.18 Yasu temporarily occupied Battie with 1000 men of Muhammad Abdul Bakr.

3. After Imre's defeat the Legations were convinced that Tafari was concealing Yasu's death to calm Muslim feeling, FO 371/2853, Thesiger to Balfour, T. 58, 19.9.17, and Wingate to Balfour, Con., T. 1008, 25.9.17.
Fitwary Hapta Giorgis
Shoan armies on three occasions, and had a remarkable ability to draw recruits; but his three defections in the face of battle convinced the Adis Ababa authorities that his reputation among Muslims was irreparably damaged.

The restoration of deposed governors following the September 1916 revolution led to discontent, especially in the northern provinces. No sooner had rebellions in the North been put down, then others rose in the country between Wollo and the Tigre. In these areas small republics, owing no allegiance to Menelik, Zauditu or Ras Wolye (the nominal chief), were established with a leading balabat as "president". Wolye was helpless, and imperial troops refused to go north again to help him. The Council urged Tafari to go north in the hope that he would be defeated and killed, and the Empress even offered him the title of Negus of the North; the Council soon backed down, however, when Tafari ordered them to accompany him north. "The interests of the people", wrote Consul Gerald Campbell, "are placed in subserviency to the personal interests of the Ministers who refuse to recognize that their country is marching backwards thanks to their utterly selfish aims and intrigues". Even the Fitwary stood aloof and would not commit himself. Campbell continued:
The root of the whole mischief is the dual control of Empress and Ras upon which the intrigues of the Ministers feed. The only man who wishes his country well is Ras Taffari and he is unfortunately too weak in character to force others to follow him along the path whither his intelligence would lead him. He would probably be only too pleased to relinquish his post and return to the comparative tranquility of Harrar but he is obstinate enough to insist on remaining where he is if only to see the game through. He may win yet when the final test of strength is made. If he loses, the time for European intervention will have come.\(^1\)

Ethiopia's brief experience with republicanism also increased anxiety as to the future of the empire. As a Foreign Office clerk noted: "If Taffari is going to be faced with 'Bolshevism' in addition to his other difficulties the break up may be still further hastened".\(^2\)

Tafari's position was marginally strengthened when Itegue Taitu died at Entoto on 11 February 1918 at the age of 76. A few months earlier she had asked to live out her days in Gondar, but Tafari was suspicious of her influence on Walda Giorgis, and he confined her to Mt. Entoto. "The death of Queen Taitou", wrote Campbell, "will no doubt prove a relief to Ras Taffari, as she was opposed to him and used her powers of intrigue to his disadvantage. Her sentiments were also pro-German".\(^3\) Tafari's youth was working to his

\(^1\) FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, No. 10A, 7.2.17.

\(^2\) FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, No. 3, 10.1.17; S.I.R. 282, January 1918.
advantage, for with patience he would soon outlast the Shoan "old guard". Taitu, Gwangoul and Abata were already dead, and they were soon to be followed by Negus Walda Giorgis on 15 March, and by Negus Mikael, and Ras Wolye within a year.¹ By the end of 1918, of those who fought at Adua, only the Fitwary and Dej Balcha would remain to plague Tafari. His patience and good judgment, more than anything else, enabled him to succeed where rash commitment would have meant certain defeat.

Had it not been for a revolt in the Tigre, Tafari could have gained control of the Northwest upon the Negus' death. Dej Kassa, a "personal friend" of Yasu's, rebelled against his father, Ras Seyoum, in January 1918, and Tafari feared that other provinces, especially those of the late Negus, would join young Kassa's revolt.² Another danger signal was the report that the Italians were massing troops in Eritrea. The Italians had opened contacts not only with Seyoum but with Walda Giorgis as well, and the Foreign Office noted:

3. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, T. 18, 12.2.17 and No. 14, 11.2.18; S.I.R. 283, Feb 1918; The Times, 16 Feb 1918 gives Taitu the credit for initiating Yasu's overthrow; Greenfield, op. cit., p. 146.

1. Mikael died at Holeta from paralysis, Greenfield, op. cit., p. 144.

2. FO 371/3126, Imperiali to Balfour, 27.3.18; Rodd to Balfour, No. 116, 28.3.18, (trs. Italian memorandum of same date); cf. League, op. cit., p. 9.
The Italian authorities had been cultivating good relations with Waldo Giorgis & his death may possibly precipitate their policy in Northern Abyssinia. The Northern Provinces were reported to be very exhausted after the fighting with the Shoans last year, so there is a hope that the central Government will be able to reestablish order now, but we must be prepared for complete anarchy giving the excuse for Italian intervention.

Imperiali, the Italian Ambassador at London, called the situation "uncertain and serious", and he "feared that Ligg Jasu may join the Northern chiefs". Tafari's troops once again refused to move; the *Fitwary* decided to stay in the capital; Balcha requested to be relieved of his post. There was a great deal of lawlessness in and around Adis Ababa, and the merchants threatened to close their shops. The Empress wanted Wolye named *Negus* with Gugsa in control of Gondar; rumours of intrigue (very often contradictory) were circulated in the capital. The situation was such that it "provoked a declaration on the part of the chiefs and soldiers at Adis Ababa against the Ministers deemed responsible for the distress and anarchy existing in the country". On 31 March 1918 700 minor officers of the Imperial Army

1. FO 371/3126, Hubbard note on Campbell to Balfour, T. 30, 1.3.18; *cf.* S.I.R. No. 281, December 1917 and No. 284, March 1918.
2. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, No. 28, 16.3.18.
3. FO 371/3126, Imperiali to Balfour, 27.3.18.
demanded the dismissal of the Council, and on 25 March they petitioned the Empress herself. The next day the Council was disbanded, their property sequestered for the state; and Igazu, who resisted the surrender of his seal of office, was promptly chained. Thesiger, only recently back from leave, hailed the event as "the first time on record that the opinion of the people, as distinct from that of their chiefs and officers, had found expression and has successfully claimed a voice in public affairs". The alikas (lesser officers) wanted to return to a "pre-Menelikian" form of autocratic rule, whereby Zauditu and Tafari would rule with the advice of the Fitwary; and they were quite willing to pick another Regent from the line of Sahela Selassie if Tafari failed to agree. Their main grievance was probably over lack of pay, but the soldiers were used to not being paid, and there is little reason to question the officers disgust at the conduct of the Council.

Thesiger urged Tafari to put himself at the head of the officers; and Langley noted: "Any move that strengthens

1. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, T. 34, 21.3.18; S.I.R. No. 285, April 1918.
2. FO 371/3126, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 33, 26.3.18 and T. 37, 26.3.18.
the position of Taffari is to our advantage as he is the element most friendly to us ... We have no reason to be dissatisfied with the action of the soldiers' unless it results in the return of Lij Yasu".1 At the beginning of April the officers demanded the imprisonment of the Ministers in case they organized provincial opposition, since there was already trouble in the Tigre' and Godjam, and Demissie and Balcha had spoken out against the officers.2 As a result, Tafari gained the right to deal solely with the Legations, without intermediary, an important concession. However he paid for his victory when Zauditu's nominees were appointed to Gondar, Wollo, Simien and Wolkait.3

Kassa's revolt in the Tigre' was crushed in April 1918 and Seyoum was reinstated.4 The alikas were brought under control with their appointment to various positions of authority, following the Ethiopian practice of putting trouble-makers in responsible posts; by making them

1. FO 371/3126, Langley minute on Rodd to Balfour, T. 262, 29.3.18.

2. FO 371/3126, Imperiali note, 2.4.18 and 5.4.18; Cf. Darley to Hubbard, 7.4.18 for an interpretation of the background of the revolt; Thesiger to Balfour, No. 35, 5.4.18.

3. FO 371/3126, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 46, 22.5.18; IO L/P&S/10/756, A.B. 91, 4.6.18, p. 183; S.I.R. 286, May 1918.

4. FO 371/3126, Imperiali to Balfour, 19.4.18.
members of the establishment they have an interest in the status quo. Tafari took control of the rebellious provinces of Arusi and Bali in June, and the Fitwary led a minor campaign against Gallas in Gurage and Walamo. In July peace was restored in the North by Fit Mangasha of Kwara, a self-styled descendant of Tewodros. Tafari's position was jeopardized however by a typhoid epidemic that struck the capital in September 1918. The Regent hovered near death until by 18 September his doctors declared him out of danger. Ras Kassa refused to come to the capital during the epidemic, and during Tafari's illness the Fitwary was in control. As a result all work stopped at the capital, and local governors took the opportunity to reassert their authority. Just as Tafari was recovering from typhoid the capital was struck by a second epidemic, now of influenza. The disease had been reported in Afghanistan and in the North-West frontier of India in May, and by 13 November it had hit Adis Ababa. On the 14th the Government ceased to exist - the chiefs departed, the telegraph and postal systems closed down, and

1. S.I.R. No. 287, June 1918.
3. FO 371/3127, Dodds to Balfour, T. 62, Urgent, 2.9.18, T. 67, 8.9.18, T. 68, 10.9.18 and No. 70, 17.9.18.
4. IO L/P&S/11/142/5534, Shuckburgh note, 1.6.18; Rey, Real Abyssinia, p. 44, calls the epidemic "Spanish flu".
the market shut. Tafari took ill again, and he kept Zauditu and the only healthy doctor incommunicado in the Ghebi. He told the physician, "You must stay with me; God will heal the others". Ras Kassa visited the capital and quelled anxiety that Tafari's death would lead to a fight for the succession, but before long he and the Abun, along with most of the chiefs, fled the capital to their home districts. Hapta Giorgis was also struck down with the disease, and he lamented: "If I die my country is finished. There is no one, no one". Ato Herui, Tafari's confidential adviser and a future Foreign Minister, now ran the rump administration. Mortality was high throughout the country, and the Government was "totally unorganized and incapable of action". Medical supplies soon ran out, and three of the six doctors died. Dodds, Campbell, Walker and Bentinck carried out missions of mercy in the beleaguered town, and they were virtually the only authority in the neglected capital for over two weeks. By 6 December the

1. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, T. 106, 17.11.18.
2. FO 370/3126, Campbell to Balfour, T. 107, 22.11.18.
3. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, T. 110, 6.12.18.
4. FO 371/3494, Campbell to Sperling, private, 2.12.18; Campbell to Balfour, No. 88, 11.12.18. Thesiger reported (to Balfour, No. 102, 31.12.18) that Greek merchants were charging £500 per coffin. Dodds received Honorary Associate of the Chancery Order of the Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem. Cf. Sir G. Campbell, Of True Experience, (London, 1948), pp. 40-1.
epidemic had abated, and on the 19th Tafari requested that Campbell, who remained untouched by influenza, congratulate the King on the Allied victory in Europe and inform him that Ethiopia would hold Thanksgiving services to celebrate the event. This was typical of Anglo-Ethiopian relations at that time. Tafari, weak and with negligible power, was offering the congratulations of a Government whose authority barely ran to the outskirts of the capital, and whose administration had been largely assisted by the officers of the British Legation. All that Tafari could offer the British was his warm congratulations and prayers, when what Britain wanted was positive rapid action. Since the establishment of the Shoan Triumvirate Britain had been hopefully waiting for Tafari to provide the initiative for reform. Britain in 1916 was not considering partition as the 'final solution' to the Ethiopian problem, she based her policy on reform, guided in good faith by the Tripartite Powers, and executed in equal good faith by Tafari. As the Regent proved incapable of such action, partition, an alternative that had been latent in the 1906 Agreement, was increasingly considered. This was aided by the conviction that France would

pursue her own special interests (respecting, in particular, the arms trade), and that the Allies could painlessly pay their debt for Italian war-time aid only by sacrificing the independence of Ethiopia.

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In the realm of internal affairs Britain lobbied for reforms, on the lines of Thesiger's Memorandum of August 1916, and for border control, especially on the Southern and Somali borders. In other matters Britain was anxious that Ethiopia break off diplomatic relations with the Central Powers and expel all German and Turkish nationals from the country. Ultimately they failed in all their attempts.

Tafari was not adverse to administrative reform - as long as it was under his control - since this would centralize the Empire and increase his authority. However his fellow chiefs, less sophisticated than he but no less patriotic, had an inordinate fear of European control or anything that smacked of "selling the country to the ferenji". Not only were they suspicious of the European Legations, they were also suspicious of Tafari.¹ They had good reason to fear both; France was aiming at an economic stranglehold on

¹. C. F. Rey describes Tafari as the only Ethiopian who acted in a European manner in the privacy of his own home, cf. Blue Nile, p. 151.
Ethiopia, and Italy, with increasing British concurrence, was hungrily eying not only her "reversionary sphere" but the whole empire;¹ and Tafari was aiming to complete Tewodros' unfinished task—the unification of Ethiopia. Tafari, in the meantime, had restricted influence, and not much power to solve Britain's problems. In the Ogaden many tribes still waited for Lij Yasu to lead them in a Jihad; and the South was administered by newly appointed chiefs with not much respect for Tafari. On Lij Yasu's deposition many old chiefs were replaced by supporters of Zauditu or the Fitwary, who had no love for the Regent; others were chosen because they had opposed Lij Yasu; still others were former supporters of the Prince who had been induced, in the name of expediency, to change sides. Tafari could only count on his cousins, Dej Imru and Ras Kassa, and his Harari troops. As the new appointees took up their posts, the retiring chiefs looted the countryside, and the new garrisons ravaged what was left—making for a very unsettled situation.²

1. This will be discussed in detail later in the chapter, pp. 343ff.

2. For example Kabada Mangasha looted Wolamo before leaving for Wollo in 1918, and caused a small Galla rebellion there.
Tafari's preference for the Allies could not be translated into diplomatic action. As he was vulnerable to accusations of favouritism he dare not show his hand. The British wished to have the Turco-German propaganda machine expelled, but they did not hope for any military support from Ethiopia, especially since if Ethiopia joined the Allies it would make it virtually impossible for Italy to claim Ethiopian territory as compensation.

In 1917 Thesiger, de Coppet and Colli were agreed on the necessity for reform, and they proposed to deliver a warning to the Government at the time of the coronation, though this seemed, to Langley, "rather a strange occasion to choose for a warning". The Colonial Office concurred with Thesiger's suggestion, but Wingate felt that the not Powers could force reforms - thereby guaranteeing Ethiopian integrity - until the internal situation in Ethiopia was clarified. He suggested adopting an "opportunist policy" until the end of the war, when Ethiopia could be discussed by the Tripartite Powers.

1. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, T. 4, 17.1.17, Langley note.

2. FO 371/2854, CO to FO, Con., 13.1.17.

3. FO 371/2854, Wingate to Balfour, Con., T. 73, 25.1.17.
The Army Council agreed with Wingate, stating, "Any discussion of schemes of internal reform with an Abyssinian Government, which is not yet supreme in its own country, is regarded ... as unlikely to produce results of any value". On 11 March Sonnino, the Italian Foreign Minister, first agreed to certain reforms - on arms, and the Turkish propaganda at Harar - but less than a fortnight later he declared that the situation in Ethiopia was so unclear that he wanted to discuss the matter with the colonial authorities in Massowah and Mogadisciu. Their discussion could have reflected the worsening situation at Magdala, or it could have marked the realization that reforms would only strengthen Ethiopia and make Italian expansion more difficult. Though Briand, the French Foreign Minister, agreed on 5 March on the need for concerted reforms, the Italians, "being unwilling to do anything to increase the stability of the central Govt. & lessen the chances of an ultimate partition", were still opposed. However French opinion also changed, and for several reasons. According to Thesiger, France and Italy were no longer interested in the Harar problem because

1. FO 371/2854, WO to FO, 2.2.17.
2. FO 371/2854, Rodd to Balfour, No. 63, 11.3.17 and No. 84, 31.3.17.
3. FO 371/2854, Bertie to Balfour, No. 107, 9.3.17 (trs. Briand Memo, 5.3.17).
the fall of Lij Yasu reduced Sayyid Muhammad's influence in Ethiopia, and because the Shoans had stopped the Somali arms trade at Dire Dawa and Harar. Another reason was that Tafari had asked for a British customs officer for Dire Dawa, which was considered to be in the French sphere. In Briand's note of 5 March he had stated that France had a special interest for reform in the Railway district, which included Dire Dawa. 1 Langley minuted, "Such an appointment would be distasteful to the French and Italians. Hitherto our policy has been to work for closer co-operation with them and for the independence of Abyssinia. This appointment would in both cases work in the other direction"; and A. J. Balfour added, "Our refusal to appoint in this particular case should be associated with a general self-denying ordinance on the part of the three Powers". 2 Wingate continued to press for an appointment on Thesiger's argument that Britain could double the customs receipts and impress Tafari with the profit in reform; also a good officer could probably rise in a few years to become the imperial

4. FO 371/2854, Hubbard note on Thesiger to Balfour, No. 23, 12.4.17.


2. FO 371/2854, Minutes on Wingate to Balfour, T. 239, Con., 7.3.17.
financial adviser. In spite of the uncomradely attitudes of France and Italy in the past the Foreign Office felt it could not agree, saying "that the difficulties and friction likely to be caused by an attempt to make the appointment surreptitiously would not be justified by the results obtainable".

Tafari was insulted that Britain had refused his request, and he said that France "would give me a man tomorrow and as many more as I chose to ask for without dreaming of referring the case to Britain". Thesiger could not "understand why we are so unwilling to help him in spite of his readiness to place himself in our hands rather than those of France and Italy". The Foreign Office had not realized the extent of Tafari's trust in Britain, and rather regretted its decision to refuse his request. Actually France and Italy had many people working for the Ethiopian Government; the former in the postal system, and the latter in the telegraph system; Britain had very few.

By 30 May Cambon, the French Ambassador at London, had informed Balfour that the French thought it not opportune to discuss the negotiation of reforms, and the War Office and

1. FO 371/2854, Wingate to Balfour, Con., T. 367, 4.4.17; Thesiger to Balfour, Con., No. 11, 6.3.17 (trs. Thesiger to Wingate, No. 10).

2. FO 371/2854, FO to Wingate, T. 428, 25.4.17.

3. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 44, 22.5.17.
Colonial Office concurred soon after. Although the question of administrative reform was resurrected several times before the end of the war, only its arms traffic side was extensively considered by the Powers.

The question of Harar and the Southern and Somali borders stayed alive throughout the war years. After Balcha's capture of Harar the town remained unsettled: "The massacre of the Somalis at Harrar", wrote Archer, "whatever the justification may have been, cannot fail to have proved a very salutary and much needed lesson to a race whose besetting sin is intrigue". In September 1916 Thesiger hoped to use the influence of Sharīf Hussein to persuade the Somalis not to follow Sayyid Muhammad. He hoped the Sharīf would ask Shaikh Muḥammad Salih, the founder of the Salihīyya tariqa and the spiritual father of Sayyid Muḥammad, to ask him to make peace with the British. Some action was needed because the Turkish propaganda machine was still active, and had stated that "Mohamed Ghalioum" - i.e. Kaiser Wilhelm - had embraced Islam, and that Britain had polluted Mecca and bombed the Kaaba. The Sharīf responded by sending Sayyid

1. FO 371/2854, French Embassy note, 30.5.17; WO to FO, 4.6.17; CO to FO, 11.6.17.

2. Hubbard noted: "It must be rare that the massacre of several hundred British subjects is greeted with such universal satisfaction by the authorities", on FO 371/2594, CO to FO, Secret, 9.12.16, (trs. Archer to Bonar Law, 14.11.16).
Abbas Melki to Adis Ababa as his personal representative. Abbas Melki arrived at Berbera on 26 January 1917, but he did not have immediate success with the Somali shaikhs since he denounced the Ottoman Sultan, whom the shaikhs still venerated as Khalıfa. After realizing his error he attacked the Turkish ruling Committee of Union and Progress with more success. After calming Somali feeling the Sayyid left Berbera on 26 May and continued to Harar where he had similar success. General J. Stewart, the Political Resident at Aden, reported that Sayyid Muhammad was in frequent contact with the Turkish commander in Yemen, 'Ali Said Pasha, and that the Turks had offered troops to reinstate Lij Yasu. Fortunately, Sayyid Muhammad offered only little trouble to the British during 1917 to 1921, though his influence on other Somalis was still great.

3. FO 371/2596, Thesiger to MacMahon, No. 48, 14.9.16.


1. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 10, 28.2.17 (trs. Thesiger to Wingate, No. 7, 27.2.17); CO to FO, 26.5.17, (trs. Archer to Long, 8.4.17); IO L/P&S/11/121/1402, A.B. 38, 12.11.17.

2. IO L/P&S/10/657/756, A.B. 29, 8.11.16.
The Marehan and Aulihan Somalis continued to be a source of irritation in Jubaland, especially since Britain had not yet reoccupied Serenli and the area evacuated after Lt. Elliot's murder in February 1916. In May 1917 B.E.A. began a build up of troops preparatory to the reoccupation of Jubaland. Italy half suspected that the British forces were going to intervene in Ethiopia; but Italy was assured on 27 June that Nairobi was merely reestablishing its authority in the Juba Valley.¹ The K.A.R. reoccupied Serenli on 25 September, and operations were completed by 20 February 1918.² This should have cleared up Britain's problems on the Southern border, had not problems arisen elsewhere.

On 15 May 1917 250 Turkana tribesmen, led by "Tigré" shiftas, raided villages in the region of Lake Rudolph. The raiders were similar to those that had raided the N.F.D. in 1913, and C. Bowring, the Deputy Governor of B.E.A. believed that the raids were organized by "Swahili" outlaws from southern Ethiopia.³ Thesiger had no luck with representations at Adis Ababa, and the Colonial Office was impatient for

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1. FO 371/2853, CO to FO, 15.1.17, (trs. Bowring to Law, No. 763, 2.12.16), Imperiali to Balfour, No. 2548, 4.6.17; CO to FO, 23.1.17, (trs. Bowring to Law, 13.6.17); Balfour to Imperiali, 2.7.17.

2. FO 371/2853, CO to FO, 5.10.17, (trs. Bowring to Long, Tel., 2.10.17) and 19.10.17; Balfour to Imperiali, 3.8.17 and 17.10.17; FO 371/3127, CO to FO, 17.4.18, 24.5.18 and 18.10.18.

3. FO 371/2855, CO to FO, 9.6.17, 20.7.17 with memo, and 2.8.17.
results.\textsuperscript{1} Shoan control in the South was practically nil, and since there was no prospect of Ethiopian aid, the Sudan and B.E.A. planned a joint operation against the Turkana raiders.\textsuperscript{2} The "Equatorial Army" worked smoothly from 27 September to 25 November 1917, to determine the extent and influence of the raids, capture stolen goods and stock, and punish offenders.\textsuperscript{3} Thesiger believed that the unrest was due to the lack of hereditary rulers (\textit{balabato\textsubscript{ch}}) in the South-West. The chiefs and their retainers were new and inexperienced, and the garrisons often deserted to become shiftas. Since the coup the garrisons had been called up and local officers were unable to control the captive population; the Central Government was too busy to do so. The Fitwary, who had some influence in the South-West, was busy at Magdala, and Igazu sought to discredit Tafari by aggravated existing problems. Tafari had ordered Fit Desta Damtew of Maji, and Dej Katama, the former Minister of the Interior and now Governor of Kaffa, to arrest raiders in

\textsuperscript{1} FO 371/2855, Balfour to Thesiger, 13.6.17; CO to FO, 24. 17.

\textsuperscript{2} FO 371/2855, CO to FO, 4.9.17, 13.9.17, 14.9.17 and 19.10.17; Thesiger to Balfour, T. 60, 3.10.17, and No. 83, 20.9.17, Tafari received no answers to his letters to the South; FO 371/3126, CO to FO, 11.4.18, (trs. Bowring to Long, 27.9.17).

\textsuperscript{3} Moyse-Bartlett, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 439-45.
Maji, but the two chiefs did not have the power. Desta confirmed British claims that the raids were carried out from Maji, but he complained that he had 5000 soldiers with land to support only 2000, and therefore shortages forced his men to become shiftas.

G. R. Clerk of the Foreign Office, who had traversed much of the Maji areas when he was Assistant at the Adis Ababa Legation from 1903 to 1907, suggested that Major H. Darley be appointed Vice-Consul for Maji, "and not enquire too closely into his methods of establishing law and order. He is a fearless adventurer, without too many scruples as to the niceties of international law, & with a wonderful command over natives". Darley was often hinted for a consular post in Southern Ethiopia because of his experiences in that region as a white hunter during 1910 and 1911. However these same experiences had made him persona non grata with the Central Government. Darley had suggested in October 1917 that the Boma Plateau in the Sudan be used as a military base because it lay on the raiders' infiltration path. Tafari did not like Darley, and, furthermore,

1. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 86A, 2.10.17 (trs. to Bowring), and No. 94, 1.11.17, (trs. to Stack, No. 53).

2. FO 371/2855, Clerk Memo, 19.11.17. Clerk was known as "the Buffalo" in the Maji area, cf. Darley, op. cit., pp. 17-8.
he could not take the chance of proposing his appointment. He told Thesiger to submit an official request for Darley's appointment and to hope that the chiefs would bow to British pressure. Consul Campbell and Dej Mulugeta, the new Foreign Minister and a "pastmaster in the art of postponing appointments", handled the negotiations. Mulugeta delayed the proceedings by refusing to transmit messages from Campbell to Tafari, and soon even Dodds could not persuade the Regent to accept Darley.

Both the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office were convinced of the need to appoint Darley, but they encountered "a bad specimen of red tape" from the Army Council which suggested "punitive military measures, followed by an extension of effective administration supported by an adequate police and mobile military force". This was no doubt necessary, but the time was not right for such measures, and the War Office was asked to reconsider its attitude to "an experiment which has a chance of doing some good". In the meantime, Lord Hardinge suggested that


1. FO 371/2855, Campbell to Balfour, T. 71, 4.12.17.

2. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, No. 8, 31.1.18.
Darley go out to Adis Ababa in the hope that Thesiger could obtain his appointment. ¹

Tafari made some half-hearted attempts to order the shifta chief Apara to "restrain his activities", but it had no effect.² Consul Hodson saw Tafari on 19 March to explain how a consul could settle border matters without recourse to violence or appeal to Adis Ababa, but Tafari told him that Darley "knows too much", and knew in particular that Maji was the centre of gun-running, slave-trading, and elephant-poaching in the south.³ Hardingie did not want to run "the risk of sending Major Darley to his possible doom", but the appointment had great support within the Foreign Office, including Sir Mark Sykes of the Arab Bureau. It was finally decided to send Darley out as a "frontier agent rather than Vice Consul". But Hardingie cautioned:

Do you consider that the situation at Maji is sufficiently serious to justify this measure and that dispatch of Major Darley to that district would be reasonably safe and likely to be productive of sufficiently good results to warrant moderate risks being run? The possibility of relief or punitive expeditions must be excluded.

³. FO 371/3126, Wo to Fo, 12.3.18.

¹. Minutes on ibid.
². FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, T. 31, 19.3.18 and T. 33, 21.3.18.
³. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, No. 30, 19.3.18.
Thesiger suggested that the issue be dropped until the Ethiopian punitive expedition1 and the British "Equatorial Army" completed their operations. Fit Desta of the highland expedition, returned to Adis Ababa on 20 July with shifta Apara as prisoner, and Tafari finally agreed that Darley, along with Ethiopian officers, could survey the Maji area.2 The War and Colonial Offices soon agreed to his appointment, and he arrived at Adis Ababa on 10 October. In view of Darley's past record Tafari insisted that he be accompanied by two other British officers, in order to obtain an unbiased report, and Tafari stood on his right to investigate Darley's background (he was charged with murder and theft). Campbell, who thought this matter had been settled, was furious at this "tergiversation", and he asked Balfour:

If any opposition is offered to a full and free enquiry [to the border raids] they will reserve the right to demand reparation by force. I do not anticipate the necessity of force but the Abyssinians are nervous as to the attitude of Great Britain after her victory and if first opportunity is seized to

4. FO 371/3126, M.S.1.Col. to FO, 8.4.18; Hardinge to Cecil, undated; Balfour to Thesiger, T. 20, 24.5.18.

1. FO 371/3126, CO to FO, 17.4.18, (trs. Stack to Bowring, No. 201, 21.10.17); Darley to Balfour, 9.6.18; Balfour to Wingate, T. 810, 26.6.18; Thesiger to Balfour, T. 46, 30.5.18; Wingate to Balfour, T. 1034, 3.7.18.

2. FO 371/3126, Wingate to Balfour, T. 1081, 16.7.18 and T. 1141, 27.7.18; Thesiger to Balfour, No. 61, 25.7.18.
give an answer of this nature it would make a very beneficial impression and would awaken them to the possibilities later of a continuance of their irritating policy both here and on the frontiers.

Force was not necessary and although the 1918 influenza epidemic delayed the appointment of the Ethiopian commissioners, Darley along with Major L. F. J. Athill, the Acting Consul at Mega, and Captain A. W. D. Bentinck, the Honorary Attache to the Legation, left Adis Ababa on 22 January 1919. The wrangle over Darley's appointment reflected the power struggle in the Ghebi. Tafari was insulted that Britain had chosen a man with such a disreputable reputation to be their representative in Maji, and, knowing that the chiefs would be equally insulted, he had refused the appointment. Darley was a flamboyant character and perhaps a good officer, but he was hardly a person to encourage responsibility in the Ethiopians. The British Legation, realizing that representations at Adis Ababa would not clear up the border trouble, committed themselves to a consular agent for the South-West, and Darley was the only man available. It was a good idea, but their particular

1. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, T. 88, 30.10.18, T. 86, 28.10.18, T. 91, 31.10.18 and No. 83, 31.10.18. Tafari sent a force under Fit Waldi to arrest "Tigré" near Moyale in October 1918, FO 371/3127, Campbell to Balfour, No. 79, 23.10.18.

2. FO 371/3497, Cheetham to Balfour, T. 156, 29.1.19.
choice was unfortunate. In the advent of the Allied victory, Ethiopian resistance collapsed, though not without a compromise on the part of the British.¹

German influence in Ethiopia had been sporadic and of little but annoyance value; but after the coup there seemed an unparalleled opportunity to rid the Near East of a source of anti-Allied propaganda, and eliminate German influence in Africa as well. Except for various rumours of German "landings" on the Red Sea coast (in November 1915, December 1915 and in January and October 1916), the two main incidents of note were the Frobenius mission of February 1915, and the Emil Kirsch "affair" of late 1916.² However, in order to maintain their waning influence in Africa, Germany kept up a steady stream of propaganda designed to undermine British influence in the Arab world and in North East Africa.³

It was felt that German influence was "at a discount"

¹ Infra, Ch. VI, pp 393-5 for continuation of Maji mission.

² FO 371/3065, Sperling Memo, 15.3.17; IO L/P&S/10/658/756, A.B. No. 66, 21.10.17, pp. 423-4. Kirsch was a German mechanic in Ethiopia contracted by the Mullah to repair arms at Tale.

³ FO 371/2859, Rumbold to Balfour, No. 205, 26.3.17, (trs. Beak to Rumbold, No. 90, 22.3.17).
following the accession of Zauditu, but it was soon evident that von Syborg and the German Legation had merely suffered a temporary set-back. In April 1917 the German Minister dispatched two of his agents, Arnold Holtz, a merchant of long residence in Ethiopia, and Albert Carmelich, an Austrian who had accompanied Lij Yasu in the last days of his reign, to reach the Turkish army in Arabia; their aim, according to one source, was to obtain arms and German officers to help Lij Yasu regain the throne; others say it was to get permission to give recognition to the new regime. The British Legation, upon learning of the mission, warned Egypt, Sudan and Aden; and Jibuti and Eritrea were likewise told to arrest the mission. By 11 May the mission had reached Lake Asal in French Somaliland, but owing to the hostile attitude of the neighbouring Danakil and the Sultan of Tajura, the Governor of Jibuti was prevented from capturing the mission.

1. FO 395/64, Gazelee to Willson, 5.7.17.
3. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 45, 6.6.17. The German Legation was forbidden from using the Italian and British Telegraphs. The pro-German Minister Igazu had given the mission a hunting permit.
4. FO 371/2860, Thesiger to Balfour, T. 33, 5.5.17.
By June the mission had allied with Muhammad Abū Bakr, Lij Yasu's agent, and they held the town of Gud. The Senior Officer of the Red Sea patrol was ordered to assist the French in preventing the embarkation of the mission for Arabia, or in preventing a Turkish rescue force. The French made no request for military or naval support (they were probably afraid that Italy would make assistance an excuse for a claim to Jibuti); they intended to starve the mission, consisting of 400 armed men with Danakil auxiliaries, and hoped that it would disband and return to Ethiopia. Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador to London, said that Ethiopia was violating its neutrality by allowing the mission to proceed, and he suggested that the granting of 16,000 rifles that Tafari wanted for the siege of Magdala should only be made on condition that Ethiopia broke off relations with the Central Powers.

5. FO 371/2860, Wingate to Balfour, Con., T. 509, 11.5.17; Bertie to Balfour, T. 510, 3.6.17.

1. FO 371/2860, Thesiger to Balfour, Tel., 5.6.17; WO to FO, 15.6.17; Admiralty to FO, Con., 15.6.17. Jibuti had raised 2000 men for the war, and there were not many troops there, V. Thompson and R. Adloff, Djibouti and the Horn of Africa, (Stanford, 1968), p. 10.

2. FO 371/2860, Thesiger to Balfour, T. 37, 26.6.17.

noticed that the March Revolution in Russia had shaken Ethiopian faith in the Allies, and they did not want to put too much power in the hands of the Tripartite Legations. G. R. Clerk could see no success in asking Ethiopia to sever her relations with Germany since "on general grounds it seems desirable to avoid as much as possible making requests of a Govt to whose demands we usually have to return polite refusals". Thesiger was ordered to join in a concerted démarché that stated:

que si cette mission rentre en territoire abyssin elle sera immédiatement désarmée ... et à l'avenir, de nouveaux incidents du même genre seraient nécessairement regardés par ces Puissances comme une violation de Neutralité.

Tafari surprised the Allies by agreeing to break off diplomatic relations with Germany on several conditions:
1) renewal of the guarantee of Ethiopian integrity; 2) no territory bordering Ethiopia to be ceded to the Central Powers after the war; 3) the import of 16,000 rifles at Jibuti to be permitted; and 4) the loan to Tafari of three airplanes needed for the seige of Magdala. Largely

1. FO 371/2860, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 46, 15.6.17.

2. A reference to the British refusal to supply Tafari with planes for the seige of Magdala. FO 371/2860, Clerk note on Rodd to Balfour, T. 616, 9.7.17.

3. FO 371/2860, Balfour to Thesiger, T. 48, 14.7.17; Protest note of July 27 of. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 64, 3.8.17.
on the urging of Ras Hailu, Tafari even offered active participation in the war in order to: 1) be represented at the Peace Conference; 2) claim an indemnity; 3) claim Anglo-French help if Germany or Turkey (with Italian acquiescence) attacked Ethiopia after the war; 4) purchase machinery after the war; and 5) extradite Lij Yasu in case he escaped to a European colony. Thesiger said that (1) could be arranged, but that indemnities would be limited to Belgium and Serbia; that the Allies would not allow the importation of arms-making machinery; and that the Allies would take care of Lij Yasu if the opportunity arose. ¹ The Foreign Office asked the Army Council once again for the loan of aircraft on the grounds that the defeat of Lij Yasu was in the balance, and that it was heartily recommended by the Tripartite Ministers. The War Office refusal worried Hardinge because if France or Italy decided to send planes, Britain "should lose a good deal of prestige in Abyssinia".²

Italy, after considering Tafari's offer, declared on 25 July that the expulsion of the German Legation was not

¹. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, Con., No. 52, 3.7.17. Tafari later added a fifth condition relating to the Ethiopian claim on certain church lands in Jerusalem, Thesiger to Balfour, T. 47, Con., 17.7.17.

². FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, T. 38, 2.7.17; FO to WO, 10.7.17; WO to FO, Secret & Urgent, 19.7.17.
worth 16,000 rifles, presumably because it would strengthen Ethiopia against possible Italian intervention. At the same time Tafari handed Thesiger new conditions, formulated at a Council meeting the week before. The Fitwary had decided that Magdala was virtually impregnable so the request for planes was dropped; in its place they asked for 30,000 modern rifles with six million cartridges — and for free import after the war; the other points remained the same. Thesiger refused to communicate the Ethiopian conditions, which he considered ridiculous, and told Tafari that if he was afraid of Italian aggression then he should come to terms with Britain. Thesiger still hoped for an agreement; British prestige was high after Yasu's deposition, and if the Germans could be expelled then British prestige would rise still further. In which case the negotiations for the Tsana Treaty would be facilitated — and this was still the keystone of British policy in Ethiopia.

Expulsion of the German Legation would have been

1. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, T. 42, 25.7.17; de Fleuriau (verbal), 1.8.17.
2. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 55, V. Con., 12.7.17 and 25.7.17. De Coetrevealed the nature of these confidential talks to Igazu, who subsequently used them against Tafari.
3. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, V. Con., No. 60, 3.8.17; Cf. FO 800/48, Wingate to Grey, Private, 10.11.16
particularly helpful at that time, since Yasu and Ras Imre had broken out of Magdala, and hopes for the Princes' return were fanned by the German Legation. However Italy was still unwilling to provide Tafari with arms on the excuse that this regime was still unstable. The Italians were, of course, quite correct, and their feelings were shared by the Germans, who believed that Lij Yasu was finished, but that Tafari had not yet established himself.

By September Ras Imre had been defeated, ending, for the moment, Yasu's threat and Tafari's need for additional arms; Magdala fell soon after; and Tafari foiled Igazu's coup on the first anniversary of Lij Yasu's deposition. On 3 September a French force of Senegalese tirailleurs captured Haltz and Carmelich 50 miles north of Jibuti, and interned them in Jibuti.

Further attempts were made to get Ethiopia to expel the German Legation, but with no success. The discussions centred on how many rifles would be an adequate bribe, since the other conditions were merely a matrix to hold

1. FO 371/2855, Imperiali (verbal), 13.8.17; Thesiger to Balfour, T. 53, 27.8.17, No. 61, 1.8.17, No. 72, 16.8.17; WO to FO, Con., 8.9.17.

2. Known through captured letters from von Syborg to 'Alî Said Pasha, FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 63, 3.8.17; IO L/P&S/10/756, A.B. 62, 8.9.17.
this one condition. The British and Italians were not anxious to supply arms to Ethiopia, but they finally agreed to the importation of 3000 Gras rifles as a personal gift to Tafari, though this hardly satisfied the Regent. They also agreed to guarantee Ethiopia, to protect her from aggression, and not to cede colonial territory to Germany (though they never had the slightest intention of doing so); however they were opposed to supplying arms or giving her representation at the Peace Conference. As a result Germany remained represented at Adis Ababa, and Ethiopia did not get any more rifles.

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France was the only Tripartite Power to make a positive effort to support Tafari. There was much good will at the British Legation, in the personages of Thesiger and Dodds, men whom Tafari trusted and respected; but British policy was hampered by a desire to keep within the Tripartite Agreement and reform Ethiopia. Sometimes their actions

3. Thompson and Adloff, op. cit., p. 57; The Times, 18.10.17; FO 371/2855, Stewart to Balfour, T. 447, 8.9.17; Thesiger to Balfour, T. 56, 11.9.17; FO 371/3127, Campbell to Balfour, No. 15, 12.2.18.
went counter to Tafari's wishes. The Foreign Office vetoed Tafari's requests for arms, planes and advisers, and so the Regent turned to M. de Coppet, who was more willing to satisfy Tafari's needs. De Coppet was a man in the mold of his predecessors, Klowbukowski and Brice. He was well experienced in Anglo-French relations, was adept at intrigue, and was no particular friend of the British Legation.

French policy in Ethiopia in 1917 to 1918 was based on the desire to increase their commercial activity and to supply arms to Tafari. Britain met French economic expansion with a vigorous initiative of her own, and Anglo-French competition was strong in these years. The arms embargo at Jibuti remained in force for the duration of the war, but France attempted to make exceptions - as in the case of the projected expulsion of the German Legation. Furthermore, Britain was very anxious to come.

1. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, T. 64, 25.10.17; WO to FO, 10.11.17; Cambon (verbal), 19.10.17; Imperiali (verbal), 23.11.17. The FO believed that Italy did not want to strengthen Tafari against Zauditu since they still wanted a "piece of Ethiopia", Campbell to Balfour, T. 73, 12.12.17.

2. FO 371/2855, Cambon (verbal) 24.10.17; FO to Imperiali, 3.11.17; Imperiali (verbal), 23.11.17.
to an agreement with France concerning the arms trade, so that Jibuti would not become a post-war arms emporium for North-East Africa and the Near East. This led to protracted discussions at Whitehall in preparation for the expected Peace Conference.

Since international trade was not great in Ethiopia, the Tripartite Powers jealously guarded their economic interests, and opposed the attempts of other powers to cut into their spheres. Articles II and X of the 1906 Agreement preserved their economic rights, and demanded that each power inform the others of changes in the status quo. So when it appeared, in July 1917, that a Franco-Swiss group, with the help of M. de Coppet, had acquired an alcohol monopoly, Rome lost no time in protesting to Paris, and requesting London's diplomatic support. Sperling lamented that "the Italians are always wanting us to make protests to the French about Abyssinia"; but Italian opposition collapsed when they were offered a share in the monopoly. Tafari had also offered a share to Thesiger, but the Minister declined on "ethical grounds", and because it was British policy to avoid monopolies.1

1. FO 371/2856, Imperiali to Balfour, Urgent, No. 3048, 5.7.17; Thesiger to Balfour, No. 74, 22.8.17.
It was natural that 1917 should mark an upsurge in commercial activity in Ethiopia since 1916 had been such a poor year. Due to the political uncertainty of Lij Yasu's reign and the following civil war, exports from Jibuti had declined. Similarly imports from the Sudan had declined, and the increase in the total Sudan-Ethiopia trade was probably only due to the fact that the western provinces were less affected by the civil disturbances than were Shoa and Harar (Jibuti's main suppliers). In 1917 exports from Jibuti surpassed the 1915 mark, and total trade through the Sudan surpassed, by almost 50%, the 1916 mark.\textsuperscript{1} This can be accounted for by the increase in commercial activity by the Powers, and by the fact that Shoa and Harar, which were battle grounds in 1916, were relatively free from civil strife in 1917. Sir F. Wingate, the High Commissioner at Cairo, felt that "now, parts of Abyssinia will prove an Eldorado, a new California for commercial enterprise after the War".\textsuperscript{2} In 1917 a British group headed by an H. N. Morris, and one headed by a Col. Villiers and E. W. Janson became interested in Ethiopia

\textsuperscript{1} All figures are in the Times, 24.6.18, cit. Journal Officiel de la Côte Française des Somalis, which can not be accurate for Sudan figures.

\textsuperscript{2} FO 371/2856, Wingate to Balfour, Con. T. 1237, 20.11.17, and Con. No. 256, 1.11.17. Ethiopia was considered an El Dorado without any factual basis.
largely because they heard that the valuable Dolol Potash Concession would soon be acquired by German interests.  

The Janson-Villiers group was also interested in the Prasso Mineral Concession, though Thesiger claimed that it had already lapsed. The Foreign Office continued to help Janson acquire various concessions (including one for an Adis Ababa to Blue Nile Railroad) even though Thesiger stated:

So long as the present system of administration exists in Abyssinia these concessions have no value; the Government gives them in order to obtain backsheesh and then grants no protection against the extortion and interference of the local petty chiefs.

The Janson-Villiers Fanti Syndicate was an ambitious organization. It planned to acquire concessions for an Adis Ababa - Gambela and Adis Ababa - Lake Rudolph railroad; for cattle and hides export; for farms and trading posts; and for mineral properties.

1. FO 371/2856, IO to FO, 21.7.17, (trs. Stewart to Thesiger, 7.6.17); Rodd to Balfour, Con. No. 249, 4.8.17; Wingate to Balfour, Con. T. 1278, 28.11.17; IO to FO, 18.12.17. Morris was head of an Anglo-Indian chemical works and had the support of the I.O.; Janson and Villiers headed the Abyssinian Exploration Syndicate.


3. FO 371/2856, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 97, 14.11.17.

4. FO 371/3125, Villiers to Sperling, private, 17.2.18.
Clearly the Fanti Syndicate had cut itself a big chore, and seemingly without knowledge of the real situation. Ethiopians in general opposed the export of foodstuffs; were suspicious of European activity - commercial or otherwise; demanded elaborate bribes before acting; and resisted the sale of land to foreigners. However Britain needed a group to handle economic affairs in Ethiopia, and the Fanti Syndicate seemed as capable as any. The Foreign Office was a trifle wary of Villers' hope to extend the Railroad to Gambela and Lake Rudolph since it would only help the French and make it that much harder to get them out of Jibuti. In general the Foreign Office supported Fanti in its attempt to anticipate foreign rivalry by negotiating during the war.

Campbell had been trying to purchase grain and cattle since January 1918 for Fanti, but the fear of famine was very great. The Governor of Jibuti - "He and his rifles are a curse", noted Langley:


2. FO 371/3125, Fanti Syndicate Ltd., to Balfour, 18.3.18.

3. FO 371/3125, Wingate to Balfour, T. 683, 12.4.18; FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, T. 2, 5.1.18 and No. 5, 10.1.18.
intimated that the Abyssinian Government were 'unable to see their way to authorize the export of cereals which are available in Abyssinia and much more needed by the Allies for immediate consumption, except on condition of sanction by the French authorities for the import of the three thousand rifles now lying at Jibuti', and he added that he was not unfavourably disposed towards the demand ...

Though Fanti finally managed to get a cattle concession, transportation difficulties kept the deal from conclusion. Thesiger suggested that they obtain concessions for 1) a farm in Harar to be worked with scientific expertise; 2) the repair of the old carriage road from Dire Dawa to Harar, and to run a motor service for passengers and goods; and 3) the old Gambela Lands Concession on the Baro River. Tafari had virtually agreed to the first two projects, in order to train Ethiopians in scientific farming; Ethiopia would buy the farm back after three years, and would allow Fanti to hold 50% of the shares. Thesiger also suggested that Fanti amalgamate with R.M.C. Backhouse's Abyssinian Development Syndicate and with the various Anglo-Indian firms already operating in Ethiopia. This would provide a united front against the encroachment of H. Achille Bayard et Fils of Paris who had been concession-hunting as well.

1. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, No. 25, 8.3.18; this was in reference to the gift of 3000 rifles for Ras Tafari.

2. FO 371/3126, Villiers to Sperling, Private, 28.6.18.
M. Vorrières, Bayard's agent, had spent lavish baksheesh (ca. one million francs), and had obtained concessions for transportation from the Adis Ababa Railroad Station; for a water power monopoly; and for an electric tramway. Most of the concessions were prestigious items with no practical advantage, and Thesiger was not greatly concerned by the French success because it had been obtained with bribes, which was a notoriously unstable method of business, and because Britain controlled the Bank of Abyssinia, the only financial institution in the country.¹

Thesiger felt so strongly about merging British commercial interests that he asked for and obtained leave to return to London to discuss the matter. A fortnight after he had left Adis Ababa however the Treasury vetoed Fanti's application to export capital.² Fanti finally straightened out its problems with the Treasury and the Stock Exchange in 1919, but not before Bayard made significant gains.

Tafari had made Kantiba Wasani Zammuel, the former Ethiopian

3. FO 371/3125, Thesiger to Balfour, T. 52, 5.7.18, (trs. Holmes to Fanti), and No. 52, 10.6.18. Bayard had offered to cooperate with Fanti but they refused the offer on Thesiger's suggestion.

1. FO 371/3125, Thesiger to Balfour, No. 60, 8.7.18.

2. FO 371/3125, Dodds to Balfour, T. 61, 20.8.18; Treasury to FO, 2.8.18. For the continuation of this matter infra, Ch. V, pp. 382-3.
Consul at Asmara, the unofficial "minister for mines", and he had given Vorrières a concession that supposedly included all of Ethiopia. In fact it was restricted to a small area in Tcher-tcher in Harar, but fear that Britain would be excluded from the twentieth century "El Dorado" made Fanti and other concessionaires petition Tafari.\(^1\) Anglo-French rivalry in Harar led Major Athill, the temporary Consul, to remark: "Some of the French in this country are more ready to give us a share in the honour of defending the soil of France than in the profit which may accrue from that of Abyssinia".\(^2\) Fortunately for Britain the French mining concession lapsed in December 1918 when both Wasani and Vorrières succumbed to influenza. 1917 to 1918 marks the period when Britain decided to coordinate her efforts to make money in Ethiopia. The Bank of Abyssinia, controlled by the National Bank of Egypt, was the main British financial institution in Ethiopia, and even that was technically an international institution. Aside from the Bank, Mr. J. Humphreys' ("a British subject of shady reputation") "third rate" cartridge factory was

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1. FO 371/3125, Campbell to Balfour, T. 90, 31.10.18, T. 94, 5.11.18, T. 101, 14.11.18.
2. FO 371/3125, Campbell to Balfour, No. 81, 24.10.18.
the only notable firm run by a Briton. The rise of the Fanti Syndicate, and the Abyssinian Development Syndicate are indicative of the mood that drove Thesiger to demand administrative reforms and drove Whitehall to clean up the arms traffic. In British eyes the days of Ethiopia as an African backwater were over. She was to be drawn — pushed if necessary — into European methods of administration, trade and diplomacy. Since Ethiopia was unable and unwilling to co-operate in this drive it had to be done without her assistance; but it was going to be done nevertheless.
Chapter V


By the end of 1916, though the outcome of the war was still in doubt, Britain was optimistic enough to give a thought to the shape of the post-war world. Two of the issues that touched closely on Ethiopia were the question of the arms traffic and the question of Italian compensatory claims. Britain saw the Peace Settlement as the opportunity to restrict arms shipments to the Horn of Africa, and perhaps to acquire Jibuti and evict the French from the Somali Coast. Italy also wanted Jibuti, but her ambitions extended further into Somaliland and Ethiopia as well. Due to the administrative chaos in Adis Ababa some British officials came to consider partition as a practical 'final solution' of the Ethiopian problem. The Italians had a good claim based on their widespread interests in Ethiopia and their war-time assistance to the Allies. The French were alone in their unqualified support of the new regime, and, in particular, of Tafari. This was no altruistic gesture; they wanted to sell their arms and expand their trade. The French stood to gain least by the partition, especially since both Britain and Italy wanted them out
of the Somali Coast. British policy between the coup d'etat and the armistice was indecisive; torn between imperialistic opportunism and the desire to see Ethiopia sovereign and free once again.

France had declared an arms embargo for the duration of the war, but the spectre of thousands of surplus arms pouring into Africa and Arabia from Jibuti upon the conclusion of hostilities haunted Whitehall. The India Office in July 1916 was particularly concerned with Jibuti's effect on the post-war Arab situation, since Jibuti was "an entrepot in close proximity by means of which powerful private interests are concerned in exploiting a highly profitable trade to the utmost".\(^1\) They wanted France to leave Jibuti as much as the Foreign Office. But Lord Hardinge warned: "In any matter of exchange they always open their mouths so wide and are so extraordinarily sensitive that it is difficult to arrive at a settlement"; and Grey noted: "We can only deal with a territorial exchange of Jibuti effectively in the peace settlement after a successful war".\(^2\) Grey, as

1. IO L/P&S/11/106/2446, Draft by Sir A. Hirtzel of IO to FO, 4.7.16.
2. FO 371/2595. Minutes on Ibid.
usual, was correct and the question of the arms trade was not taken up until the Peace Conference. However that did not prevent Whitehall from trying to find a quid pro quo, and from preparing for the eventual showdown. H. Read at the Colonial Office thought that the Sudan might be able to satisfy the French (Lado? Fashoda? Darfur?); but the Foreign Office could not find a suitable concession. In September 1916 the Foreign Office considered the Jibuti arms traffic situation as their biggest long-term problem in Africa. France would not accept the loss of their enclave, with its railroad and their reversionary interest in Ethiopia, without adequate compensation. Britain was loath to surrender their claim to the captured German colonies; especially since the Commonwealth Dominions wanted their share of the spoils. The Foreign Office was ready to sacrifice the "black" colonies of West Africa for a free hand in "white" East Africa, but the Colonial Office was not quite so willing. From the Foreign Office point of view the acquisition of Jibuti was essential.  

The situation in Ethiopia in 1916 to 1917 made a detached discussion of the Jibuti arms question impossible since Tafari needed arms and France was willing to provide them. The War Office was reluctant to support Tafari until he had defeated Mikael; and the Foreign Office was afraid that France would "score one" if she supplied Ethiopia with arms while Britain held back. Britain's bargaining position was aided by M. Briand's concern that Britain control the arms trade from British colonies in West Africa to their French neighbours. This was an excellent opportunity to press the French to make concessions not only at Jibuti, but in India as well, where arms regulations were poorly enforced. Both Bonar Law at the Colonial Office and A. Chamberlain at the India Office agreed, and Sir L. Mallet stated: "I quite agree that this offers a good opportunity for a bargain and that it need not prejudice a comprehensive settlement of the whole question later". No doubt France's

1. FO 371/2596, WO to FO, Con., 23.10.16; Cambon to Grey, 24.10.16.

2. FO 371/2808, French Chargé (verbal), 3.11.16; IO to FO, 21.11.16, CO to FO, 30.11.16; Grey to Cambon, 8.12.16. Mallet's Committee had agreed that a comprehensive post-war settlement was preferable to bilateral piecemeal agreements.
sensitivity in West Africa made her more susceptible to pressure on the arms question, though it did not reach the level of sacrificing Jibuti.

On 21 November 1916 Grey learned that Tafari had asked Jibuti for 30 machine-guns and ten thousand rifles, as well as airplanes; and on 18 November the Governor of Jibuti had given Ethiopian envoys 2 machine-guns, 2 canons-révolvers, and 600 rifles. ¹ Though Brice denied all knowledge of the deal it was clear to Thesiger that France had made a great propaganda coup. G. E. Hubbard, a War Department clerk, minuted:

They give us an explicit promise not to let arms pass into Abyssinia during the war and they send in this lot without consulting us and, as it seems now, on a very flimsy excuse. Indeed it looks as if their only real motive was to ingratiate themselves from the start with the new Govt.

There seemed little point in protesting against this fait accompli, and there was no opportunity to match France's generosity. When Tafari renewed his request for planes on 6 December, Thesiger discouraged him and explained that the whole question of the arms trade had to be discussed

¹. FO 371/2596, Cambon to Grey, 21.11.16; Thesiger to Grey, T.65, 23.11.16.

². FO 371/2596, Hubbard note on Thesiger to Grey, T.70, 3.12.16.
before Britain could agree to supply arms. Tafari reluctantly agreed that his request was not urgent, and he intimated that he would be amenable to the conditions of the "Colli Scheme" -- i.e. to negotiate through the Bank of Abyssinia, and to destroy an equal amount of old rifles for the new ones acquired -- should importation be agreed to.  

The India Office was particularly interested in the arms trade and followed its development in Ethiopia with interest:

The results [of an unrestricted arms trade] are likely to be most prejudicial, not only to the internal situation in Abyssinia itself, but to the tranquility of the adjoining British territory (Soudan, British Somaliland, &c.) and of the Italian colony of Eritrea. There is also the danger that Jibuti will replace Maskat (where we have stopped the traffic) as the distributing centre from which arms and ammunition will find their way by sailing craft to the Arabian and Persian Gulf littorals, thus neutralising the effect of our settlement of the Maskat question with France (which cost us £ 64,000 in hard cash).

Thesiger thought an exchange was the best way to get Jibuti: "The Cameroons and Togoland were given away for nothing and Gambia must now go to repair that error"; although Wingate did not agree on the wisdom of an exchange (perhaps he feared that the Sudan would be

1. FO 371/2596, Thesiger to Grey, No.123, 7.12.16.
2. I0 L/P&S/11/106/2446/277(73). Shuckburgh minute on Ibid.
sacrificed), there were others who were favourable.¹

Lord Islington of the India Office was given the Chairmanship of the Sub-Committee on the Arms Traffic to discuss the question of Jibuti and arms in Ethiopia. J. E. Shuckburgh, who acted as secretary of the committee, expressed an initial pessimism:

Speaking generally, we are likely to find it very difficult to induce the French to stop the traffic at Jibuti where such powerful financial interests (public and private) are involved; and it is not very easy to see where the quid pro quo -- which will most unquestionably be demanded -- is to come from.

The Committee, which included Sir A. H. MacMahon, the High Commissioner at Cairo; Sir W. Tyrell, Balfour's private secretary; Read of the Colonial Office; and representatives of the War Office and the Admiralty first met at the India Office on 8 January 1917.³ The Committee had not much hope that France would part with Jibuti, but they recommended: 1) that the Peace

¹ Harcourt, former Colonial Secretary, and Sir A. Steel-Maitland, future Additional Parliamentary Under-Secretary, were favourable; S.A. 295/1, Thesiger to Wingate, 22.2.17, and Wingate to Thesiger, 19.3.17.

² I0 L/P&S/11/106/2446/(348), Shuckburgh note, FO to I0, W.6819, 22.1.17.

³ FO 371/3087, C.I.D. to FO, Secret, 23.3.17, No.P.13, Report of Sub-Committee on Arms Traffic, Appendix I.
Conference should agree not to dispose of surplus arms to non-belligerent nations in the interest of prevention of future wars; 2) that France should be approached, prior to the Peace Conference, to determine her arms policy; and 3) that the Jibuti arms trade should be closed down by purchase, exchange, or otherwise.¹

Though Britain had no concrete plan for its acquisition, Jibuti was to become the price for favours France might ask. During the session of Lord Islington's Committee Jibuti was a constant source of irritation to Britain. In December 1916 the French authorities held up the transport of Maria Theresa dollars from the Bank of Abyssinia to Aden because they felt exportation would hurt French trade. This was in direct contravention of the Tripartite Agreement which provided for "absolute equality of treatment" in all matters of trade and transit on the railroad and in the port of Jibuti.² The claim that exportation would hurt Jibuti was "preposterous" since it gave French merchants the right to interfere in Ethiopian internal affairs. France accused the Bank of

¹. Arms Committee Report, Ibid., Appendix II.
². FO 371/2853, Thesiger to Balfour, T.75, 29.12.16; Bertie to Balfour, T.43, 18.1.17; Hubbard note on Bertie to Balfour, 42, 22.1.17.
"advantageous speculation" when it tried to exercise its right to export when it could make a profit. Britain held that the exportation was legal and its detention was unjustified, and on 21 February Paris revoked the ban.  

The incident emphasized Jibuti's "annoyance value", and the need to oust the French from their Red Sea foothold. Added to this incident were rumours of arms contracts that were often in the wind. In Paris, Briand assured Bertie that no arms would leave France, but the Foreign Office remained unconvinced: "The old story -- 'export is prohibited'; but the prohibition did not prevent the Govr. of Jibuti giving rifles etc. to Ras Tafari".  

Lord Islington's Committee met again on 29 January to hear statements by Sir Mark Sykes of the Arab Bureau, and Sir Hugh Clifford, Governor of the Gold Coast. Sykes felt the main problem was the supply of ammunition, and the Committee decided to limit ammunition supplies more than arms, and to utilize French sensitivity to the West Africa Arms trade in bargaining for concessions at Jibuti.

1. Thesiger to Balfour, 3, 3.1.17; Bertie to Balfour, T.133, 21.2.17, and 78, 21 Feb.(trs. Briand note); FO to Bertie, 13.3.17, FO 371/2853. 

2. Hubbard note on Bertie to Hardinge, Private, 23.1.17; Bertie to Balfour, 48, 25.1.17, FO 371/2853.
They also heard Thesiger's five proposals for the control of the arms trade in Ethiopia: 1) the Head of State to apply for arms through the Legations; 2) the Bank of Abyssinia to conduct the negotiations once the home Governments are agreed; 3) private traders to be prohibited from dealing in arms; 4) old rifles to be exchanged for the new ones; and 5) a fixed number of cartridges for each rifle, within a fixed annual supply.¹

These proposals were based on the pre-war "Colli Scheme". France had always held that she had the right, under the Brussels Act, to export arms to Ethiopia as long as they were sold to the "Government" and not to individuals. A Conference in 1908 tried to change "Government" to "Head of State" and the "Colli Scheme" tried to limit arms to Menelik alone, but both attempts failed. The Committee decided to prepare a revision of the Brussels Act to remedy this and other problems.²

In the meantime, the War Office referred Tafari's

1. FO 371/2853, Thesiger to Balfour, T.31 and T.32, and No.29 of 26.4.17. Old rifles in N.E.Uganda were worth 30-50 lbs. of ivory.

2. Arms Committee Report, op. cit., Appendix III.
request for aircraft to Egypt, and Italy asked Britain to join her in protesting against the Jibuti Governor's gift of arms to Tafari, which Thesiger now believed was a bribe for the Adis Ababa Railway Station site that the French had recently acquired. News soon also arrived of Jibuti's coronation gift to Zauditu -- two machine-guns. As Archer arrived at the capital for the coronation he learned from talkative French railway officials that the French Legation had also asked for an extension of the railway west of Adis Ababa. To this Hubbard exclaimed: "So this is what the presents of arms, the French behaviour over the coronation, etc. have been leading up to". This rumour, though false, underlined the extent of French influence in Ethiopia, and their potential for trouble.

On February 12 and 26 the Arms Committee discussed the revision of the Brussels Act. The proposed

1. FO 371/2853, WO to FO, 3.2.17.

2. FO 371/2853, Rodd to Balfour, T.127, 7.2.17; Thesiger to Balfour, T.9, 6.2.17, and T.14, 17.2.17. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, T.13, 19.2.17, with Hubbard's note; Bertie to Balfour, T.168 Con., 2.3.17; Gilmore to Clerk (trs. Ochs to Gilmore, 27.10.17), 2.11.17, Ochs' Railway Trust heard of the rumour and protested to the FO, and offered to build the railroad with FO support.
International Convention ran to 14 Articles, of which the ones that pertained to the Ethiopian situation were:

1) to enlarge the prohibited area to include all of Africa (except Tunis, Algeria and South Africa), Asia Minor, Arabia (except the Persian Gulf, Muscat, and Persia);

2) to prohibit the export of arms from the territories of the signatories to the prohibited areas except by license;

5) to control the sale of arms in European colonies and fix quotas;

6) to control the manufacture of arms in the prohibited areas.¹

Since Ethiopia was to be included in the "prohibited area" it would be virtually impossible for her to obtain arms unless by special license. However this would not prevent administrative "slip-ups" in Jibuti, or gifts by its Governor. Technically the French had imposed an arms embargo on Ethiopia for the duration of the war, but complicity between the arms merchants, Jibuti officials, and the French Legation made strict enforcement of the embargo impossible. For this reason section (a) of

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¹ Arms Committee Report, *op. cit.*, Appendix IV.
Article II of the Committee's report recommended that Britain come to an understanding with France before the Peace Conference, in the knowledge that materials existed for a genuine "community of interest" in Arabia, West Africa, and North-East Africa, which would include the cession of Jibuti or the total supression of the arms trade there. The other two recommendations called for the discussion of the arms trade at the Peace Conference, and for a new International Convention on Arms. For good measure Thesiger's five proposals were also endorsed.\(^1\) Balfour brought the findings before the Cabinet on 10 March 1917, and emphasized that in order to starve semi-civilized tribesmen and urban "anarchists" (no doubt a reference to Russia) of arms Britain had to close down the arms trade. This was especially necessary because Germany would have no compunction about selling arms after the war -- he could have added France as well.\(^2\)

De Coppet would not co-operate with Thesiger on arms regulation, and the latter was convinced that, whatever changes in personnel were made, it was "perfectly evident

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1. Ibid.
2. FO 899/4, P.13, C.I.D. Report of Sub-Committee on Arms Traffic, 10.3.17, No.713.
that ... French policy in Abyssinia will never change, and that, by force of circumstances, that policy must be hostile to us, and destructive of all our hopes and aims". 1 The French only cared about Jibuti, and Jibuti depended on the arms trade and the railway.

Limit the arms traffic, and Jibuti becomes a financial burden to the French Government while, as regards the railway, it can never become a paying concern so long as it terminates at Adis Ababa. The French Legation must fight therefore to keep this country open to the import of arms and to extend their railway....

Therefore, "it must always be in the interest of the Abyssinian Government, the French Legation and of every employee and merchant at Jibuti to evade" any arms restriction. The only answer was to eliminate the French from Jibuti. In British hands the railway could be extended to Jimma, Góre, or Lake Margharita -- and eventually even to Khartoum.

The Foreign Office while recognizing the benefit of acquisition, was not hopeful; and by the end of February 1917 they had just about given up hope of gaining any

1. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, No.6, 22.2.17; Thesiger to Sperling, Private, 22.2.17, he stated, "De Coppet is an intriguer of the worse type, shifty and unreliable and determined to make a name for himself here by pushing thru' the railway to Jimma & filling the country with arms".
satisfaction from the French, especially since Thesiger continually requested armed assistance for Tafari's struggle against Lij Yasu at Magdala. The original request for two demonstration aircraft had eventually increased to a flight of six warplanes. The War Office, wisely, was not ready to commit itself to Tafari, not only because he was still insecure, but because it did not want to establish a precedent that could eventually lead to a costly and embarrassing intervention to save a few pilots and advisers.\(^1\) Thesiger continued to pound away at War Office transigence, wiring, "Lij Yasu, by his aid to Mullah and Germany, proves himself our open enemy... All our interests are bound up with Ras Tafari"; but the "school" planes available at Egypt had not the equipment to fly at Magdala's altitude.\(^2\) Hubbard lamely suggested that Thesiger might explain that the planes were needed.

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1. FO 371/2853, WO to FO, 2.3.17; Thesiger to Balfour, T.12, 16.2.17. Various plans, including one which called on each of the Powers to send two aircraft also were rejected.

2. FO 371/2853, Thesiger to Balfour, T.23, Immed., 15.3.17, and note by Maj. Paddon; WO to FO, 25.3.17, and Hubbard note; Thesiger said in No.15, 13.3.17 that "Ras Tafari is Abyssinia's last hope and, unless we wish to intervene and partition Abyssinia the moment peace is declared in Europe, we must... support him".
for the "allied advance in Europe" -- i.e. the battle of Arras, preparatory to Nivelle's offensive of April 1917. 

By this time Tafari was convinced that he would not get planes, but he had hinted that he might accept rifles instead. Italy had foreseen this and had suggested that the Allies purchase the stockpiles at Jibuti in order to take them off the market. Cambon stressed that the Powers ought to accept Tafari's request on the condition that he order the arms through the Legations and not through private merchants.¹ The Foreign Office learned on 30 April that Tafari had asked France for 16,000 rifles and that she had refused. In order that France should not bear the full burden of refusal, Cambon asked if Thesiger could inform Tafari that Britain approved of the refusal.² In fact, the Tripartite Ministers concerted their refusal, and told Tafari to make all future requests simultaneously to the three Legations. The Foreign Office wanted to wait until the War Cabinet had met and discussed the arms issue before they

1. FO 371/2853, Borghese to Balfour, No.989, 27.2.17; Wingate to Balfour, T.252, 10.3.17, he suggested selling Jibuti arms to Hussein; WO to FO, 28.3.17; Balfour to Imperiali, 4.4.17.

2. FO 371/2853, Cambon to Balfour, 30.4.17; Balfour to Thesiger, T.33, 3.5.17. Cf. CAB 24/13, Sperling memo, G.T. 746, 25/C/1, 17.5.17.
considered an Italian proposal to refuse all future requests for arms; however Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the War Cabinet, decided on 18 May that due to the pressure of business in foreign and domestic policy, the arms trade question would not be put on the agenda.  

Thesiger told Tafari on 18 June that the Allies would only supply arms if Ethiopia severed her relations with the Central Powers, and Tafari wished to telegraph personally to King George to intercede on his behalf.  

M. Ribot, the French Foreign Minister, responding to British enquiries on Thesiger's five proposals, instructed de Coppet to co-operate with his colleagues; however Ribot was reluctant to impose conditions on Ethiopia lest it appear to other Powers that France was trying to limit her sovereignty. Ribot was hedging, of course, since no country had interests in Ethiopia equal to the Tripartite Powers, and the others were much too busy to care.  

The question was however academic since Ethiopia had no

1. FO 371/2853, Langley note, 14.5.17; Cambon to Balfour, 17.5.17; FO Minute, 19.5.17 citing Storr to Sperling, 25/C/1, 25.5.17.


3. FO 371/2853, Cambon to Balfour, 18.7.17; Balfour to Cambon, 26.7.17.
intention of severing her relations with the Central Powers so long as Magdala held out and while the political situation was uncertain. Thesiger postponed discussion on the arms question, prior to the abortive Igazu coup of September 1917, in the hope that Tafari would strengthen his position. The arms proposals were part of Thesiger's long-term project of revitalizing the Tripartite Agreement by subjecting Ethiopia to rigid European control. In addition to Thesiger's scheme, the British Minister proposed that the French close Jibuti, since Arab dhows could smuggle arms and thereby ridicule the Entente embargo. 1

As the French gave support to British attempts to limit the arms inflow (on condition that Ethiopia expel the Central Powers' Legations), the Italians withdrew theirs. 2 Italy had been desirous all along to halt the arms trade, and Thesiger's proposals had been formulated in conjunction with Count Colli. However, Italy maintained that Articles VIII, IX and X of the Brussels Convention of 2 July 1890 and Article XIII of the 1906 Agreement prohibited the arms trade, and that Thesiger's

1. FO 371/2853, Thesiger to Balfour, No.80, 10.9.17.

2. FO 371/2853, Fleuriau to Balfour, 16.8.17; Imperiali to Balfour, No.4473, 19.10.17.
plan was therefore unnecessary. They also complained that under the British plan Ethiopians could buy old rifles, exchange them for new ones and sell the surplus. Italy was "following a thoroughly obstructive line", and missed the essential point that the old rifles would be destroyed once they were received. Sperling noted: "The Italian objections are silly, especially about the old arms. They seem to think that the Abyssinians have only to produce an old rifle to get a new one, whereas the true (and obvious) meaning of the condition is that they cannot get a new rifle without producing an old one in exchange". The Italians may have genuinely misunderstood Thesiger's proposals, but more likely they wanted a stronger line taken - one that would have completely stopped the arms trade. The Italians proposed a Tripartite exchange of notes on the arms trade, and identical instructions were sent to the Tripartite Representatives in Adis Ababa. The Representatives were however agreed that Tafari could not be approached at that time, because he was in a power struggle with the

1. It is probable that Rome feared that Thesiger's plan would weaken the Brussels Act, or give Ethiopia the impression that the provisions of the Brussels Act, the main anti-arms trade document, were no longer in force.
Empress. ¹

With Anglo-French pressure, and on the recommendation of Count Colli, the Italian Government agreed in February 1918, to accept the first, third and fifth of Thesiger's proposals, and

With the object of facilitating the negotiations the Italian Government consent, as an absolute exception to the firmly established principle of refusing any further grant of arms, to the delivery to Ras Tafari of the 3,000 rifles now stored at Jibuti.

This concession was granted, over Sonnino's and Orlando's opposition, due to the misapprehension that it would obtain Ethiopia's adhesion to the Allies. In fact the gift of 3,000 rifles and the severence of relations were two different issues; and when Barrère, the French Ambassador at Rome, informed Sonnino that Tafari wanted an additional 16,000 mousquetons to affect the rupture, Sonnino was very upset. Indeed Campbell did not think the rupture would be initiated for anything less than

1. FO 371/2853, Cambon to Balfour, 27.12.17; Balfour to Fleuriau, 3.1.18. Supra, Ch. IV, pp. 369-73.

2. FO 371/3127, Imperiali to Balgour, 27.2.18, (trs. Pro-Memoria, No.779); Rodd to Balfour, T.155, 18.2.18, and T.164, 21.2.18.
30,000 rifles.¹ Langley, on 6 November, noted: "The French are most tiresome in starting this fresh hare just as the Italians had unexpectedly given way about the 3,000 rifles". Due to the Russian surrender by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3 March 1918 and the German advance into Italy, Ethiopia was much less confident of an Allied victory, and was unlikely to commit herself to the Entente. Furthermore de Coppet made it very plain to Tafari that it was the Italians who were to blame for the refusals of his requests. Hubbard noted: "The French Minister is doing his best to ruin the chances of success by informing the Ras of the Franco-Italian dissensions about the import of rifles. Harmony seems to be unattainable in Tripartite policy in Abyssinia".² This was certainly true: Britain wanted to restrain French enthusiasm to arm Tafari, and Italy was waiting for Ethiopia to break up,³ and framed her policy accordingly.

1. FO 371/3127, Rodd to Balfour, T.189, 3.3.18; Imperiali to Balfour, 27.2.18 and 28.2.18; Campbell to Balfour, T.25, 7.3.18.

2. FO 371/3127, Rodd to Balfour, T.203, 8.3.18; Campbell to Balfour, T.27, 15.3.18.

3. Thesiger also thought that Italy would use the slave trade as an excuse to disqualify Ethiopia from the Brussels Act, FO 371/3127, Thesiger to Balfour, No.34, 26.3.18.
France also contributed to Tripartite disharmony by diverting to France Aden produce bound for Ethiopia. De Coppet claimed that the restrictions at Jibuti were in reprisal for an Aden ban on exports to the French enclave; however this ban only applied to dhow traffic (lest the dhows and their cargoes fall into Turkish hands), and it did not account for harassment of Italian trade. In fact Aden was French Somaliland's chief supplier. Campbell stated: "The French Government would appear ... to maintain that, whether Abyssinia belongs to them or not, they hold the gates and they refuse to allow anyone else to enjoy benefits which they are precluded from sharing!"¹ The French comandeered goods entering and leaving Ethiopia on the excuses that there was no carriage available and that the goods were needed by the French community. Thesiger wrote:

To acknowledge the right of the French authorities on the coast to act in this manner is equivalent to the recognition of a French Protectorate over Abyssinia and to the granting on a monopoly of the Red Sea trade to French merchants.

¹. FO 371/3127, Campbell to Balfour, No.16, 13.2.18, and also No.24, 7.3.18, and No.27, 15.3.18; Stewart to Balfour, 3.4.18.

². FO 371/3127, Thesiger to Balfour, No.40, 25.4.18, and notes.
To this "Jibuti blackmail" Hardinge noted: "If true, it is incredible". Lord Derby protested to the Quai d'Orsay and received a reply on 9 July 1918 saying that the requisitions were necessary and only a last resort, since France could not supply the colony during the war; however in a note of a few days later Briand promised to take action on further infractions.\(^1\) The requisitions could have only convinced London and Rome that French presence in Jibuti was detrimental to their goals and policies in Ethiopia, and though it was prompted by the war situation, the unilateral decision of Jibuti to interfere in Ethiopian trade had little justification.

Tripartite rivalry over arms was exacerbated by the Jibuti imbroglio. When Langley learned that de Coppet had blamed Italy for the refusal to give Tafari arms, he noted: "The dispatch shows why it is impossible to get anything done in Abyssinia. As long as France and Italy pull in different directions and crab one another to the Abyssinian Govt. we shall not get the German and Austrian RR. out of the country"; and Hardinge remarked: "The

\(^1\) FO 371/3127, Balfour to Derby, No.558, 26.6.18; Derby to Balfour, No.536, 9.7.18 and No.549, 12.7.18. British Indian merchants were the ones most effected by the Jibuti restrictions.
same lack of unity has been seen elsewhere, i.e. in Greece and Palestine. 1

Italy considered her acquiescence to the gift of 3,000 rifles as a "very special exception" and an "act of benevolence" toward Tafari, but France still wanted her Allies to agree to grant 16,000 more. France wanted to recruit an Ethiopian brigade for the war, and that would not be possible if Ethiopia remained neutral. Thesiger was convinced that even 16,000 rifles, which were virtually unusable, would have no effect on Tafari in view of the European situation. He believed that France wanted to keep the flow of arms alive, regardless of the circumstances, to prove that France was Ethiopia's only friend. 2 The War Office was sceptical of the value of Ethiopian recruits in either France or the Balkans, but France wanted them for labour formations, work that the highlanders would not welcome. 3 Lloyd George had intended to raise the question of enlisting and employing Ethiopian troops when he saw Clemenceau at the Allied

1. FO 371/3127, Campbell to Balfour, No.29, 16.3.18.

2. FO 371/3127, Cambon to Balfour, 2.4.18; Thesiger to Balfour, No.39, 23.4.18.

3. FO 371/3127, WO to FO, 5.5.18; Thompson and Adloff, op. cit., p.10.
Supreme Council in January 1918 when the problem of man-
power and reserves was discussed. The Imperial General
Staff thought that four combat battalions and 10,000
labourers could be recruited for work in Palestine, but
Clemenceau envisaged a 200,000 man force. The Supreme
War Council referred the question to the Military
Representatives at the 6th Session of the S.W.C. at
Versailles in early June 1918, which decided on 11 July
that combat battalions were impractical, and that a labour
force should only be raised as an absolute last resort.

De Coppet maintained that Ethiopia would break with
the Central Powers if the Entente either loaned Tafari
money, paid for recruits for a labour contingent, or gave
him rifles. Thesiger did not think that Tafari had the
power or the will to sever relations with the Central
Powers; nor did he need the money. Furthermore, he
would not be prepared to sell the blood of his soldiers

1. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, ii, pp.1635-49; CAB 23/5,
324 (2), 17.1.18.

2. CAB 23/6, 5.6.18, meeting 426; CAB 25/49/15-A-1,
21.1.18, by CIGS Ismay; and Kirk to Wilson, 19.1.18,
Balfour to Wilson, Tel., 15.6.18; Cf. for recruit-
ment for the K.A.R.: FO 371/3128, WO to FO, 19.1.18;
Wingate to Balfour, T.814, Con., 11.5.18;
"Recruitment no longer contemplated", FO 371/3127,
WO to FO, 6.12.18.
as mercenaries, or let them leave the country; "and ... the idea of raising a labour contingent was preposterous, in given Abyssian ideas on the indignity of Manual labour". On 1 June Colli received a telegram from Sonnino stating that Camille Barrère, the French Ambassador, was convinced that Ethiopia would join the Allies if given enough arms. "The telegram closed with the words 'MM Pichon and Clemenceau are disposed to accept the conditions proposed by Abyssinia as they attribute an enormous political and military importance to her intervention in Europe'". Thesiger was astounded. Tafari could not even get enough men to keep order in his own country, let alone help others. Colli arranged to see de Coppet and Tafari "without delay in order to clear up this misunderstanding which is most mischievous as tending to give the Abyssinians a dangerous misconception of the military situation in France and an entirely exaggerated idea of their own importance". Now that Magdala had fallen, Tafari's price was higher -- including the free import of arms, and possibly even the return of Eritrea and the Somali coasts.

Further talks on the arms trade had no great effect;

1. FO 371/3127, Thesiger to Balfour, No.51, 4.6.18.
Tafari did not get his arms, and Ethiopia did not expel the Central Powers' Legations. Pichon agreed in September that the best time for a review of the arms trade was at the Peace Conference, which was sure to be soon in view of the successful Allied advances on the Western Front.¹ In order that Italy should not take advantage of the slave trade clause in the Brussels Act to disqualify Ethiopia from receiving arms, de Coppet had persuaded Tafari to prohibit the sale or purchase of slaves and arms²—following in the tradition of Tewodros, Yohannes and Menelik. And like his illustrious predecessors' edicts on the slaves and arms trades, the prohibitions were unenforceable, and therefore meaningless. The French Minister also urged Tafari to grant France paramount interests in their commercial and administrative affairs in order to eliminate Anglo-Italian interests in any possible settlement of the Ethiopian question. France was using her position as arms supplier and protector to

1. FO 371/3127, Cambon to Balfour, 11.9.18. Sir L. Mallet and the CO still favoured a separate conference after the Peace Conference.

2. Campbell to Balfour, T.97, 11.11.18. He might have also added a prohibition on the ivory trade, since slaves and ivory were very often linked: Cf. Darley, op. cit., passim, and Oliver and Fage, op. cit., p.176.
gain economic advantage in Ethiopia, and possibly to raise their bid should they decide to cede Jibuti. This is not to say that France was not genuinely interested in the independence of Ethiopia and the success of Tafari's regime; however the fact that they stood to gain by the venture economically makes any exaggerated altruistic claims a trifle biased.

As far as Britain was concerned hopes that Ethiopia would reform herself, or that France would exercise moral restraint, were pointless. Tafari's Government proved to be as irresponsible as Lij Yasu's, which had no pretense to govern at all. It was unrealistic to assume that Tafari -- no matter how "European-oriented" he was -- would risk his shaky position by imposing unpopular reforms, which if carried out would diminish his authority. Reform on Thesiger's August 1916 model was out, and as for the arms trade:

The principal offenders in the past have been the French. French Somaliland, depends for its revenue largely on the arms trade, of which Jibuti is the emporium, and the French manufacturers and dealers are a powerful interest, under whose pressure the French Government have systematically frustrated every effort made by the other Powers to deal with the evil.

1. FO 371/3127, Campbell to Balfour, T.98, 11.11.18.

2. FO 371/3468, FO Memo by Spicer, Hurst, Read, Hirtzel and Sperling for Balfour, 19.12.18.
Britain therefore went to Paris in 1919 prepared to solve the arms trade question once and for all. Connected to this was the problem of Jibuti. This port was also considered in the question of the Italian compensatory claims: how far should Britain and France go to satisfy Italy's demands for a reward for her wartime service? Should she get "slight border rectifications" or should she get Jibuti? Should Ethiopia be used as compensation? These questions haunted British thinking throughout 1917-18, and many ideas were discussed and discarded.

* * * * * * *

Fear that the Tripartite Powers intended to partition Ethiopia had always been present in Adis Ababa, though the Powers were often too busy to contemplate such a move. Germany exaggerated this fear in her propaganda and tried to divide the Entente by playing on their rivalries. On 10 October 1916 the Tägliche Rundschau stated that France and Britain intended to leave Italy out of the imminent partition of Ethiopia. On this Sperling noted: "The absurd part of it is that Italy is the one member of the Entente which is out for loot". Italy may not have forgotten the "shameful scar" of Adua, but her primary motive was not revenge. Her colonies of Eritrea

1. FO 395/1, File no.155001/150970.
and Benfadir would remain unproductive until she managed to extend them into the rich highland and Galla-land hinterlands.¹ Ten days after the Shoan coup of 27 September 1916 Italy asked her Allies to give assurances that they would continue to concert their policies and not intervene unless there was a change in the political and territorial status quo.² She wanted to postpone the solution of the Ethiopian problem until after the war, when she could devote her full attention to it.

Britain had no thoughts of intervention, but the future of Ethiopia was increasingly concerning her in 1916. Wingate stated that Ethiopia should form the basis of Italian compensation under the London Agreement of 1915, since it would be preferable to piecemeal rectifications. He also believed that French territory should be extended since she would make an effective counterweight to Italy and an extension of territory would induce her to halt the arms trade. He believed France would become more responsible once she acquired her mandate in Syria and

1. "Eritrea and Somaliland [were] ... a bow which had to have a string, namely Ethiopia", G.W. Baer, The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War, (Cambridge: Mass., 1967), p.6.

2. FO 371/2596, Cambon to Grey, 12.10.16, and Imperiali to Grey, No.4898, 10.10.16.
realized the difficulty of administering a nationalistic people. Sir A.H. MacMahon did not agree with Wingate's interpretation, and he stated that if Britain could obtain Jibuti then he would recommend ceding British Somaliland to Italy. Both agreed that failing all else, the Kitchener partition plan safeguarded all Britain's interests most effectively.  

The desire to redivide Africa, evict the Germans, and obtain security for the route to India carried over into thinking on Ethiopia.  

Fear that Germany would remain in Africa, using her colonies as arms depots to undermine British colonies, made it imperative that a new Partition or Rectification of Africa take place. "A peace that wd leave the Ottoman Empire intact", wrote Shuckburgh, "and the Germans with a footing in E. Africa, wd. be a danger to India that wd. threaten the peace of the world".  

In early 1917 an "irresponsible Italian magazine" stated that Italy would swap Tripoli for Jibuti, and that

1. FO 371/2820, MacMahon to Grey, T.938, Secret, 25.10.16.  
2. This new imperialism is considered by J. Gallagher in "Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire, 1919-1922", (I.C.S., 1968).  
3. IO L/P&SB/11/94/2674, Shuckburgh note on an article by E. Zimmerman in the Vossische Zeitung, 23.12.15. Shuckburgh connected this with Yasu's policy, note on Thesiger to Grey, No.72, 23.11.15.
the Powers should return to pre-Adua times and recognize an Italian protectorate over Ethiopia. M. Brice, before he left Adis Ababa had shown this and another article in the Nuova antologia (stating that Italy should receive British Somaliland for her sacrifices) to Tafari; this naturally worried the Regent. Rodd at Rome was asked to enquire, but he reported:

A discreet reference to rumour as having been circulated in Abyssinia met with incredulity here. No Minister would dare to make such a suggestion. Occupation of Tripoli is a Mediterranean question, object being to prevent any other Power from holding [the] coast of Africa opposite to and near Italy.

At any rate, to Louis Mallet, "M. Brice's last effort to undermine his allies" was "an indication of what Italy will ask for under the treaty which brought her into the war". Italian agents from Eritrea had been active in Dese, Gondar, Nogara and Godjam, and it was apparent to Thesiger that Italy was trying to prepare the foundation for an Italian protectorate. Thesiger urged that the Sudan meet the challenge by revitalizing its trade and contacts with the North-West.

1. FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, T.17, 24.2.17 and No.30, 26.4.17, with notes by Langley and Mallet; Rodd to Balfour, T.193, 5.3.17. These maneuvers only enhanced Jibuti's value to France, Thompson and Adloff, op. cit., p.13.
The Foreign Office did not look kindly, in early 1917, on the partition of Ethiopia. On 15 March 1917 Wingate was cabled:

His Majesty's Government would be indisposed to depart at the present juncture from the principle of maintaining the territorial integrity of Abyssinia, which would have the effect of dividing it into spheres of political interest.

Therefore the problem of Italian compensation was acute. Balfour intended to abandon Jaghbub in Egypt to Italy in return for El Bardia or an improved strategic position on the Gulf of Sollum; but this was really not "compensation", and Britain needed to give something else away. An Ethiopian protectorate or an Eritrea-Sudan rectification was ruled out early, and British Somaliland and Jubaland looked the most promising areas, especially if Britain got Jibuti from France.²

2. By 15 November 1916 the Italian Minister for Colonies, Colosimo, had submitted a plan to Sonnino calling for the entire Horn of Africa, Hess, ubi supra, pp.108-10, with maps.


1. FO 371/3160, Balfour to Wingate, T.264, 15.3.17.

2. FO 371/3100, Balfour to Wingate, T.264, 15.3.17.
Wingate stood by his remarks in MacMahon's dispatch of 25 October 1916 since: 1) he did not think France would cede Jibuti; 2) Ethiopia could not survive without European supervision -- i.e. a definition of spheres under the Tripartite Treaty; and 3) it was dangerous to discuss the rectification of the western boundary of Egypt while Italy was negotiating with the truculent Muhammad Idrīs al-Senussi. Sir Louis Mallet, who was in charge of defining British policy towards territorial changes in Africa, was still in the dark as to what Italy would claim, but he was increasingly convinced that Anglo-Italian relations would be best served by the implementation of Kitchener's partition plan. Sir Walter Langley recognized Wingate's concern with the Sudan, but he cautioned:

Spheres of influence are however the stepping stone to partition and until now the policy of H.M. Government as embodied in the Tripartite Agreement has been the maintenance of a United Abyssinia and the protection from encroachment of our vital interests, the headwaters of the Nile and our trade with Western Abyssinia.

1. A reference to Kitchener to Grey, No. 77, 26.4.14, Cf. supra, Ch. I, p. 76.

2. FO 371/3100, Wingate to Balfour, T. 273, Secret, 15.3.17, with minutes by Langley and Mallet on 16.3.17.
Wingate, like Thesiger, believed that the acquisition of Jibuti and the Railroad would secure British interests in the Red Sea and would allow her to give British Somaliland to Italy; but, as Sir G. Clerk noted, it was "based on so remote a contingency" that it really was not worth considering. In addition the General Staff was unwilling to give Jaghbub, and even wanted El Bardia and the territory five miles west. This was the reverse of 'compensation', and if France was unable to make concessions in Tunisia, then Britain would be hard pressed to avoid sacrificing British Somaliland.

In a reply to a statement on Britain's interests in Ethiopia Wingate named: 1) Lake Tsana and the Abai system; 2) access to Adis Ababa by rail from the west; and 3) a rail connection between the Sudan and Berbera, via the N.F.D. (as stated in Kitchener's plan). To Wingate, British Somaliland was only important as an outlet for the Sudan, and it had no value without a rail connection. Clerk summed it up thus:

It comes, I think, to this. That our minimum, but vital, interests in Abyssinia are the control of L. Tsana and the Blue Nile System, and trading facilities with W. Abyssinia -- the latter most desirable, but not perhaps

vital. Outside that we can, if need be, surrender our position in Abyssinia to meet our obligations to Italy.

However Wingate added that if Britain could get Jibuti then she could give away all of Somaliland including Jubaland and the N.F.D. in return for Eritrea. In that case the Tripartite Agreement could be superseded by an Anglo-Italian Agreement that would guarantee Ethiopian independence, open the Empire for economic development, and divide it into spheres separated roughly by the Rift Valley. The plan would make the Red Sea a British lake, protect the route to India, and safeguard the Nile waters. Italy would get a contiguous colony with a hinterland capable of development, and she would virtually rule the Horn, South Ethiopia and Somalia. It was an ambitious plan, built on many "ifs". It presumed that France would cede Jibuti, and that Italy would give up Eritrea, her oldest colony. In other ways too, the plan was biased in Britain's favour. She got Tsana, the Blue Nile, the rich highland provinces, and Eritrea, while Italy got the unproductive Bale, the N.F.D., Jubaland, the Ogaden, and

1. FO 371/3100, Wingate to Hardinge, Private, 2.4.17, in ibid.
2. FO 371/3100, Wingate to Balfour, Secret, T.351, 31.3.17.
the Somali coasts — and presumably Sayyid Mahammad 'Abdille Hasan as well. The plan might have looked very neat on the map, but Italy was probably more interested in her pocket and prestige, than in cartographical symmetry.

The Italians were not ready to surrender their hold on the North to Britain with a struggle. They intrigued to strengthen relationships between Eritrea and the North, and they protested in April 1917 when Britain appeared to be reopening the Tsana talks. The Fitwary and the Betwoded were still opposed, and with Lij Yasu threatening from Magdala, and his follower Fit Kedani Imam Magusa rallying support among the Ogaden Rer 'Ali, discussion on any long-term project was futile. The French were afraid of Italian designs; Italy was unwilling to support Tafari; and Britain was trying to find a way

1. FO 371/2855, Rodd to Balfour, T.370, 27.4.17; Borghese to Campbell, Memo, 27.4.17; FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, T.25, 23.3.17; DMI to FO, Secret, 26.4.17.

2. FO 371/2855, Wingate to Balfour, No.100, 6.5.17, (trs. Pearson to Wingate, 15.4.17 and 26.4.17).

3. Thesiger wanted a British officer to administer Harar since no one seemed able to control it, FO 371/2854, Thesiger to Balfour, No.31, 26.4.17, (trs. to Dodds, No.31); and No.34, 1.5.17 (trs. to Dodds, 30.4.17).
out of partitioning Ethiopia.¹

Wingate maintained that "the local alternatives are 'Menelik rule' or chaos. The former involves the presence of a Menelik-- not a Tafari nor a Council of Ministers, I feel -- the latter spells European intervention". Britain's prime concern was Lake Tsana -- the arms and frontiers questions were secondary -- and he felt that Britain could only sacrifice her interests in South Ethiopia.²

Archer naturally was concerned with areas closer to Somaliland than Lake Tsana and the Nile. He wanted Hafar, and he would also buy out the French, though leaving them coaling facilities for the Madagascar and Indo-China mail service. With the addition of Jibuti and Harar British Somaliland would be converted from a "burden on the British taxpayer" to a "valuable possession of the Crown".³ He felt that "the continued existence of Abyssinia as a State is impossible", since the internal situation there

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1. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, No.43, 17.5.17, (trs. to Archer, 17.5.17), CO to FO, 1.6.17, (trs. Archer to Long, 27.3.17).

2. S.A. 295/1, Wingate to Archer, 26.4.17.

3. FO 371/2854, CO to FO, 1.6.17, (trs. Archer to Long, 27.3.17); Dodds agreed with Archer, FO 371/2854, Dodds to Thesiger, No.20, 27.6.17 in Thesiger to Balfour, No.54, Con. and Secret, 12.7.17.
had so deteriorated. Italy would never surrender her rights in Ethiopia to Britain, and it would be a "crime" if Britain did so to Italy.

The true solution of the difficulty lies in ... the absorption by Great Britain and Italy of the outlying provinces which are coterminous with our respective possessions with the consent of the hereditary rulers as and when the opportunity offers, on the gradual disruption of the Ethiopian Empire, and in accordance with a pre-arranged agreement between the two countries in order to dispel local rivalries. In other words, a policy of peaceful penetration leading up to the final partition.

British interests [he concluded] are clearly Tsana first, and then Gojjam, Walega and Gore for the Sudan, and Harrar for Somaliland.

Archer's plan took into account the needs and desires of Britain and Italy, and it made use of intelligence that Hailu of Godjam and Tafari of Harar were inclined to accept British protection. Most of all it emphasized the value of a strong British Somaliland rather than a strong independent Ethiopia. The India Office needed Somaliland to supply Aden with meat, but the Colonial Office was split on the value of British Somaliland.

Read asserted 1) that before Sayyid Muhammad's Jihad it

1. FO 371/3482, Annex to report on Territorial exchanges.

2. FO 371/3100, IO to FO, Con., 8.5.17. Berbera had exported 93,000 animals to Aden in 1915 to 1916.
had paid its way; 2) that it exported hides, meat and camels; and 3) that oil had been discovered recently. However, H.A. Butler minuted: "British Somaliland has no intrinsic value. If it goes to help a rearrangement by which bigger Imperial interests will gain, we need not shed tears over it".¹ Thesiger, who favoured Wingate's Eritrea-Somalia swap, maintained that if Britain could get Jibuti and cede Berbera, then Britain could still claim Harar and Dire Dawa. However he emphasized that Berbera should not be ceded unless Britain received something in return, since it would be viewed as a sign of weakness in Ethiopia.²

In Ethiopia both Tafari and de Coppet were concerned about Colli's visit to Asmara on 7 July for talks with the Governor of Eritrea. Colli later arrived in Cairo on 12 July, and spoke to Wingate about the arms trade and Ethiopian-German relations, though he said nothing about Italian designs on Ethiopia.³ In order to anticipate

1 CO 535/49, FO to CO, No.101550, 20.6.17, also in FO 368/1688.

2. FO 371/3100, Wingate to Balfour, T.534, 19.5.17; Thesiger to Balfour, Secret, No.42, 17.5.17.

3. FO 371/2853, Wingate to Balfour, Priv. Tel., 3.7.17; Rodd to Balfour, T.615, 9.7.17; Thesiger to Balfour, No.48, 15.6.17, and T.42, 10.7.17.
the Italians Thesiger proposed opening discreet talks with Ras Hailu of Godjam, who had recently stated: "'If England, France and Italy are to die, let us die with them, as the victory of Germany would mean the return of Lij Yasu who would establish a Moslem Kingdom under the protection of Germany & Turkey'". According to Thesiger, "Ras Hailu holds the key to Abyssinia and under certain conditions he would, I believe, be prepared to hand it over to our keeping". Hailu was also an intriguer of the first order, and could not be relied upon.

Thesiger submitted a revised plan to go along with those of Wingate and Archer in November 1917. He proposed that the Sudan get Eritrea, a guarantee on Lake Tsana and reversionary rights on Godjam, Walega, Jimma and Kaffa, and Italy get French and British Somaliland, along with a protectorate over Ethiopia. France would be compensated with cash or with some unspecified African territory. This would satisfy Italy's wildest expectations, while also rendering Ethiopia governable. It considered only the Sudan's interests as vital, since without Harar Somaliland would remain poor, and with Eritrea Somaliland would not be needed. The B.E.A.

hinterland was unprofitable desert, and Thesiger stated: "Somaliland and East Africa have no vital economic or territorial interests in the eventual partition of Abyssinia". The Sudan, however, needed Lake Tsana, "the importance of which is self-evident", and the western provinces of Godjam, Walega, Jimma and Kaffa, if she was "to become entirely self supporting". By following this plan Britain could be generous to Italy while severing herself from Ethiopian problems. He was convinced that reform was impossible, and though Tafari meant well, he could not govern. Intervention, war and partition was the alternative short of a protectorate, since a continued laissez-faire policy would prejudice trading possibilities. France could be bought out, but not Italy, so Britain would have to bow out and trust Italy to protect British interests. The plan, far-reaching as it was, was still based upon the cession of Jibuti, which though it did not pay its way, was to the French a case of amour propre. The scheme had the virtues of avoiding a partition, whereby tribes would be split and


2. FO 371/3100, Thesiger to Sperling in Thesiger, No.90, op. cit.
animosity towards the Powers engendered; and there would be no need for an expensive military intervention. By giving Italy a protectorate, she would have an unhampered opportunity to reform the empire, in much the same way that Britain had in Egypt; it would also reduce border troubles since Britain could protest to Italy and not to Ethiopia. However the plan was still founded on a series of questionable hypotheses, the biggest of which was: How would Ethiopia react to an Italian protectorate?

To discuss and evaluate the various plans, L.S. Amery, the Under-Secretary for European and Far Eastern Affairs, suggested that a small committee be constituted, chaired by Sir Louis Mallet, and including Langley, MacMahon, Read and Sperling. Their first meeting was held on 9 August 1917, and they immediately ruled out the possibility of ceding either Egyptian or Sudanese territory; this left Somaliland and Ethiopia. Thesiger's, Archer's and Wingate's plans were discussed, and it was decided that the Eritrea-Somalia exchange was preferable, though

1. FO 371/3100, Thesiger to Wingate, 12.10.17 in *ibid*.

2. FO 371/2854, CO to FO, 1.6.17, (trs. Archer to Long, 27.3.17). Amery was one of the "imperialists" who joined Lloyd George's War Cabinet in 1916, along with Curzon, Milner and Sykes, Gallagher, *op.cit.*, p.1.
Langley doubted whether Italy would write off the time and money spent on her first colony. Eritrean trade was far greater than that of British Somaliland, and Eritrea could also supply meat to Aden. Read however stressed the value of Somaliland, especially once the Dervishes were crushed, and suggested that Jubaland was less essential to imperial interests. The meeting was adjourned until the Admiralty's opinions on Somaliland were obtained; their views immediately set back the whole discussion. They maintained that the port of Berbera was needed for the protection of Aden, and that they needed the oil that had been found near Berbera. This was a serious blow since it virtually eliminated the only bargaining piece

1. FO 371/3482, Minutes of the Committee on Territorial Exchanges in Abyssinia, File no.187678/185713.

2. Oil had been found at Agagwein, 28 miles from Berbera, in 1914, FO 371/3100, CO to FO, Secret, 18.10.17. Subsequent prospecting in Harar was fruitless, FO 371/1878, CO to FO, Pressing, 17.1.14; Doughty-Wylie to Grey, No.38, 18.4.14. Also cf. FO 371/3468, Wingate to Balfour, T.465, 11.3.18 and No.157 Con., 21.7.18. Britain would have left the Somali Coast in 1896 had it not been for the fact that it was needed for the defence of Aden, Somali Republic, op. cit., p.47. Cf. Archer, op. cit., p.101 on oil discoveries at Degeh Shebel; Harcourt said there was "a fair promise of good oil in Somaliland", CAB 32, 1/2, Dominions, No.69 Con., I.W.C., 22.7.18.
that Britain held. MacMahon saw no reason why Britain could not give Italy the Berbera oil, since she could still control Italy's supplies through the Suez Canal. Furthermore, with Eritrea Britain could increase her control on Arabia. Mallet agreed, but he had to refer the question to the Cabinet because of the Admiralty's objection. Mallet modified Thesiger's plan so that Italy would receive Jibuti and an eventual protectorate over Ethiopia, while Britain would get complete and immediate control over Lake Tsana and the eventual reversion of the western provinces. This compromise satisfied none of the Committee: MacMahon wanted Italy out of Eritrea; Read thought it too generous to Italy; Langley thought that Italy would not find it generous enough.1

With British Somaliland eliminated from the list of disposables, Britain had to suggest areas further from Italy's main interest. Italy, of course, was mainly concerned with Italia Irredenta: Trentino, Trieste, Fiume; but these claims conflicted with South Slav ambitions, and sometimes with the principle of 'national determination' of peoples. Italy's second concern was with Libya and the Mediterranean, but Britain was

1. Territorial Committee, loc. cit.
reluctant to make concessions on the western boundary of Egypt, and even coveted Libyan territory. Thirdly was their colony of Eritrea, but the Sudan refused to make any concession. Lastly was Somaliland, and the Admiralty had vetoed concessions in that area as well. The only area left that satisfied the 1915 Treaty of London was in B.E.A., the Juba Valley; but this was territory that held little attraction for Italy and would be a poor substitute.

Colosimo, the Italian Minister for Colonies, urged Sonnino to make extensive claims for compensation in East Africa, but Sonnino, who was more interested in Asia Minor, was not impressed. Sonnino even contemplated ceding Italian rights around Lake Tsana to Britain in return for Kismayu and support in acquiring the Franco-Ethiopian railway. Colosimo, of course, opposed this.\(^1\)

At the Committee's third meeting, 2 January 1918, the suggestion of the Acting Governor of the B.E.A., Bowring, to cede Jubaland and the port of Kismayu was discussed. The prospects for cotton cultivation were good there, and deposits of coal and mica had been found. MacMahon noted that Italy preferred large prestigious

\(^1\) In October 1917 Orlando, a close friend of Colosimo's, became Prime Minister and was more receptive to Colosimo's plans, Hess, ubi supra, pp.112-3.
colonies no matter what their worth. Mallet enumerated two alternatives: 1) a. assuming Ethiopia did not break up, Italy was to get all of Somaliland (including, if necessary, Jubaland), but without a reversionary sphere in Ethiopia; \(^1\) Britain was to get Eritrea and Italian support in getting the Tsana barrage; b. assuming Ethiopia did break up, Italy was to get Somalia with a revisionary sphere; Britain was to get Eritrea and a reversionary sphere comprising Tsana and the western provinces. Or, 2) Italy was to get French Somaliland and Jubaland and an Ethiopian protectorate; Britain was to get Lake Tsana and the western provinces. \(^2\) Thus, faced with limited options, Mallet's Committee soon became deadlocked. The last meeting was concerned with finding a *quid pro quo* for Jibuti. Mallet felt sure that France would exact a high price in West African territory for Jibuti (more than just Gambia or Togoland). The Committee was prepared to allow France a coaling station for the *Messageries* steamers, but no one had much hope that France would be tempted. \(^3\)

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1. Langley said that as a matter of tactics Britain should not show all she had before hand.

2. FO 608/217, FO 1412, 14.3.19, (trs. Committee Report, 786/2/1).

3. Territorial Committee, *op.cit.*, fourth meeting, 3.4.18.
In the meantime Italy was isolating Ethiopia as much as possible: her refusal to supply Tafari with arms assured that Ethiopia would not join the Allies and therefore not be represented at the Peace Conference; they protested against French 'intrigues', and they objected to de Coppet's unco-operative habit of blaming Italy for anything that was unpopular. The Italians stressed the dissatisfaction of the Tigre with Tafari's Government, and the rebellious situation in the North following Negus Waldia Giorgis' death. Hubbard noted: "Probably the Italians hope to see Tigre independent of Adis Ababa as it will then be more susceptible to influences from Erethrea, so the wish may, to some extent, be father to the thought".

In Adis Ababa the future of Ethiopia was very much in question. Tafari confided to Dodds, in the first week of 1918, "'What is the use of my trying to settle the internal affairs of my country? It is too late, I have not sufficient time'". De Coppet either succumbing to the infectious European opportunism or anticipating Italian post-war claims, told Campbell that only an Anglo-

1. FO 371/3126, Balfour to Rodd, T.276, 9.2.18.
2. FO 371/3126, Rodd to Balfour, T.262, 29.3.18.
French condominium could settle Ethiopia's problems and prevent the spread of German influence after the war. This could have been prompted by Tafari's remark to de Coppet that he would accept "French and English advisers certainly; Italian never". Campbell reasoned: 1) since France had no territorial interest in Ethiopia, and 2) since Italy would have to impose her protectorate by force; then 3) Britain should assume the guardianship of Ethiopia, and 4) she should compensate Italy elsewhere, preferably in B.E.A.\(^1\) Campbell's logic mirrored the thinking of most British 'experts' on Ethiopia, and except for Hodson, who wanted B.E.A. to annex the land bounded by the Omo and Ganale Doria Rivers, most were in favour of compensating Italy in the yet unproductive Jubaland.\(^2\)

The hope that Italy would part with Eritrea was an imperialistic notion without much basis in reality. Rodd stated that Somaliland, though larger than Eritrea, was "probably the least desirable of the British possessions overseas, independently of the fact that a great portion

\(^1\) FO 371/3468, Campbell to Balfour, No.1, 8.1.18.

\(^2\) FO 371/3468, CO to FO, 20.8.18. Some even included the entire N.F.D.
of it is in a condition of chronic unrest". Eritrea, though not rich, was settled, productive and peaceful. "From a material point of view therefore the proposed exchange would offer little inducement to the Italians". The Ambassador felt that a protectorate over Ethiopia offered the most attraction to Italy, though he felt that the Italian Government did not seek it.¹

If Britain did not want to give up Somaliland, and Italy did not want to give up Eritrea, very little was left to bargain with. Wingate, though wanting to find large compensation for Italy, was influenced by Archer's views on the value of Harar, and urged that Harar be included in the hinterland of British Somaliland. He also professed doubts whether Italy could administer Ethiopia if she acquired it.² This only left the French enclave outstanding; and although France had not made a statement on her policy towards the Italian claims, it was generally thought that they would not leave the

1. FO 371/3468, Rodd to Balfour, No.31, Con., 30.1.18.

2. FO 371/3468, Wingate to Balfour, Con., T.249, 5.2.18, and also Con., T.250; Hollis (op. cit., p.70) believed that the Italians could bribe the Muslims to accept the protectorate and support Italy.
Somali coast. In Ethiopia, both Italy and Britain tried to consolidate their positions. Britain discouraged the Fanti Syndicate from trying to extend the railway west of Adis Ababa; and Italy, in June and July 1918, seemed to be mobilizing her forces in Eritrea and Benadir, preliminary to an invasion of Ethiopia. Count Colli denied any hostile intention by Italy, but he was not on good terms with the Eritrean authorities and the Colonial Ministry, and he was unaware of their plans. Thesiger also suggested that war credits could easily be diverted to support a forward policy by the Italian colonies. The threat from Italy was quite real in Adis Ababa, but it made little sense when one considers that Italy was fighting for her life in Europe, and would not win a decisive victory until the autumn of 1918.

1. FO 371/3127, Willis, S.I.D. to Gaselee, 31.5.18, with memo by the Conseil de la Société des Études Coloniales et Maritimes.

2. FO 371/3125, Villiers to Sperling, private, 15.4.18. Eritrea had ordered 60,000 water bottles (FO 371/3126, Wingate to Balfour, T.977 Con., 22.6.18). Benadir was buying mules, and munitions had been shipped to Mogadisciu (D.M.I. to FO, 10.6.18 and 3.7.18).

3. FO 371/3126, Thesiger to Balfour, No.56, 3.7.18; Wingate to Balfour, T.1011, 29.6.18. Colosimo was an unabashed imperialist, and he was worried over Thesiger's attempt to acquire Jibuti for Britain, Hess, ubi supra, pp.115-6.
Mallet's Committee on Territorial Exchanges in Abyssinia submitted its meager findings to the Committee of Imperial Defense in October 1918. Due to their ignorance of French intentions they were unable to decide anything on Libya, so they had confined themselves to Ethiopia. They felt that Italy's interest was in the connection of Eritrea and Benadir, with a protectorate over Ethiopia as her ultimate goal. The matter was complicated with conflicting Anglo-Italian claims over Lake Tsana, due to the British recognition of the Protocol of 1891. They did not think that mere border rectifications would satisfy Italy. France, on the other hand, only had an interest in Ethiopia due to the railway trade and because she needed Jibuti as a coaling station. Since Britain had a stake in a stable, independent Ethiopia, Italy's territorial designs and France's neglect in controlling the arms trade were harmful. All authorities agreed that France should leave the Somali coast in order to make the solution of Ethiopia's problems easier. They felt that Britain should pay heavily to get France out, since there would never be another opportunity to deal with Ethiopian problems so effectively. The Committee thought that Campbell's plan to make Ethiopia a British protectorate was unnecessary
if Britain's interests in Lake Tsana and the western provinces could be preserved in an easier way. Thesiger's plan, though it solved the problem of an Eritrea-Benadir connection and eliminated Italy from the Red Sea, did not take into account that Italy would not trade Eritrea for Somalia and that Ethiopia would not accept Italy as her protector. The Committee favoured Archer's plan because it satisfied Italy's territorial claim without destroying Ethiopia; and it settled the problem of the partition of Ethiopia once it broke up. Unfortunately Archer's plan also hinged on Jibuti, and it only satisfied Italy eventually -- and then only if Ethiopia broke up.

A.J. Toynbee was asked to comment on the Committee's report, and his memorandum reverted to the old Thesiger-Wingate plan. He recommended obtaining Jibuti, Eritrea and Ethiopia north and west of the Rift Valley; and offering Italy the southern part of the French enclave, British Somaliland (using its oil as bait), Jubaland, and Ethiopia south and east of the Rift Valley. Thus Britain would have the entire Nile Valley and the Red Sea; Italy would be handsomely compensated ("It is worth our while

to avoid leaving Italy with a sense of grievance); and Ethiopia would be partitioned on lines of nationality and religion ("wher as [sic] Mr. Archer's scheme carves up not merely the Empire but the Nation"). This last point looked forward to a time when "highland national consciousness" would be growing; to then have the different tribes partitioned between two European Powers would make an unstable situation. Toynbee's proposals eliminated Thesiger's "most serious drawback ... namely an Italian Protectorate over Abyssinia", and compensated Italy with immediate possession of a consolidated holding, rather than two separated spheres which Archer had outlined. Archer's contention that Harar-Somalia would produce "immediate returns" was an argument, to Toynbee, to give it to Italy: "Are not immediate returns on her outlay even more indispensable to Italy than to ourselves? And if they are, is it not good policy to induce Italy ... to secure for ourselves something that will be far more valuable to the British Empire in the long run?" -- i.e. Italian goodwill. The British Empire was rich enough to forego immediate returns for the long-term benefits to be found on the highland plateau.

It seems the proper policy for us to consider every possible acquisition from the point of view of its contribution to the organic
interests of the British Empire, and control of Eritrea and the headwaters of all the right-bank tributaries of the Nile is obviously more important for the Empire than isolated gains in the region of Harrar.

Toynbee's imperialism had a broader perspective than the narrow imperialists, who were interested in bits of land and access to ports. His views are centred on the European situation, and he considered Italian friendship and satisfaction a greater guarantee to the British empire than extensive security for the route to India. His suggestions were supported by George Lloyd of the Peace Delegation who wished to get rid of the Ethiopian question and support Italy (as opposed to France) as much as possible. With a plan of this nature Britain would get all she wanted in the Nile Valley and the Sudan hinterland, and Italy would be satisfied enough to drop her claims to Yemen and al-'Asir\(^2\) -- with their challenge to Britain's position in the Red Sea and Aden. Toynbee also counted on obtaining Jibuti as well as Eritrea -- both difficult tasks no matter how pretty the package deal looked.

1. FO 371/3482, Toynbee Memo on Report, 12.10.18, File 187678/185713.

2. FO 371/3482, Lloyd to Sec'y British Peace Delegation, no date.
In Ethiopia the British Legation continued to be suspicious of Italian policy, which seemed to want to present the Peace Conference with a fait accompli, and thereby recoup the prestige lost in the European war.\(^1\) On the other hand Campbell believed that Entente prestige was high enough to enable the Legations to negotiate reforms with Tafari. Colli, for one, was ready to provide the Regent with help to force the dissatisfied Tigré chiefs to co-operate with Adis Ababa and Massowah, but the Count was often in conflict with his countrymen in Eritrea, who were probably implicated in the Tigréan unrest. Tafari, in order to prevent an Italian protectorate, told Dodds he was ready to receive foreign advisers, provided he could convince the chiefs of the necessity for such action.\(^2\) Campbell was convinced that Ethiopia would face Italian aggression united, and that Tafari would ask for British aid. Campbell therefore recommended that Britain "should try to come to a clear understanding with Italy as regards an after war policy\(^{3}\)."

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1. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, Con., No.77, 17.10.18 and 1.11.18; Campbell to Sperling, private, 24.10.18.

2. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, Con., No.78, 21.10.18, and T.83, Con., 21.10.18.
based on the necessity of eliminating French influence from Abyssinia and on the desirability of reforming the country from within with the idea of preserving its integrity.\(^1\) Campbell's view was a voice crying in the wilderness of demands for loot. Toynbee remarked: "In spite, however, of temporary rallies, the chances are so much against an effective recovery of Abyssinia in its present form and within its present frontiers that we need to have a policy ready against all eventualities".\(^2\)

Tafari's call for advisers came as a surprise to all except Thesiger, on leave in London, who cautioned that the matter would move slowly and would not lead to anything.\(^3\) In the meantime Campbell suggested that a mission ought to go to Ras Hailu to determine his willingness to accept British protection should Italy attack. Thesiger did not want to arouse Italian suspicions, and he suggested that Capt. Bentinck, on his way to Gondar, should stop off and visit Hailu.\(^4\) With the news of the

1. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Sperling, private, 17.10.18.
2. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, No.80, 21.10.18, and Toynbee minute.
3. FO 371/3126, Wingate to Balfour, T.1593, 30.10.18. Tafari was only supported by Ras Kassa, Campbell to Balfour, No.96, 11.11.18.
4. FO 371/3126, Campbell to Balfour, T.92, 2.10.18,
Battle of Vittorio Veneto fear of Italian aggression rose in the capital, and the belief that Italy would soon avenge Adua gained credence among Ethiopians and the European Legations. Italy's strategy was more peaceful, and the submission of her territorial demands in Africa in October 1918 told how she intended to avenge Menelik's great victory.

The discussion of Italy's demands and how they were not satisfied is the subject of the next chapter. In essence the British policy was to buy out France, and partition Ethiopia. The first item became a necessity after the Shoan coup. France soon replaced her Minister but not her policy, and Britain realized that France would never play her game in Ethiopia. France was determined to extend European commercial rivalry in Ethiopia, and with the aid of her railroad she had an unbeatable advantage. Furthermore she was anxious to fill Ethiopia's endless need for the tools of war; once peace was declared France would dump her Gras and Lebel rifles on Ethiopia's doorstep, and soon Danakil and Somali, "Tigré" and Anuak, Turkana and Galla would have sufficient

Consul Walker finally went to talk to Hailu, but with no favourable results; Wingate to Balfour, T.1653, 9.11.18.
firepower to terrorize unarmed British-protected tribesmen. It was obvious to all that France had no other interest than in causing Britain grief in Ethiopia; and it was equally obvious that France would some way have to be induced to leave the Horn of Africa. However the Somali Coast to France was more than just a bargaining position. It was their only colony on the African east coast, and therefore the only port-of-call for Frenchmen on their way to East Africa and the Near East, and for French ships on their way to Madagascar and Indo-China. Furthermore it was a colony with powerful friends in the arms and railroad lobby who were able to persuade the French Government that their colony was worthwhile. Britain could offer France no quid pro quo for Jibuti. Any enclave on the East African coast would soon replace Jibuti as a sore-spot and Britain was reluctant to give away any of her other colonies in West Africa. Gambia was the obvious choice; a small enclave coveted by France -- though not coveted enough apparently. Togoland and the Cameroons, the former German colonies, were already partially promised to France; and rectifications in the Lado Enclave or in Darfur were too involved in the Nile Valley question to allow their consideration. Britain was therefore counting on France's good-will --
usually very short in these cases -- or for something to "come up" to extricate her from the Jibuti problem.

The other problem was: What was to become of Ethiopia? Some imperialists justified their land-hunger by the German bogey: Germans would exploit anti-Entente feeling in post-war Africa, and arm the blacks, gain control of Ethiopia, and threaten the Nile and the Empire. Under the canopy of a "world settlement" little Ethiopia would not be missed, and the untidy partition of Africa could be squared: no more raids, rivalries or threats to the sources of the Nile. It was all conveniently aided of course by the depressed state of Ethiopia politics and the Italian clamour for payment for her war-time sacrifices. Gradually the British authorities and experts on Ethiopia began to "reluctantly" consider the question of the future of Ethiopia, and soon they were immersed in partition plans and exchange schemes, and they were redrawing the map of North-East Africa with great abandon. It was not primarily their desire for loot that moved them, but rather a desire to salvage as much security for the British Empire, in the course of satisfying Italy's appetite. Great gains by Italy would necessarily have to be offset by some gains by Britain. In particular it was an excellent opportunity to obtain
Lake Tsana; but with Tsana went several other areas such as Godjam, the South-West and Harar. The attempt to get Eritrea was to further assure that the Nile Basin and the Red Sea remain British, in preference to the Gulf of Aden, which was more (though not much more) expendable. Britain would be willing to satisfy Italy's demands so long as they did not prejudice British interests. In the scheme of things Italy was preferable to either France or Germany.

British policy came up against some hard facts however. Firstly, France was not ready to leave the Somali coast. At one shot the French destroyed all the neat plans and schemes, and blotted the carefully drawn maps. Secondly, Italy was not ready to forego her sphere of influence in northern Ethiopia; and this meant not only Eritrea, but Lake Tsana as well. Thirdly, though more in the background, Ethiopia was not at that stage of dissolution that it would peaceably allow Italy (and/or Britain) to partition and occupy her. These are the elements that the Peace Conference had to deal with.
Chapter VI

Ethiopia and the Peace Conference

British officials in London and Ethiopia saw the end of the war as the opportunity to reorganize Ethiopia. They felt that the Tripartite Powers would now have time to consider such matters as administrative reform, the arms traffic and the cession of Jibuti. In reality, Europe was just as occupied with the problems of peace as she had been with the problems of war. Compared with European security and the establishment of national frontiers, Ethiopian problems were minor and of little urgency. The Ethiopian situation was discussed, however peripherally, within the framework of the Italian compensatory demands for her war-time assistance to the Allies, which was one of the major problems of the Paris Peace Conference. The British and French plans for the future of Ethiopia were made as much in anticipation of the Italian claims as they were made in satisfaction of their own imperialistic interests.

On 2 December 1918 Baron Sydney Sonnino communicated the Italian Memorandum on territorial claims in Africa to Lord Curzon. The Memorandum, written by the Minister

1. FO 371/3482, Sonnino to Curzon, Con., 2.12.18. Also cf. I.D.D.I., 6th Series, I, Colosimo to Orlando et al., T.s. 234, 12.1.19, p.455; and Baer, op.cit.,p.11.
of Colonies, Gaspare Colosimo, was based:

1. Upon rights existing prior to the war.
2. Upon rights created by the war.
3. Upon necessities deriving from the war.¹

The first rights had been won by the policy of that "great, clear-sighted statesman, Francesco Crispi". Italy claimed an overwhelming interest in North-East Africa because of her colonies; through diplomatic agreements (in which they still claimed that the Treaty of Wuchale provided "for the Italian protectorate over Ethiopia"); and through geographical-scientific exploration and study.

Italy felt that:

any advantage accruing from the war should be distributed in proportion to the contribution which each according to his own resources has brought to the common victory.

Italy's contributions to the war effort included the success of the Italian fleet in "preventing the Austrian fleet from issuing forth from the Adriatic sea"; the occupation of Libya; and

the effective watch kept by Italy in Eritrea and in Somaliland on the confines of Ethiopia which was a centre of Austro-Turco-German agitation and intrigue, notwithstanding the coup d'état of September 27, 1917 [sic] which

¹ Colosimo worked to "turn back the clock to pre-Adowa times", Baer, op. cit., p.12, and Hess, ubi supra, p.108.
overthrew the Ethiopian sovereign Ligg Jasu, prevented hostile action undertaken against the Allies by Ethiopia and Arabia from having dangerous consequences -- and this while France and England were fighting also in Africa in order to possess themselves of Germany's colonies there, and while Italy had on her own borders the whole Austrian army.

Italy believed that the Allies should continue to co-operate to ensure the peace of the world "in the high ethical ends for which President Wilson has declared himself", therefore it was necessary that there should not be a conflict of interest between them. Since Britain and France had large tracts of colonies in Africa "constituting a homogenous whole organic and independent", Italy felt that she should "secure for herself an analogous, sound colonial position". In order to do this it was

necessary only that the protectorate of French Somaliland which extends along the coast, together with English Somaliland and Guibaland be added to Italy's two colonies, and that Ethiopia be put under the exclusive influence of Italy.

Italy, besides asking for the Farsan Islands and the Libyan hinterland, wanted, most of all, the Jibuti enclave. In return for obtaining the dominant position in the Horn of Africa she was willing to offer France a coaling station at Jibuti, and to guarantee certain rights to Britain in the Nile headwaters.

The Italian claims should have come as no surprise
to anyone in the Foreign Office. Her claims in the Horn of Africa were anticipated, but Britain was not prepared to satisfy them. In British Somaliland the situation had so improved that Britain was not anxious to cede her protectorate. After the Armistice Britain intended to crush Sayyid Muhammad, who had established himself in stone fortifications at his haroun at Tale. As his herds and possessions had increased, his mobility had decreased. By the end of the war he was old and infirm, and his movement had lost some of the fanatical attraction it once had. Since the fall of Lij Yasu his influence in Ethiopia was negligible, and though his adherents and spiritual descendents continued to disrupt Arusi, Bale and Ogaden, Somali unrest was not considered very dangerous. British forces kept up their pressure on Sayyid Muhammad until he escaped to Ethiopia and died in January 1921. Moreover, the Admiralty did not want Italy established at Berbera, in the Farsan Islands or on the Arabian Coast. The Navy

1. Agnessa and Imperiali had convinced Sommio that Britain would be receptive to the Italian claims, Hess, ubi supra, pp.118-9.


3. ADM 116/1861, Case 3871, Peace Terms 1918-20, Secret, 514(3). They wanted Berbera for its harbour and the
emphasized, on 9 December 1918, the importance of controlling both sides of the approach to the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. The Admiralty also favoured the British acquisition of Jibuti, but A. J. Toynbee disagreed:

There is much to be said for buying the French out of Jibuti ourselves and giving it to Italy, whose interests in regard to the Arms Traffic are identical with ours. We should thereby secure two objects: (i) we should settle the Arms Traffic question; (ii) we should have compensation in hand for Italy for waiving of her rights, under the Agreement [of 1915], in the Adriatic and the Aegean.

Most British opinion was opposed to an Italian protectorate over Ethiopia; and even an Anglo-Italian hinterland for its oil. Cf. Carler's to Davies (W.T. I.D.), 21.1.19 for relative values of Somaliland. For views of D.M.O. of Col. Meinertzhagen's "Military Policy Governing the Partition of Africa", in FO 608/219, No. 803/2/1, 1.2.19.

1. ADM 116/1861, Case 3871, Notes on the Peace Settlement Subcommittee, 6 and 9.12.18. They later qualified their stand, infra, p. 430.


3. FO 371/3127, notes on Rodd to Balfour, No. 367, 28.11.18. These rights referred to Italian claims to Dalmatia, and in particular Fiume, and in Asia Minor, where they claimed extensive territory in the Dodecanese Islands and Anatolia. On a Jibuti-Gambia exchange cf. FO 371/4353, P.I.D. memo by Lord E. Percy, 3 December 1918; and for Jibuti-Togoland, ADM 116/1861, Case 3871, "Notes on matters affecting naval interests connected with the Peace Settlement", Secret January 1919.
condominium or division of spheres was to be "deplored". The singer, by the end of the war, had given up his idea of acquiring Eritrea and the highland of Ethiopia, and was concentrating on: 1) eliminating France from the Horn; 2) getting Ethiopia to accept Anglo-Italian assistance in reforms; and 3) co-operating with Italy on economic development; and 4) increasing British economic initiatives and persuading Ethiopia to participate in world trade.

The last point was particularly close to the hearts of all British interested in Ethiopia. Previously, British trade had been a myth; but gradually it was being conjured into reality. In early 1917 trade was poor; the peasants, who had suffered from billeting, requisitions, a poor harvest and late rains, refused to pay their taxes, and merchants were hoarding their dollars and were ceasing to import. There was no way of getting money into circulation because the Government paid out very little, and it refused to let the Bank of Abyssinia

1. FO 371/3482, Sperling memo, 13.11.18.
2. Thesiger on ibid. He could not interest Agnesa in his plan for a four kingdom division of Ethiopia under Anglo-Italian supervision, FO 371/3496, Thesiger to Balfour, No.98, 26.12.18.
3. FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, No.19, 29.3.17.
function as a state bank and stabilize the monetary system.\textsuperscript{1} The value of the dollar continued to rise from \textdolar{14} to the pound sterling in 1913 to \textdolar{4.9} to the pound in December 1919 -- making it difficult to export goods.\textsuperscript{2} Also Jibuti to protect its merchants took it upon itself to ban the export of dollars to Aden (though this order was later rescinded on representations to Paris). In 1916 trade through Britain's three main routes -- Moyale-Nairobi; Harar to the Red Sea; and Gambela and Gallabat to Khartoum -- were still the poorest of the Tripartite Powers', even though the Somaliland and Sudan trade had increased since 1915, and the Eritrea and Jibuti trades had declined.\textsuperscript{3}

Britain was spurred to expand her trade by the fear of French domination.\textsuperscript{4} A. M. Verrières, the agent of Achille Bayard et Fils, had acquired several concessions

\begin{enumerate}
\item FO 371/2595, Thesiger to Grey, Nos.43, 76, 68, 20.4.16, and 17 and 19.7.16.
\item FO 371/3500, Dodds to Curzon, No.109, 16.10.19 and T.194, 20.12.19; FO 371/2855, Thesiger to Balfour, No.67, 15.8.17.
\item Figures based on 10 M.T.$ to the £, FO 368/1875, Barclay to Balfour, No.695, 13.9.18 (trs. \textit{Abyssinia - Commercial Status}, A.E.Southard, Dept.Commerce, 1918).
\item FO 371/3495, Erlanger to Tyrell, private, 18.12.18; Campbell to Balfour, No.85, 5.12.18.
\end{enumerate}
in 1918, including an apparent mining monopoly. The mining concessions however seemed to be another case of a mistranslated document, "of which every Legation here has had ample experience". Italy opposed the concession as contrary "to the letter and spirit of Article 2 of 1906 Agreement and with the Franco-Abyssinian Treaty of amity and commerce of January 10th 1918 [sic] (Article 2, paragraph 2)"; until Thesiger and Colli obtained the cancellation of the concession when both Kantiba Wasani, the "minister for mines", and Verrières died of influenza leaving no record or receipt of their transaction. Tafari had been in a tight corner: he had not wanted to return his M.T. £400,000 "fee", nor could he deny Wasani's transaction, but equally he could not accept Bayard's and de Coppet's claim to have a monopoly. Paris denied that Bayard's concession was illegal, but they bowed to Anglo-Italian pressure, and de Coppet joined his colleagues in protesting against the concession on 12 March 1919.

1. "Experience has shown in this country that the French are psychologically incapable of avoiding the introduction of the political element into any matter with which they are directly or indirectly concerned", FO 371/3494, Campbell to Curzon, No.93, 12.9.19.

2. FO 371/3495, Imperiali to Curzon, Con., No.111,9.1.19.

3. FO 371/3497, Thesiger to Curzon, No.15, 20.2.19.

4. FO 371/3495, Derby to Curzon, No.257, 12.3.19 and No. 296, 21.3.19.
Bayard soon left Adis Ababa, and Thesiger was confident that either European intervention or the League would stabilize the politico-economic situation: "If therefore Abyssinia is to continue as an independent power trade facilities are bound to improve and the benefits will go to those Nations which have taken the trouble to prepare the ground in advance".¹

British merchants however were having trouble getting themselves out of Britain, let alone establishing themselves in Ethiopia. The Abyssinian Corporation was upset at being beaten by Bayard, but they could not move until the Treasury allowed them to issue stock. Although Lord Curzon had urged Austen Chamberlain at the Exchequer to allow the Abyssinian Corporation to issue stock,² it was not until April 1919 that the Treasury agreed and that the Corporation could send out its agents to Ethiopia.³ To avoid wasteful competition between British firms, the Foreign Office sponsored a meeting of British groups working in Ethiopia on 14 August, and in further private

¹. FO 371/3495, Thesiger to Curzon, No.26, 19.3.19.
². FO 800/152, Curzon to Chamberlain, 15.1.19; Chamberlain to Curzon, 16.1.19; Curzon to Chamberlain, 26.1.19; Chamberlain to Curzon, 27.2.19; Wolmer to Curzon, 26.2.19.
³. FO 371/3495, Wolmer to Curzon, 9.4.19; Campbell to Curzon, No.51, 15.6.19.
meetings on 2 October and 2 December the companies agreed to co-operate, while upholding the basic principle of "first come first served".¹

Britain seemed to have met the French threat with an admirable display of initiative, and there was reason to believe that Britain would not long remain the junior partner in Tripartite commerce. But the Ethiopian trade would never live up to the expectations of an African "El Dorado" for the simple reason that the Ethiopians saw no benefit in producing for export; and until Tafari gained the upper hand in the Central Government, Adis Ababa would not co-operate with European traders who continued to give the impression of looters. Moreover France, with her outlet at Jibuti and her control over the railroad, still controlled Ethiopia's economic destiny. All French interest seemed to be reducable to Jibuti -- the railroad, trade and concessions, and the arms trade. All Whitehall was agreed that the French must leave the Somali Coast, and that Britain had been given a golden opportunity in the Italian compensatory demands. However there was no guarantee that France was going to be any more generous

than Britain, and Britain was not feeling very generous at all.

In answer to the Italian claims, Rowland Sperling, who was to be attached to the Africa Section of the British Peace Delegation, stated in a memorandum on 17 December 1918:

It is in practice very inconvenient for either Great Britain or France to cede anything to Italy on the frontiers of Libya. When it is, in addition, taken into account that Italian aspirations in Asia Minor, and, to a certain extent, in the Adriatic, cannot be realized, it is evident that we must expect great pressure from Italy in the direction of large concessions in Abyssinia and the adjoining British and French protectorates.

This would hopefully provide the permanent settlement that Ethiopia required because of her 'unstable condition' and because of potential European rivalry and intervention.

The internal situation in Ethiopia at the end of the war was one of complete disorganization and exhaustion. The capital had been victim to two devastating epidemics, which struck down chiefs, as well as soldiers, peasants and slaves. Both Tafari and Hapta Giorgis were ill, and

at the British Legation only Campbell remained unaffected. As the chiefs slowly filtered back to Adis Ababa, and as the Legations finished treating their stricken countrymen, diplomatic relations returned to their 'normal' state. The epidemics did not however change the basic power relationships in the capital. Tafari was still the most powerful notable in the empire, but he was faced by the combined forces of Zauditu and the conservatives, and Hapta Giorgis and the army. Nothing could be done without Tafari, but Tafari could do nothing alone.

The epidemics had confirmed the worst suspicions of the British Legation about the viability of the Ethiopian state, and Campbell said: "The one thought in our minds is 'cannot we finish with it now?' It is useless to go on like this and I do not believe European Counsellors will stick it for long".1 European Counsellors, an offshoot of Thesiger reforms of August 1916, were the latest panacea for Ethiopia's ills. There had been a great deal of discussion before the influenza epidemic of methods of reorganizing Ethiopia. But, "With the suddenness approaching that of a volcano or tidal wave the epidemic

1. FO 371/3494, Campbell to Sperling, private, 2.12.18.
of influenza descended on all these policies, projects and
discussions".1 De Coppet, more in anticipation of the
Italian claims rather than for any French imperialism as
such, had his own cure-all: Ethiopia was to apply to the
Peace Conference and then to the League so that France
could be declared its mandatory. In addition, in order
that Britain and Italy should not accuse Ethiopia of
breaking the Brussels Act, de Coppet persuaded Tafari to
promulgate two decrees on 11 November 1918 banning the
trades in arms and slaves.2 Meanwhile, as a sop to
Britain, Tafari also accepted in principle the need for
advisers. He was supported in this by Ras Kassa and
Abuna Mattewos against Zauditu, Hapta Giorgis and the
provincial chiefs.3 However Tafari had no intention of
being under anyone's thumb, and there was but a slim chance
that he would introduce reforms. To the British, Ethiopia
without reforms had a dim future, especially with Italy

1. FO 371/3496, Campbell to Balfour, No.89 Con.,11.12.18.
2. I.D.D.I., 6th Series, I, Colli to Sonnino, T.2769/101,
11.11.18, p.58; Hess, "Italy and Africa", pp.117-8.
3. There was also an undefined "Abyssinia for the
Abyssinians" group, which wanted admission to the
League and advisers from the United States. This
group probably allied with Tafari for all practical
purposes.
waiting hungrily in the wings. Britain's job, therefore, was to determine what her essential interests were in the Horn of Africa so that Italy's claims would not be at the expense of British imperial security.

British interests, as defined by the various Ministries, included the control of the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb; the cessation of the arms trade (i.e. the elimination of the French from Jibuti); the command of the Red Sea (i.e. the acquisition of Eritrea); control over the headwaters of the Nile (i.e. control over Lake Tsana); access to oil in British Somaliland; and the safeguarding of British commercial interests, especially in Harar and the western provinces. The two most favoured plans put forward were Thesiger's, which would make Italy dominant in the South-East of the Rift Valley and Britain dominant to the North-West; and Archer's, which would eventually enlarge the present British and Italian colonies into their respective hinterlands. Thesiger's plan had the advantages of putting Ethiopia immediately under the direct control of a single Power -- Italy -- and of controlling the arms trade (since France would, somehow, be bought out of Jibuti); but it left Britain with no African naval base on or south of the
straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. It also gave the Somali oil and the Harar trade to Italy. Archer's plan safeguarded Britain's economic and strategic interests, but it divided Ethiopia into artificial spheres. However, from the Italian demands it was clear that Italy would never give up Eritrea or her position in the Red Sea, thus virtually nullifying Thesiger's plan. It was also clear that Italy wanted immediate compensation, and she would not be satisfied with Archer's suggestions.

Britain, likewise, could not accept Italy's plans for the future of Ethiopia and the Horn, and it was difficult to see how Italy could demand a protectorate over Ethiopia without infringing the principle of self-determination, since Ethiopia (except perhaps the Tigré) would never accept Italian domination. Though Italy had recognized British interests in Lake Tsana, Ethiopia was still commercially important to Britain -- it was thought to be potentially the richest area in Africa.

It is, therefore, decidedly to our advantage that Abyssinia should not become an Italian sphere, even under any guarantees of free trade which can be devised, and, in view of its resources, it is worthwhile making sacrifices elsewhere to maintain the existence of the country as an independent entity, which course alone provides any real guarantee for equality of commercial opportunity.

Britain could now see positive advantages to an independent Ethiopia, and she could always reconcile this policy with the 1915 Treaty of London, which allowed for compensation only in the adjoining Anglo-French colonies. Though Tafari preferred neutral advisers (probably from the United States) he could be persuaded to accept British ones if Italy and France agreed not to object. However Italy would have to be compensated somewhere if she was to be thwarted in Ethiopia, as well as in the Adriatic and Asia Minor, while Britain and France absorbed the German colonies. The territories that would be fair compensation, yet dispensable in terms of Britain's economic-strategic interests, were Jubaland, with the port of Kismayu and its cotton-growing potential; the eastern N.F.D. ('Marehanland'); or eastern British Somaliland, with its mineral potential (and Sayyid Muhammad).¹

The area most disposable, as far as Britain was concerned, was the northern part of B.E.A., from the Juba to Lake Rudolph, which was also probably the biggest Anglo-Ethiopian border problem. There were constant raids and no border control, and Britain would not be sorry to be

¹ Ibid.
rid of it. In January 1919 'Tigré' raiders attacked British border posts, and a K.A.R. force was sent to re-occupy the border. Under pressure from Thesiger, Tafari dispatched troops to the South and allowed British troops to occupy certain border wells. The Ethiopians had been impressed by the Allied victory, and they were frightened that Ethiopia would now come under Europe's axe. Tafari also allowed the 'Maji Mission' of H. A. Darley and L. Athill to leave Adis Ababa on 22 January 1919 for the Ethio-Sudanese border to survey the raiders' infiltration path through the Sudan and Uganda to B.E.A. The combined Anglo-Ethiopian operations went well in the South, but the highland troops were afraid of British advances. They thought "'The time has come for us to be wiped out. Europeans, Tigre and Galla are all against us'". Their fear was aroused by British occupation of the town of

1. FO 371/3495, D.M.O. to F.O., 30.1.19; CO to FO, 13.2.19; Curzon to Thesiger, T.15, 18.2.19; Moyse-Bartlett, op. cit., p.448.
2. FO 371/3495, CO to FO, 7.3.19.
3. FO 371/3497, Thesiger to Curzon, No.7, 22.1.19; Campbell to Balfour, No.94, 14.12.18.
4. FO 371/3496, CO to FO, 6.6.19; Lawrance to Curzon, T.62, 27.5.19; Campbell to Curzon, No.25, 14.5.19; Hodson, op. cit., pp.171-2; Moyse-Bartlett, loc.cit.
Gaddaduma. Both Tafari and Hapta Giorgis denied giving permission for British troops to occupy Ethiopian territory, and they claimed that they only permitted the British to "go and stay and take water at any wells that may be useful". Apparently it was another mistranslation.

H. B. Kittermaster, the District Commissioner at Moyale, wanted to retain Gaddaduma as a frontier post, but Sperling warned:

We are bound by the Tripartite Agreement to maintain the political and territorial status quo in Abyssinia. Any encroachment by us on Abyssinian territory in the South might lead to much more serious encroachment by Italy in the north and greatly increase the difficulties of the already difficult and still unsettled, question of Italian compensation in Africa.\(^1\)

Campbell agreed, especially since Tafari refused to co-operate with B.E.A.

I feel it is doubtful whether at this juncture when the question of Abyssinia as whole is almost due for discussion in Paris or elsewhere, His Majesty's Government will consider it a suitable moment to reopen the subject of the Gwynn Frontier line or to afford the Abyssinians, and not only the Abyssinians but the French and Italians as well, an opportunity of accusing Great Britain of acquiring new territory.\(^2\)

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1. FO 371/3496, Campbell to Curzon, T.68, 11.6.19.
2. FO 371/3496, Campbell to Curzon, No.48, 15.6.19.
The operations were completed in July,¹ and the K.A.R. held on at Gaddaduma until 17 October, when Deputy Governor C. C. Bowring ordered its evacuation. "promptly according to agreement as [a] chance thus presented itself of doing so without loss of prestige".² Britain could have only hoped to have stayed in Gaddaduma for a few more months at the most before Italy and France made some move, the former in the North and the latter towards some trade or arms deal. Tafari would never have agreed to part with an inch of Ethiopian territory while his position was so precarious, and he could have relied on the support of de Coppet in opposing the British occupation. The border violations in 1919 were no worse than previous incidents, and the situation in Europe -- the Peace Conference was in session -- prescribed the necessity for caution in all matters. In the end the British had no alternative but to evacuate Gaddaduma; as Campbell stiffly put it: "We have a reputation to live up to and we cannot repudiate pledges merely because the Abyssinians do not fulfill


². FO 371/3496, CO to FO, 19.11.19; Dodds to Curzon, No.125, 16.11.19.
their engagements". 1

The situation in the South was complicated by the fact that Britain was demanding other rectifications and adjustments on the Sudanese border at the same time that the Gaddaduma question was in progress. Darley and Athill had gone to Maji because The Governor of Maji [Fit Desta Damtew], whose geography was not his strong point, had made a small error as to the position of his frontier. The unfortunate result of this error was a fight between Abyssinian and Sudanese troops, in which three Sudanese officers and several men were killed. 2

The South-West was a dangerous region. In the Turkana area rifles were particularly scarce, and they brought high prices in ivory; and after the influenza epidemic of late 1918, in which many slaves died, there was an increased demand for slaves. 3 Moreover, in the campaigns of 1916 to 1918 many highland soldiers had tasted blood, and they wanted to continue their occupation in a private


capacity in the glamourous and profitable role of the shifta.

The Maji Mission surveyed the border and finished their work by August 1919, but Campbell's demands for 1) the dismissal of Desta, who according to Darley had sold most of the South-West into slavery; 2) the appointment of an Anglo-Ethiopian delimitation commission; and 3) the appointment of a British Frontier Agent as Maji, were largely ignored. With little hope of success the British Legation only pressed Campbell's first and third demands, since it would have been difficult to procure a delimitation commission without French and Italian support and they had no interest in this matter. Removing Desta however was also not an easy task, since he was a balabat of the influential Addisgé family with "feudal" rights in Maji.1 The provincial chiefs did not like their privileges being tampered with, and the Legation could not well use the excuse of Desta's youth, because he was the same age as Tafari and had been brought up at court with him.2 Tafari was certain the Abyssinian commissioners


2. FO 371/3498, Thesiger to Sperling and Campbell to Sperling, private, 1.1.20; Dodds to Curzon, No.171, 22.11.19, and No.4, 8.1.20.
would exonerate Desta, but on the question of the Frontier Agent he was more lenient, and Darley, that "gallant Yorkshireman ... of the blond Nordic Viking type to whom adventure is the salt of life", was appointed to Maji in 1920. Darley's appointment was the most Britain could hope for. Rectifications either on the Sudan or B.E.A. border would have provoked outcries in Paris and Rome, and would have ruined any chances of preventing the partition of Ethiopia. Italy had already claimed a great deal of territory, and had Britain forced a territorial settlement of her border problems then Italy's price would certainly have risen.

Under the 1915 Treaty Italy was entitled to equitable compensation on the frontiers of her African colonies, but her claims, though perhaps reasonable in other areas, seemed excessive in Asia and Africa. A Foreign Office memorandum stated:

It is hard to say to what extent Italian public opinion is interested in these acquisitions. They are naturally considered as offering good outlets for Italian capital and colonizing energy, and the relative insuccess of the Libyan venture does not seem altogether to have damped

1. Darley, op. cit., pp. iv, xii.
colonial enthusiasm.\footnote{FO 371/4356, Anonymous memo, P.C. 131, 18.12.18. Baer contends that Italian public opinion was more interested in Italian Irredenta than in Africa. Colosimo was alone in his desire to grab colonial territory, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.11-3.}

In addition there was some question as to the quality of Italian administration, and some feared that she would cause trouble on the borders of British colonies. Thesiger warned:

> Before acquiescing in the necessity or advisability of such an act of self-abnegation, one would need to be very sure both of the justice of the claim in itself and of the results which would follow on its acceptance.\footnote{FO 371/3496, Thesiger to Curzon, No.9, 5.2.19. Thesiger believed that the declaration of an Italian protectorate over Ethiopia would lead to a general massacre of Europeans, FO 608/219. Notes by Vansittart, Sperling and Thesiger, 797/1/1, 16.1.19.}

Sperling was certain that Italian colonial ambitions were "going to incur some severe disappointment in N.E.Africa", and he counselled that Britain "better keep any possible concession up our sleeve for production at a suitable moment".\footnote{FO 371/3495, Butler (D.O.T.) to Tufton, 24.12.18. This was in reference to an Italian request for support to prevent France from erecting a wireless telegraph station at Adis Ababa. Wingate had recently agreed to the cession of Jaghbub, FO 608/219, Notes in 797/1/1, 16.1.19.}

But the Foreign Office had precious little to offer,
and there was some disagreement over whether the Italian claims were justified. Sir Ralph Paget, an Assistant Under-Secretary, held that the Italian demands contravened the Fourteen Points, especially the principle of self-determination, which Italy had accepted. However, Sir Esmé Howard, of the political section of the Peace Delegation, and Lord Hardinge stressed that Britain had pledged herself to Italy and she could not back down, especially since it would comfort the "pro-German party" in Italy. Howard recalled that it was Italian neutrality that helped win the Battle of the Marne, and he felt that Britain should not sacrifice Italy for the South Slavs who had been no help at all.¹

Thesiger had a plan that would satisfy Italian claims in the Horn without unduly upsetting Ethiopia. The plan, which had some support from Tafari and Count Colli, divided Ethiopia into four kingdoms under Anglo-Italian supervision: Ras Seyoum would get Tigré, Wollo and Gondar, and Ras Kassa would get the Ogaden and Sidamo under Italian supervision; Ras Hailu would get Godjam and Kaffa.

¹. FO 371/4356, Howard to Tyrell, 7.12.18. Italian policy was contradictory: Colli was told to uphold Ethiopia, while Colosimo tried to get its protectorate, Hess, ubi supra, p.119.
and Ras Tafari would get Harar and Shoa under British supervision. All would be hereditary kingships; and the seat of Government, under Zauditu (advised by the two Legations), would remain at Adis Ababa. In short, Ethiopia would become a federated condominium. In this way, Ethiopia would remain sovereign, Italy would be compensated and Britain would not sacrifice her interests in the West and Harar. Only France (and Zauditu) would be the losers. Thesiger had had talks with Giacomo Agnesa, the Director-General of political affairs at the Italian Colonial Ministry, on 29 November 1918 before he returned to Adis Ababa, and he knew that Italy wanted all of Somaliland and Ethiopia; he might have even hinted this to Tafari in order to convince him of the wisdom of federalization.¹

Thesiger explained his proposal to his two colleagues on 13 January 1919. Colli had doubts whether Hailu could extend his control over the powerful Ras Demissie of Walega, but Thesiger maintained that a challenge by one chief was unimportant if the rest of Ethiopia was ready

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¹ Thesiger also had the support of Ras Hailu, FO 371/3496, Thesiger to Balfour, No.98, 26.12.18; FO 371/3500, Campbell to Curzon, No.74, 10.8.18; FO 369/1059, Dodds to Curzon, 26.10.19; Hess, ubi supra, p.118.
to accept federalization. De Coppet admitted, in a meeting on 17 January, that he had told Tafari to ask for only French advisers, but Thesiger was not worried. He was now sceptical of the value of advisers: advisers affected only the Central Government which had no influence in the provinces, where British interests lay. Thesiger's plan called for compensation to France, but like all others he neglected to mention where and how much. He hoped this would work itself out in a European conference attended by the three Ministers and Tafari, Seyoum, Kassa and Hailu.

Though Thesiger's plan received some support in the Foreign Office, Balfour did not approve of his suggestion for a conference. He felt that if the League was to be an effective instrument, then "how can a question of this sort be dealt with behind the [sic] back?" Natchbull-Hugessen of the Peace Delegation stated:

I doubt whether we want to raise Abyssinia here. It is governed by the Tripartite Treaty, which

1. Demissie died soon afterwards. Thesiger also suggested that the army and police be reduced to 10,000 men, armed with a special rifle and drilled by Europeans, FO 371/3496, Thesiger to Curzon, No.1, 13.1.19.


we do not want to interfere with as to do so
would give Italy an excellent opportunity for
pressing her exorbitant claims in Africa. We
want to avoid encouraging this. Until
Abyssinia breaks up I think we ought to leave
matters alone. When it does it would probably
be better to deal with the situation separately,
by a Conference of the 3 Powers concerned.

Lord Hardinge followed a similar line: "Abyssinia was not
a belligerent, and there is therefore no reason why the
question should be raised at the Peace Conference"; and
this was confirmed by Cecil Harmsworth's statement to the
Commons on 25 February. The Foreign Office felt it
could not, without Italian permission, communicate the
Italian claims to Parliament, since it might endanger
European lives in Ethiopia. They did not want Ethiopia
at the Peace Conference because she did not belong there;
moreover if allowed to attend she might fall under France's
influence. In spite of Balfour's remarks, it was
generally felt that Ethiopian affairs could best be
settled after the Conference by the Tripartite Powers, or,
hopefully, by Italy and Britain alone. The chief

1. FO 608/217, FO memo No.815, 21.2.19 on Thesiger to

2. FO 371/3496, FO memo on question by Mr.Wignall, 25.2.19.
Cf. I.D.D.I., 6th Series, 1, Colosimo to De Martino,
22.11.18, pp.143-5, and Baer, op.cit., pp.9-10, fn.25.

3. FO 608/217, 786/2/1, FO memo No.1056, 3.3.19;
Balfour to Curzon, No.268, 17.3.19.
disadvantage (hitherto not stressed) of Thesiger's proposal was "that it contemplates the partition of a hitherto independent country which has existed historically for nearly 1,000 years (and traditionally a good deal longer)".¹

The partition of Abyssinia is repugnant to all the modern ideas of self-determination, nor would it suit us so well as the restoration of Abyssinia to order and decent government, a process which would have the further advantage of putting an end once and for all to the intrigues and jealousy which centre around Abyssinia.

Sir Louis Mallet agreed:

It is absolutely out of the question in my opinion, to partition Abyssinia into spheres of influence unless the Abyssinians are a consenting party. The recommendations of my Committee were framed on the hypothesis of Abyssinia shortly falling to pieces which we were assured must immediately happen and of the various chiefs being willing to accept assistance. As the likelihood of France consenting to exchange Jibuti and French Somaliland for Gambia is apparently smaller than it was, and as the question of Abyssinia's future can not be left in the hands of Great Britain and Italy alone in view of French interests and of the Tripartite Agreement, I

¹ FO 608/217, 786/2/1, FO memo No.1735, 27.3.19, (trs. Thesiger's memo No.9, 5.2.19 on Italian claims).

² Note on Thesiger's memo, op. cit.

³ Supra, V, pp.364-5.
think that the question must be postponed for consideration until Abyssinia does fall to pieces. By that time Italy's desire to expand her Empire may have abated.

The Ethiopian Government, of course, was unaware that Ethiopia was unlikely to be considered at the Peace Conference. De Coppet, fearing that Ethiopia would be swallowed by Italy or Britain and Italy, urged that Ethiopia send a congratulatory mission to Europe, and he impressed upon Tafari the need to ask for French advisers to the exclusion of all others.² Tafari wanted to head the mission but he was prevented from leaving the country by the alikas -- the lesser officers -- who threatened to storm the Ghebi and elect a new Regent if he left the country. Thesiger thought that Tafari was waiting for a European ultimatum so he could plead "force majure [sic]" for the introduction of reforms he dare not father himself.³ With the Ethiopians fearful of Italian designs, and with de Coppet urging Tafari to ask the League for French protection, Thesiger suggested that, when the time was

1. Note on Thesiger's memo, op. cit.

2. FO 371/3494, Thesiger to Curzon, T.5, 24.1.19; Campbell to Balfour, No.96, 19.12.18; FO 608/218, 786/2/2, Knatchbull-Hugessen to Sperling, private, 6.2.19.

right, Italy and Britain should accuse Ethiopia of being a menace to the peace of this part of Africa, substantiating our case by complete lists of the raids for the past ten years, prove the gun running case to the hilt; prove they are slave traders and allow freely the trade in alcohol -- the Greeks distill freely thousands of gallons of liquid poison; show that the whole Galla race are merely serfs, and the others Slaves; that there is no justice for Europeans, no freedom of trade, and so forth, and then ask for a mandate \textit{sic} (not France) to take over responsibility for the country. They will then see that France can do nothing for them.

Thesiger, in the face of French intrigue and Ethiopian intransigence, was becoming convinced of the necessity for drastic solutions. Ethiopians were now talking of the "right of small nations to govern themselves", in the hope that France would protect them from Italy and Britain. Thesiger impressed upon them that they were not a small nation to be upheld, but one that required European tutelage so that its inability to govern itself did not become a source of danger to the rest of Africa.\footnote{FO 371/3496, Thesiger to Sperling, private, 8.4.19, extract.} This inability was emphasized by reports that Dej Kassa, son of Ras Seyoum, and Dej Amadi, brother of Ras Gugsa Wolye, were in revolt in the Tigré; that Kassa had declared himself Negus Tewodros of Tigré; that Lij Yasu was

\footnote{FO 371/3496, Thesiger to Curzon, No.25, 11.3.19.}
recruiting support among the Danakil of his father-in-law, Muhammad Abu Bakr; and that a Government expedition had mutinied.¹ At the Colonial Office E. Machtig wrote:

What with the Abyssinian helplessness and French intrigues, the position appears to have sunk enough that the place can not go on much longer as an independent concern. The intriguing and duplicity of the French Minister, who is presumably backed by the French Govt, is beyond words or comment: Italian-French relations will hardly benefit by these proceedings, to say nothing of our relations with France. Nothing could well be worse for our interests in the EAP and Somaliland than a French Prote. over Abyssinia.

Pichon, the French Foreign Minister, instructed de Coppet to concert with his colleagues, and he responded by drawing up an eleven point program of reform, unrivalled in its depth in recent times. The points included: the emancipation of slaves; the prohibition of the arms trade; the registration of distilleries; the reorganization of the court system and reformation of the prisons; the regularization of the collection of customs, taxes and tribute; the construction of public works; the establishment of new schools; and the selection of European

¹. FO 371/3496, FO memo with extract from Daily Telegraph, 4.4.19; FO memo of 12.4.19 with Parliamentary question by Major O'Neill, 9.4.19; FO 371/3499, Thesiger to Curzon, No. 24, 10.3.19, and No. 29, 19.3.19.

². CO 535/57, FO to CO, 5.3.19.
advisers to supervise the reforms. The points went farther than the 'Colli Scheme' on arms control, and Thesiger's reforms of August 1916, and the Foreign Office thought they were excellent -- on paper. Thesiger (and Southard, the United States Consul at Aden) thought that many of the reforms would be impossible to obtain, especially since France was not prepared to back up the demands with force (something Britain was also reluctant to do). Whether de Coppet's reforms were a sincere initiative is hard to say. He had urged Tafari to ask for French protection and advisers, and no doubt France would have accepted a mandate over Ethiopia if it had been offered. But France was unlikely to press for a mandate, in the face of Anglo-Italian opposition, and de Coppet probably hoped his reforms, or rather the discussion of his reforms, would postpone the Italian absorption of Ethiopia. His reforms were impractical, and Colli and Thesiger received no instructions to act on them. By the end of April Britain had not yet raised Ethiopia at Paris, "the intention being to postpone the evil day as long as possible", said Sperling. "A scheme has been prepared for the partial satisfaction of Italian claims in Africa.

1. FO 371/3496, Thesiger to Curzon, No.30, 26.3.19.
by the French and ourselves. The trouble over Fiume may make the Italians much more insistent in Africa ...."¹

Italy did not get Fiume and with the acceptance of the principle of mandates she was prevented from getting any of the former colonies of the Central Powers. Orlando, the Italian Prime Minister, could see no hope for the Italian claims in Africa, and he counted on a postponement of their discussion. He wrote on 2 February 1919:

However great an idea we may have of Italy's rights in colonial matters, the truth of the matter is that they form a relatively small part of the larger whole.²

However in Ethiopia it was not doubted that Italian expansion was imminent, and Campbell asked Allenby to send Sudan Government agents to the North to report on any Italian advances.³ The Foreign Office felt that since the chances of Italy gaining a protectorate over Ethiopia were slight, that she might try to obtain her ends by a

1. FO 371/3496, Sperling on Bentinck to Curzon, T.40, 21.4.19. The 26 April 1915 Treaty of London did not promise Italy Fiume (Rijeka), yet Italy claimed it in addition to Trieste and Trentino. Britain and France stood on the 1915 Treaty and refused to award Fiume to Italy.


3. Cf. infra, p.407, where the situation in the Tigré is discussed.
"coup de force". Britain was not overly concerned with the Tigré, but the Foreign Office was worried over Italian penetration at "Gondar and the country round Tsana ... which is of supreme importance for us to secure eventually in order to control the headwaters of the Nile".  

The belief that Italy would make a move in Ethiopia was strengthened by reports that she was aiding Dej Kassa in his rebellion in the Tigré; but discontent was so widespread that it could not all have originated with the Eritrean authorities. Allenby's agents from Gederef reported that Ras Seyoum was mobilizing against the rebels and that he had a good chance of winning them over, though there was widespread dislike of Ras Gugsa Area, Seyoum's cousin. In order to get a firm grip on the Government and deal with the unrest in the North, Tafari instigated a demand by the common soldiers on 4 May for the resignation of Hapta Giorgis. This was a sudden development, though there had long been conflict between Tafari and Hapta Giorgis, and the latter was accused of intriguing with Ras Demissie of Walega to replace Tafari

1. FO 371/3496, Notes on Allenby to Curzon, T.661, 27.4.19.
2. FO 371/3496, Allenby to Curzon, T.661, 27.4.19. Lij Yasu's strength was increasing and there was unrest at Gondar.
3. FO 371/3496, Allenby to Curzon, T.757, 11.5.19.
Ras Seyoum of Tigré
with Fit Taye. On 5 May the Fitwary massed his troops at Adis Alem, but the majority of the chiefs remained neutral. Zauditu declared her confidence in both Tafari and Hapta Giorgis, and she sent deputations to both chiefs to make peace. Tafari claimed that Hapta Giorgis wanted supreme power, and he was able to recruit his old enemy Dej Balcha of Sidamo, and the commander of the imperial cavalry, Dej Makonnen Wasani. Tafari was also joined by his faithful Hararis, but the Mahal Safari -- the Palace Guard -- remained loyal to the Empress. The army continued to demand Hapta Giorgis' trial, and on 9 May Zauditu forced him to present himself to the discontented troops. He invited them to his annual feast, which Tafari and Zauditu also attended. Tafari was reconciled with Hapta Giorgis, but it was thought to be only temporary. ¹ Hapta Giorgis had accused Tafari of exceeding his authority (Taitu's crime nine years earlier) in granting Bayard's concession, and of engineering the deposition of the Empress and himself. Most of the chiefs were opposed to Tafari, and Campbell thought that he would be deposed and at best exiled to Begamdir or

¹. FO 371/3496, Campbell to Curzon, T.49, 8.5.19, T.55 and No.34, 12.5.19.
Wollo. Curzon asked Balfour for instructions for Campbell, since Thesiger (and de Coppet) were in Paris for the discussion of the Italian claims. Balfour said Campbell and Colli should inform Zauditu and Hapta Giorgis that a fresh revolt would prejudice Ethiopia in the eyes of Europe, and that they should settle their differences peacably. The Abun threatened to excommunicate any traitors, and the atmosphere was improved with a further reconciliation on 20 June; but Hapta Giorgis, though willing to work with Tafari, still considered him to be "unreliable and treacherous". The quarrel exacerbated the dual control, and now all permits had to be signed by both the Regent and the Fitwary. This made even a modicum of government impossible, and Colli suggested that Zauditu form an Executive Council composed of Hapta Giorgis, Tafari, Kassa and Dej Hapta Mariam, the Finance Minister. Tafari's solution was admission to the

1. FO 371/3496, Campbell to Curzon, No.36, T.56 and T.57, 15.5.19; Curzon to Balfour, T.748, 22.5.19; Balfour to Curzon, T.933 and 940, 23 and 24.5.19.

2. FO 371/3496, Lawrance to Curzon, No.39, 30.5.19.

3. FO 371/3496, Campbell to Curzon, T.75, 21.6.19; Derby to Curzon, T.856, 6.7.19.

4. Hapta Mariam was Zauditu's adviser and uncle, FO 371/3496, Campbell to Curzon, No.50, 15.6.19.
League and European advisers. The British goal was a compromise that would keep Tafari in power and eliminate dual control. While Ethiopian 'conservatives' called for "capable ministers" (Hapta Giorgis, for example, wanted the return of the Council of twelve), the 'progressives' doubted whether Tafari could control even a truncated Council of four.¹

Tafari, no doubt, hoped that his position would be saved by the Ethiopian "congratulatory missions" that were then touring the European capitals. These missions were sent to congratulate the Allies on their victory, but they were also to make sure that the Ethiopian view of the future of the Horn was known in Europe. Tafari had wanted to head the missions, but Zauditu prevented him after the army threatened to mutiny.² Gān Mangasha Wube, future President of the Senate (1946 to 1957), was then chosen to head a mission comprised of men of low position, and Thesiger was afraid that they would be too easily influenced by de Coppet's offer of admission to the League, in preparation for a French mandate. The Italians were

¹ FO 371/3496, Campbell to Curzon, T:74, 20.6.19, No.55, 22.6.19, and T.78, 27.6.19.
² FO 371/3494, Thesiger to Curzon, No.23, 10.3.19.
also worried lest the mission exceed its limited authority to congratulate.¹

However in order to assure that the Tripartite Powers received equal consideration three separate missions were chosen to go to Europe. They were not diplomatic missions and they had no authority to negotiate, though had the opportunity arisen to gain admission to the Peace Conference or the League they would have certainly taken it. Their main intention was to show Europe that Ethiopia was not material for partition. They left Adis Ababa with de Coppet on 24 April, but only the Paris-bound group of Dej Walda Gabriel left on time. The mission to London, headed by Dej Nado,² and the mission to Rome, headed by Dej Getachu (son of Ras Abata), were detained in Jibuti on orders by the Governor Lauret. He claimed that there had been no room on the ship that had taken de Coppet and Walda Gabriel, and so they had to wait until

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1. FO 371/3494, Thesiger to Sperling, private; Imperiali to Curzon, 8.4.19.

2. It also included Ato Herui, Tafari's adviser, and Kantiba Gabru, Zauditu's courtier, former interpreter for the German Legation, and commander of the Arada Zabagnock -- the town guards. They were the best educated Ethiopians, Rey, op. cit., p.159.
12 May when they were picked up by an Italian ship. ¹

Reports in Le Matin that Ethiopia would ask for a protectorate caused consternation in Rome, which was not yet aware that it, as well as Paris, was to receive a mission from Ethiopia. Pichon stated that the missions merely had a ceremonial nature, ² and Le Temps, which reflected French Government opinion, remarked, according to Sperling, "That the right to choose a mandatory should be restricted to peoples capable of exercising the functions of sovereignty". Sperling added: "I am not sure that Abyssinia falls within that category". Tilley speculated: "It rather looks as if Abyssinia might be chosen as a propitiatory offering to Italy. The French after having talked of a French mandate would pose as making a great concession". ³

The Foreign Office was in doubt what to do with the

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¹ FO 371/3494, Bentinck to Curzon, T.41, 25.4.19, T.44, 29.4.19, and T.32, 25.4.19; Campbell to Curzon, T.59, 17.5.19; ADM to FO, 23.5.19. Boucoiran, the French chargé, later confessed that there had been room on the French ship, Campbell to Curzon, T.65, 4.6.19. Nado reached Italy on 23 May, Marseilles on 24 May, and Folkestone on 2 June 1919.

² FO 371/3494, Rodd to Curzon, T.332, 11.5.19; Derby to Curzon, T.709, 8.5.19; Rodd to Curzon, T.334, 11.5.19.

³ Notes on Rodd, T.334, loc cit.
Ethiopian delegation, but since Walda Gabriel had been presented to the President of the Republic on 13 May and Getachu had been presented to the King of Italy on 27 May, Britain could do no less.¹ On 12 June Dej Nado "wearing the native ceremonial dress" was presented to the King and Queen in the Throne Room of Buckingham Palace for a 25-minute audience. Nado's speech and Tafari's and Zauditu's letters expressed joy at the Allied victory and hopes for close relations in the future. The King replied:

It has been the constant care of my Government in the past to assist in upholding the independence and integrity of your country, which adjoins, and is closely related with, territories under my rule; and it is for this reason that I am anxious to see maintained on frontiers that order and peace which is essential to your welfare.

Tafari received appeals from Walda Gabriel, at the instigation of de Coppet, to come to Paris to represent Ethiopia. De Coppet promised that France would not cede Jibuti to an enemy of Ethiopia -- presumably Italy -- and

¹. FO 371/3494, Campbell to Curzon, T.53, 10.5.19; Derby to Curzon, No.526, 16.5.19.

². The speech was written by R.E.Synge of the FO, FO 371/3494, Dodds memo, 7.6.19; The Times, 13.6.19; Rey, op. cit., p.73.
he intimated that France would support Ethiopia's application to the League. Zauditu was now favourable to such a mission, and Tafari asked Campbell's advice. The Consul persuaded Tafari to wait for Tripartite permission before he went to Europe, and he promised that he would tell him when and if Ethiopia was to be discussed at the Peace Conference.¹ Tafari regarded de Coppet's messages not as an individual initiative, but as Quai d'Orsay policy, and he was shocked at the various rumours that Ethiopia was to be mandated to Italy, France or the United States.² Ras Kassa believed that Ethiopia would accept mixed tribunals, as in Egypt, in order to escape a mandate, but he would compromise no further. On 18 July Lord Derby at Paris received assurances from de Peretti de la Rocca, the head of the Africa Section of the Quai d'Orsay, that France had not urged the admission of Ethiopia to the League, and he doubted whether Ethiopia


could even carry out its Covenant. He was sure Italy would oppose admission, and France would concert with her allies in such a matter.¹

After a three-week visit to the United States,² Dej Nado left New York on 4 August and returned to Paris in order to be present when Ethiopia was discussed. There was a genuine anxiety in Ethiopia that the victorious allies would complete the partition of Africa at Ethiopia's expense. Ethiopia could not do much more than plead her case, and trust in the good will of the Allies. Good will, however, was getting in short supply in Paris. Italy had failed to get Fiume, and Sperling feared that Britain and France might feel moved to give Italy anything, even Ethiopia, "for a quiet life". He asked Mallet to impress upon the Delegation that Ethiopia was not covered by the 1915 Treaty, and that an Italian protectorate would

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1. FO 371/3496, Derby to Curzon, T.889, 18.7.19; FO 371/3497, Grahame to Curzon, No.720, 22.7.19. The Italian Government was opposed to Ethiopian admission to the League "for participation in the League's system of collective security would end Ethiopia's isolation and give to the country a perhaps irreversible guarantee of independence", Baer, op. cit., p.9.

2. FO 371/3494, Lindsay to Curzon, T.1231, and T.1234, 6.8.19, "the State Department rather wondered why they had come"; The Times 19.8.19.
mean "another match in the North African powder barrel".  
On 7 May Orlando unsuccessfully asked the Supreme Inter-
Allied Council to include Italy in the mandate system, for
"if a mandate constitutes a charge, she is ready to bear
her part of the responsibility; if on the contrary, there
are advantages attaching to a mandate, Italy is entitled
to participate in these advantages".  
This plea, like
the previous one for Fiume, contravened the 1915 Treaty
and was rejected. Since Ethiopia was not covered by this
treaty there was a good chance that she would escape
Italy's clutches. Yet Italy had suffered two disappoint-
ments, and Britain and France might not want to present
her with a third. The Council appointed a Colonial
Committee to discuss the Italian claims, and it met at the
Pavillon de Flore on 15 May 1919.  
Henry Simon, the
Colonial Minister, and M. Duchène, his Under-Secretary,
represented France; Lord Milner, the War Secretary,
Herbert Read, Assistant Under-Secretary at the Colonial

1. FO 608/219, 797/1/1, Sperling to Mallet, 9.5.19.

2. FO 371/4320, Report of the Colonial Committee, File
No.12598.

3. FO 608/219, 797/1/1, Minutes on File No.19055; W.G.
LXXI, 3, pp.890-1.
Office, and R. G. Vansittart, Secretary to the British Embassy, represented the United Kingdom; Silvio Crespi, the Minister of Supply, Giacomo De Martino, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,¹ and Renato Piacentini, Consul-General of the Colonial Ministry, represented Italy. Crespi produced a map containing rectifications in Libya, and a territorial connection between Eritrea and Benadir, but he said that Italy would not ask for compensation in North-East Africa if she received a mandate. Crespi recapitulated Italy's military, financial and economic sacrifices made during the war, and he stated that public opinion demanded increased living space and raw materials. Milner cautioned that the Italian claims went far beyond the provisions of Article 13 of the 1915 treaty and they tended to encircle Ethiopia, which, Simon added, would deprive France and Great Britain of their reversionary interests. Simon refused to cede Jibuti,² but he was more yielding over the

¹ Apparently both nobile Giacomo De Martino and Senatore Giacomo de Martino were governors of Somalia, but the Senatore also became Governor of Eritrea, while the nobile served in the Foreign Ministry.

² France had refused Italy's request for Jibuti in 1915 also, Baer, op. cit., p.13. Italy had always blamed France for thwarting Italian expansion in Ethiopia in the 19th century, Thompson and Adloff, op.cit., p.12.
Italian claims on the Tripoli-Tunis frontier. Milner clearly excluded Arabia and the Farsan Islands as outside the terms of reference, and refused to discuss the subject. Simon and Milner agreed that the lands claimed by Italy (but for the notable exception of Jubaland) would not help Italy's self-proclaimed policy of emigration, but De Martino held that a great Power needed a large area, unencumbered by other great Powers, to work in. Milner was clearly opposed to the Italian demands, especially since Britain was asked to make concessions that far exceeded those made by France.1 After the meeting Milner lunched with Crespi and De Martino, and he warned them that they were mistaken to press for Jibuti. Later he told Orlando that Britain would accept an Egypt-Cyrenaica rectification and the cession of Jubaland, but would not cede British Somaliland.2

With the start of the discussions on the Italian claims Balfour requested Sperling's attendance, and Curzon sent over Thesiger to Paris as well.3 Despite the

1. Louis, ubi supra, (cit. Milner PP. memo, 30.5.19.
3. FO 371/3496, Curzon to Balfour, No.3061, 15.5.19; Balfour to Curzon, T.891, 16.5.19.
Admiralty's objections to the cession of British Somaliland, Lloyd George was willing to sacrifice it if France made some concession. However he was adamantly opposed by Milner, the "apostle of imperial unity", who feared that Britain was giving up too much. He felt that Jubaland was economically valuable, and that the cession of Somaliland "involves a weakening of our strategic position at one of the 'nodal points' of the Empire, and will have far reaching effects upon the future of both Abyssinia and Arabia". He felt that Italy was out to absorb Ethiopia, and that an Italian empire in North-East Africa "would cut right into the heart of that great sphere of British influence extending from the centre of East Africa through the Sudan, Egypt, Arabia and the Persian Gulf to India, which is the real British 'Empire'". He particularly stressed the importance of the "Headwaters of the Blue Nile, upon which the cotton cultivation of the Sudan ... absolutely depends"; and

1. Reiterated in FO 371/4320, ADM to FO, No.62094, 17.5.19 and FO 608/215, 676/1/1, FO 3150, 19.5.19.


western British Somaliland, which was needed for the supply of Aden and for its oil.\footnote{Ibid., Milner to Lloyd George, 16.5.19.} Milner's 'global strategy' was based on two premises: 1) that Italy would penetrate Ethiopia once she "got possession of all her accesses to the sea"; and 2) that this "would certainly mean trouble for us in the future". Certainly Italian aggression would have been facilitated by the acquisition of the entire Somali Coast, but Milner's concern for imperial security and his emphasis on the Abai waters seem exaggerated.

Regardless of Milner's arguments, at a meeting of the Supreme Council on 18 May Lloyd George was still willing to give British Somaliland for a settlement; but "if France could not give up something here \[in Somaliland\], neither could we", he told Clemenceau. "He thought, however, something might be done even in that quarter". But nothing was done: "Directly the question was raised, the French said they could not live without Djibouti, and the British said much the same about their Asia".\footnote{Ibid., P.596, a reference to differences over the Anglo-French partition of the Middle East.}

The Colonial Committee took up the question on 19
May, with Fournal, Secretary-General of the Colonial Committee on War Questions; Merlin, Governor-General of French West Africa; and de Peretti de la Rocca joining the French Delegation. ¹ Simon said that no slight rectification in French Somaliland would satisfy Italy, and that no French Government would cede Jibuti because it was needed for a port-of-call, and because they did not want to lose their interest in Ethiopia. Simon agreed to rectifications in Tripoli and Tibesti, and Milner agreed to cede Jaghbub, but he refused to cede more than 31,000 square miles of the Juba Valley (including Kismayu). He saw no reason to give way on Somaliland, especially now that France had refused Jibuti. Crespi offered France a free zone and a coaling station at Jibuti, but Simon said France, as well as Britain, could not allow Italian preponderance in Ethiopia.

Italy had nothing to offer France in return for Jibuti, and she relied on Britain to back her claim for a territorial connection between Eritrea and Benadir. Colosimo, the Colonial Minister, urged Rodd on 21 May to press the Foreign Office, but it was unreceptive.

¹. FO 608/219, 803/2/1, 19.5.19; Hess, ubi supra, p.124.
The argument would equally apply in our own case, but we are not asking Italy to cede Benadir so that we may join up Somaliland and British East Africa.

Milner was quite pleased that France had been so unyielding on the subject of Jibuti, since it enabled him to refuse British Somaliland. On the subject of Ethiopia he wrote:

As long as the fate of Abyssinia, which is one of the most serious international problems of the near future, remains undecided, neither France, Italy nor England can be expected to give up any position now held by them, from which they can exercise an influence on the future of that country .... We ... have one absolutely vital interest; it is to safeguard the headwaters of the Blue Nile .... When the time comes to liquidate the Abyssinian situation, we must be in a position to stipulate for the security of this water supply.

In further meetings of the Colonial Committee on 28 and 30 May, Crespi continued to press for Jibuti, but, of course, without success. He declined to accept France's Tibesti rectification, but he accepted Britain's Jubaland offer, though he wanted more territory there. Colosimo

1. FO 608/219, 797/1/1, Sperling on Rodd to Curzon, T.358, 21.5.19.


3. FO 608/219, 803/2/1, FO 19055, no date.

4. The present Chad-Libya border.
could not see the value of British Somaliland without the French enclave so the Italians dropped their request for more of the Somali Coast,¹ but they again appealed for the mandate over Togoland. Milner pointed out that the 1915 treaty provided that Italy could receive a mandate or border rectifications, but not both,² but De Martino pleaded for a liberal interpretation of the treaty, especially since Russia was no longer a party.³ In a heated exchange Simon said that since Italy had taken no part in the conquest of the German colonies she had no right to their administration. De Martino pointed out that 50,000 Italian troops in Tripoli had guarded the Tunisian border for France, and De Peretti suggested that French troops could have been said to have guarded the Tripolitanian border for Italy. Tempers cooled, but the Italians could not convince the French that Togoland was

¹ Hess, ubi supra, p.125.

² Article XIII of the 26 April 1915 Treaty of London (FO 93/48, No.56) allowed Italy compensation on the borders of her colonies, "Dans le cas où la France et la Grande-Bretagne augmenteraient leurs domaines coloniaux d'Afrique aux dépens de l'Allemagne". It made no mention of mandates.

³ He was using the argument of the Società Africana d'Italia, perhaps an indication of the power and influence of the Italian colonial party, Pigli, op. cit., pp.91-2.
"equitable compensation" for Italy's failure to get Somaliland. Somaliland was rejected because it was an excessive demand, said Duchêne; so was Togoland. Italy must ask for rectifications in Libya and Jubaland, or ask for a mandate, not both.¹

The Report of the Colonial Committee to the Supreme Council stated that: 1) Italy had accepted a reduced Jubaland (31,000 sq. mi. instead of 65,000); 2) Italy had accepted a revised Cyrenaica-Egypt border; 3) France and Britain would not cede Somaliland; 4) Italy rejected rectifications in Tibesti and South and West Tripoli; 5) Italy would like the mandate for Togoland; 6) France and Britain had refused Togoland as contrary to Article 13 of the 1915 treaty; and 7) France was willing to cede more land in Tunis to Libya.² Sperling suggested that the Italian claims to Tibesti should be opposed by Britain if the satisfaction of these claims meant that Italy would

¹ Presumably if Italy received a mandate she would not want rectifications as well, but the 1915 treaty did not promise her a mandate nor prohibit her from getting one. In practice she wanted a mandate and rectifications, but Britain and France were bound not to agree, so they did not.

² FO 608/219, 803/2a/1, FO 19055, and FO 371/4320, File No.12598.
drop her demand for Jibuti, since Italy had a better chance than Britain of getting France out of the Horn. Vansittart agreed, but he felt "if there is a chance of keeping Italy sweet generally and getting her out of inconvenient claims elsewhere by an African settlement, we couldn't on grounds of general policy hold it up because agreement wd. lighten pressure on the French in this particular quarter". In order to break the deadlock in the Colonial Committee Thesiger suggested that France keep the Jibuti enclave, but cede the hinterland and the railroad to Britain and withdraw her Legation. Britain would then cede the land north of Tajura to Italy and keep the rest herself. France would rid herself of an unprofitable territory in the Somali hinterland, and Britain would have compensation in hand for Italy. However he overlooked the fact that France was not prepared to abdicate her interest in Ethiopia. Britain could not have seriously contemplated the acquisition of Jibuti, since she was never prepared to give anything for it. Gambia might have interested the French, but Britain

1. A reference to Italian claims to Fiume and probably Asia Minor.
2. FO 608/219, 797/1/1, Sperling to Vansittart, 5.7.19.
3. FO 608/218, 786/2/1, Thesiger to Hardinge, 29.5.19.
did not want to pay that price. The quid pro quo would have had to be almost irresistible for France to give up her interests in Ethiopia, but Britain never offered France anything.

The report of the Colonial Committee ended the threat from Paris to Ethiopian independence, and the Tripartite Legations could then concentrate their efforts on reform. Zauditu believed it was "God's Will" that there were bad governments all over the world, and that Ethiopia was no worse off than the rest of humanity.1 Campbell urged her to reorganize the Government on the lines of Colli's four-man Executive Council, and a meeting of chiefs was called for August 6. Because of Dej Kassa's revolt in the Tigré and anti-Tafari agitation in Adis Ababa not all chiefs came to the meeting.2 Those that did come held daily meetings, and they seemed determined to recall some of the former Council of Ministers to join Tafari, Hapta

1. FO 371/3497, Campbell to Curzon, No. 57, 3.7.19; FO 371/3496, Derby to Curzon, T. 856, 6.7.19.

2. FO 371/3497, Campbell to Curzon, T. 106, 4.8.19, T. 107, 8.8.19, and T. 100, 26.7.19. Seyoum stayed in the Tigré, and Gugsa Wolye was not invited; Zauditu preferred to "admire him at a distance".
Giorgis and Kassa. Campbell wrote:

Ras Tafari has even asked me for a book on the English constitution and I have lent him Lord Courteney's work, but a copy of the Magna Charta would have been more to the point.

Tafari was desperately trying to recruit support as more chiefs deserted him, and rumours developed of Kassa or Taye being named Regent. There was little opportunity now for Tafari to go to France, or to send a mission to the Peace Conference. 2 On 8 August the chiefs forced the acceptance of a new Council which included: Dej Katama ("an ignoramus"), returning as Minister of the Interior; Dej Walda Gabriel, as Minister of Police; Ato Walda Mascal, as Minister of the Pen; Dej Hapta Mariam, as Minister of Finance; Alaka Stephanos, as Minister of Justice; and Hapta Giorgis, as Minister of War. Tafari had lost favour with the chiefs, 3 and the soldiers were crying: "Endure till the end of the rainy season [September] and Lij Yasu will then return". 4

1. FO 371/3497, Campbell to Curzon, No.73, 3.8.19.
4. FO 371/3497, Campbell to Curzon, No.75, 10.8.19; The Times, 1.9.19.
indictment against Tafari included excessive friendliness to the French and with Catholics -- reference to the Bayard concession and to the fact that many of Tafari's young advisers had been educated in Catholic mission schools. The European Legations protested directly to Zauditu on 23 August against incidents of vandalism and robbery in the capital. The demarche was signed by Campbell, Colli, Boucoiran for France, Vinogradov for Russia and Hadjioannou for Greece, and it asked for: 1) a Minister of an authority to deal with the Legations; 2) the reorganization of the police; 3) the expulsion or arrest of all criminals in Adis Ababa; and 4) the disarmament of all unauthorized individuals.¹

Dodds, in London, argued for strong British support for Tafari in order to save Ethiopia from dissolution: "The preservation of the integrity of Ethiopia is synonymous with the preservation of the present regime". The difficulty was to support Tafari without tainting him with the sin of "selling Ethiopia to the foreigners". Dodds suggested that Britain should cede Zeila in return.

¹. FO 371/3497, Campbell to Curzon, No.83, 23.8.19. A.W. Lidderdale noted: "this despatch gives strong evidence of the unfitness of Abyssinia to join the League of Nations".
for an agreement on Lake Tsana.

In short, we wish to play with the waters of Lake Tsana, while the Abyssinians wish to play with a port. By the exchange we should enjoy mutual satisfaction.

If a railroad could be built from Zeila, the value of Jibuti would fall and France might be induced to leave the Somali Coast. Dodds was opposed both to a French presence in the Horn, and to the partition of Ethiopia; the only alternative was a strong Ethiopia under Ras Tafari. The Admiralty agreed:

As long as we retain Berbera and the adjacent hinterland, the possession of Zeila and a strip to connect it with Abyssinia is not of great importance. If Zeila under these conditions would compete with Jibuti so much the better.

But at this point the situation in Adis Ababa began to improve and British territorial sacrifices therefore seemed unwarranted. Zauditu, at the end of the rainy season in September and in the face of European dissatisfaction

1. FO 371/3497, Dodds memo, 19.8.19.
2. This would not effect the arms trade if Ethiopia had her own port.
3. ADM 1/8559, Memo on a file first opened on 17.5.19. Also cf. The Times, 9.10.19, citing an article in the Corriere d'Italia, 8.10.19.
4. The plan was tried in 1922 with no success, Baer, op. cit., p.14.
and probably personal dislike of the revolutionary situation, called the chiefs to the Ghebbi and declared that she and Tafari were as mother and son and she gave him power to govern the country. Then summoning her uncle, Dejaz Hapta Mariam, the newly appointed Minister of Finance and an adversary of the Ras, she pointed to Ras Tafari and said to her uncle 'There is your Master'.

This calmed matters somewhat, and a few days later she called the chiefs again and announced that Hapta Giorgis was her personal representative -- thus "dividing the honours". By 20 September several rich men, including the Fitwary and Ato Desta, the State Archivist, had deposited large sums in the Bank of Abyssinia to show their confidence in the sagging economy; Tafari dismissed his Hararis; seven thieves were publicly executed; tedj shops and Greek distilleries were closed down; the Arada Zabagnock -- the town guards -- were reorganized; and all non-Adis Ababa residents were expelled from the capital. The European démarche, as in September 1916, had had the desired effect. On 21 September a 21 man National Council, incorporating the already mentioned Ministers, was named, with a priest, Alaka Melaka Worq, as President.

1. FO 371/3497, Campbell to Curzon, T.127, 8.9.19, and No.94, 13.9.19.
At the same time news came that Seyoum had arrested his son Kassa, and that old Negus Mikael had died in captivity.\(^1\)

It was hoped that Ethiopia was in for a breathing spell, and that British prestige, improved since the evacuation of Gaddaduma, would continue to rise. Tafari felt himself in a stronger position after Mascal at the end of September, but he said to Dodds, on 9 October, that his power to reform was very limited. He confessed that the talk of joining the League was a bluff, a desperate attempt to ward off a mandate.\(^2\) Zauditu was also afraid of Ethiopia being mandated, and she sent her secretary Ato Saleh, albeit without official credentials, to ask the French to prevent Ethiopia being made a mandate.

Lidderdale noted:

> The idea of a mandate may be useful as a bogey to frighten the Abyssinians with, but it would be going a long way beyond the principles laid down in the Covenant of the League to subject a non-enemy country to a mandate.

And Sperling added:

> Mutual jealousies would make it impossible for France, Great Britain or Italy to take a mandate; no second rate Power could administer a country like Abyssinia with success; the

\(^{1}\) FO 371/3497, Campbell to Curzon, No. 101, 21.9.19.

\(^{2}\) FO 371/3497, Dodds to Sperling, private, 9.10.19.
U.S. would probably refuse, even if we could trust them not to pursue their own interests, which I do not.

The mandate was indeed a bogey, devised by de Coppet to persuade Ethiopia to undertake French patronage and prevent the Italians from obtaining a protectorate. In the end he frightened the Ethiopians enough for them to accept the European representation of 23 August 1919, and to carry out its points within three weeks. The protest halted the disintegration of Ethiopian politics, and it brought a degree of stability to Adis Ababa. The imposition of reforms implied that Ethiopia was powerless to resist European pressure, yet the Powers refused to force major reforms on Ethiopia. They preferred Ethiopia to reform herself, but this, to the Adis Ababa Government, was a long unnecessary task. The reform of her ancient institutions required endless negotiations with the many power factions -- Church, chiefs, army and court -- and the Ethiopian situation was never peaceful enough to allow for prolonged discussion. Ethiopia was frightened to be sure, but there were enough proud, arrogant chiefs, who were sufficiently misinformed about, or unimpressed by,

1. FO 371/3497, Notes on Dodds to Curzon, T.144, 14.10.19, and No.112, 21.10.19.
European might, to oppose the European solutions to Ethiopia's problems. Furthermore, the Tripartite Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, as opposed to the Foreign Office clerks and the Ministers Plenipotentiary, were not convinced of the need to deal with Ethiopia at all. Ethiopia was a non-problem compared to the questions of European frontiers and security.

With the work of the Colonial Committee completed Balfour did not think that the question of Ethiopia would arise again, and Campbell told Tafari so. The new Italian Colonial Minister, Tomasso Tittoni, and his Secretary-General, commendatore Baccari, praised Britain's efforts to help Italy, and they realized it was useless to pursue the Jibuti question further, especially since the arms traffic question was virtually solved. This was due to Anglo-French discussions earlier in the year. Pichon, the French Foreign Minister, agreed in February 1919 to send De Peretti de la Rocca, the Quai d'Orsay African expert, to discuss the matter with Foreign Office negotiators, who agreed on a revision of the Brussels Act. The proposed arms convention was, inter alia, to remove

1. FO 371/3496, Balfour to Curzon, No.1420, 26 July 1919; Curzon to Campbell, T.70, 30.7.19.
Ethiopia from the benefits she derived from Article VIII of the Brussels Act, and to put her in the prohibited area. The new Convention was supposed to prevent war stocks being sold (Article 3); to provide for the destruction of old arms before new ones were sold (Article 4); to prohibit the export of arms to Africa, except to Algeria and South Africa (Article 8); to prohibit the sale of arms in Africa (Article 10); and to authorize the League to supervise the provisions of the Convention (Articles 1 and 26). The Foreign Office negotiators, Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen and Mr. Mackin, could not act on these proposals since the Cabinet had not yet decided whether to sell surplus arms or not. An interdepartmental conference was held at the India Office on 24 February 1919 under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Holderness, which included Sperling, Shuckburgh of the India Office, as well as representatives of the Colonial and War Offices, the Government of India, the Ministry of Munitions, the Treasury, the Department of Overseas Trade and the Board of Trade. Sperling was afraid that France would not

1. FO 608/217, FO memo 162, 3.1.19, encl. Wingate to Curzon, T.12, 3.1.19; Forbes Adam to Curzon, 30.1.19, with draft copy; FO 371/3468, Balfour to Wingate, T.1555, 22.12.18.
accept a revision of the Draft Convention, but the Ministry of Munitions, which had already signed several arms contracts, wanted Article 3 revised to allow for contracts negotiated before the cessation of hostilities.\(^1\) Holderness accepted this, and the War Cabinet, on 6 March, upheld his decision and further deferred to the Ministry of Munitions' wish to omit the obligation to destroy old weapons in Article 4. On Bonar Law's suggestion they agreed to limit the Convention to small arms and ammunition.\(^2\)

The "General Convention for the control in Trade in Arms and Ammunition", which was signed in Paris on 10 September 1919,\(^3\) was the realization of the 'Colli Scheme'. However the qualifications it included rendered it practically useless in the Ethiopian context. Smuggling was the main avenue for the introduction of arms, and there was no practical way of halting clandestine importing

\(^1\) FO 608/217, Pichon to Curzon, 14.2.19; FO memo 776, 20.2.19, with minutes; IO L/P&S/10, memo, 24.2.19.

\(^2\) FO 608/217, War Cabinet memo, No.542, minutes of 6.3.19.

of arms. Jibuti was forbidden to import arms (Article 2), and there were provisions for land and sea surveillance (Article 3 and 4), but the arms trade continued to be a problem for the next ten years.

Balfour had not wanted the Tripartite Powers to discuss Ethiopia -- the arms trade, reforms, and partition -- without the concurrence of the League. However the complexity of the compensation negotiations, and the unlikelihood that the United States Senate would ratify the Versailles treaty put the whole Italo-Ethiopian problem on a new footing. Furthermore, Italy's territorial claims in Egypt, Jubaland and Arabia were much wider than expected and this gave Curzon, who became Foreign Secretary in November 1919, the opportunity to postpone the compensation question while he consulted the Colonial Office and Thesiger. The Italians had made a plea for additional territory in North-West Jubaland, and they suggested that Ethiopia be invited to adhere to the Tripartite Agreement with the spheres more specifically defined. The Foreign Office did not object to Ethiopia's adherence to the Tripartite Agreement, but it thought that a definition of the spheres would make her

1. FO 371/4320, Crowe to Hardinge, 17.11.19.
too suspicious. It also thought that Ethiopia would be suspicious of the formal exchange of notes between Milner and Tittoni, embodying private agreements on Jubaland.\(^1\) Imperiali asked Hardinge on 4 November if the Ethiopian question was to be settled in London along with the Jubaland agreements, but Sperling and Milner stressed the need not only to complete the territorial exchanges before discussing the future of Ethiopia, but also to obtain a definite recognition by Italy of Britain's protectorate over Egypt.\(^2\)

The Foreign Office however finally agreed to accept an Italian delegation to discuss Ethiopia, and signori Baccari, Piacentini and Catastini arrived in London on 12 November and met at the Foreign Office on the 17th. They urged Britain to "adopt a policy of efficacious collaboration for the progress of Abyssinia"; the Powers would guarantee her independence and she would agree to benefit from the development that the Powers would provide.


2. FO 371/4320, Notes by Sperling, 10.10.19, Milner, 14.10.19, and Hardinge, 4.11.19, File No.12598.
On more practical matters Italy offered Britain help in acquiring the coveted Lake Tsana barrage along with a territorial corridor "within the Italian sphere of influence". In return Italy wanted support to build a railway from Eritrea to Benadir through a corridor west of Adis Ababa. She also demanded exclusive economic interest in West Ethiopia and in her prospective railway district. The Tripartite Powers would maintain order by concerting, and Adis Ababa would be excluded from any one Power's influence.  

The Italian Government were originally anxious to pursue these and other talks on compensation because they wanted to make capital before their elections. But by the time the discussion had gotten under way the elections were over, and the sense of urgency disappeared. The Italian delegation returned to Rome unsatisfied, and the British Cabinet decided to drop the negotiations without giving a reply.  

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2. FO 371/4320, Crowe to Hardinge, 19.11.19; Baer, loc. cit; "Seeing no threat from Ethiopia and no reason at the time to curry Italian favour, the British followed their usual practice of ignoring Italian demands until they served some British purpose".
that since the compensation questions were so far-reaching, and that since further consultations were necessary, that there would be no point in pursuing the talks. It would be best, the Foreign Office suggested, to wait until all territorial matters were concluded before talks on Ethiopia and Jubaland were resumed. ¹ Italy continued to agitate for a sweeping territorial settlement; the Colonial Congress at Naples in January 1920 and the Geographical and Commercial Exploration Society of Milan voiced the colonial party's demands for Kassala, Somaliland, Jubaland, the Farsan Islands and Yemen, as well as for the denunciation of the Tripartite Agreement and for Italian domination of Ethiopia. ² Sperling commented: "The main point to remember is that, we are prepared to discharge our obligations to the satisfaction of Italy, while France is not. Jibuti, which is the apple of the Italian eye, being absolutely refused". Though Tittoni proclaimed that "'the integrity of the Ethiopian Empire [remains] the basis of our policy'", his demands for Kassala, Tokar and

¹ FO 371/4320, Curzon to Imperiali, 25.11.19; Milner and Scialoja agreed in April 1920 to settle Jubaland after all other Peace Conference questions, Villari, loc. cit.

² FO 371/4320, File No.12598/168856, no date; The Times, 6.1.20.
and an outlet on the Atbara" (meaningless since it was not navigable) smacked of expansionism with a vengeance.¹

Curzon, in a talk with Imperiali, agreed to reopen the Tsana talks, and Sperling met with Baccari on 25 February 1920. He told him there was no room for concessions, not even of Britain's economic interests, without prejudicing the interests of Egypt, the Sudan and the British companies. He told Baccari the next day that Britain's interest in the Nile was territorial as well as hydraulic; and that there was no prospect of exclusive Italian economic interest in West Ethiopia.²

The difficulty arose from sections 'a' and 'b' of Article IV of the Tripartite Agreement, which safeguarded the "interests of Great Britain and Egypt in the Nile Basin" and which also safeguarded "the interests of Italy in Ethiopia as regards Erythraea and Somaliland ... with reference to ... the territorial connection between them to the west of Adis Ababa".

The practical application of these two paragraphs is a matter of great difficulty, because it is not possible to lay down a passage west of Adis Ababa from Erythraea in the north

1. FO 371/4320, Ibid; The Times, 8.1.20.

2. FO 371/4320, CO to FO, Secret, 24.2.20, with Sperling to Baccari, 26.2.20.
to Somaliland in the south without passing through the Nile Basin....

Sperling maintained, on a close perusal of Anglo-Italian negotiations from 1903 to 1919, that Italy had recognized Britain's territorial as well as hydraulic interest in the Blue Nile basin, and that Italy's claim to Lake Tsana and the western provinces of Ethiopia was inadmissable. Britain was not ready to sign away her rights and be at the mercy of Italian expansion for the sake of the barrage. The Italian Government may have been insecure and "in bad odour at the Peace Conference", but Britain rejected the Italian offers of November 1919 because they meant abdicating her carefully built up position in Ethiopia.

By the end of 1919 the threat to the independence of Ethiopia was gone, but in all other matters Ethiopian affairs were much the same. Sayyid Muhammad was no longer a great problem, and Britain and Ethiopia had cooperated to patrol the southern border. The border problems were not solved however; this would only come with increased supervision by the Ethiopian and colonial


2. Jones and Monroe, op. cit., p.162.
authorities. British trade took the field as an aggressive counter-part to Italian and French firms. These firms did not, however, make spectacular progress, and they were hampered by trade restrictions at Jibuti and on the railroad. The French presence at Jibuti, with its bearing on the arms trade, emphasized the need for Britain to buy out France. However Britain had nothing to offer her, and the French were not prepared to give up their interests in Ethiopia. The Arms Convention of 10 September 1919 went some way to solve the arms traffic problem, but it would not be as effective with France still on the Somali Coast.

The Italian claims in Africa intended to make Italy a great colonial Power and to transform her African holdings into a profitable empire. Her claims were excessive and unreasonable, and Britain and France saw no reason to honour them. She had only been promised rectifications, and her attempts to acquire whole colonies, and, in the case of Ethiopia, an independent country, were outside the terms of reference of the 1915 Treaty. Milner, who was overly concerned with imperial security, and Simon, who refused to budge over Jibuti, shattered Italy's dreams, and she came out only with an enlarged Libya and Benadir. The Entente representatives at Adis Ababa spent much time
in formulating plans for the reform, partition and reorganization of Ethiopia, but the negotiators at Paris were not impressed with necessity to parcel out Ethiopia. The Ethiopian polity had not regained stability in the tenth year since Menelik's virtual abdication, and it did not then seem likely to do so in the near future. However by 1919 Tafari had a stronger hold on the Government and he was able to meet each challenge to his authority with decision. Ethiopia's attempt to gain admission to the Peace Conference and the League of Nations was thwarted, but by the end of 1919 the major threat to her existence -- partition -- had been defeated, and she could turn her attention towards internal affairs.
Conclusion and Epilogue

Ethiopia survived the Lij Yasu debacle thanks to her largely unappreciated ability to weather civil strife without succumbing to anarchy. The Ethiopian political system, chaotic as it might seem to western observers, was well adapted to absorb an amount of internal conflict which would have totally wrecked a more sophisticated system. Ethiopia survived the First World War as a sovereign state due in part to the conflicts between the Tripartite Powers, and in part to her own reputation as a military power. Thus Ethiopian independence was safeguarded by her own stalwart vigilance and diplomatic skill, coupled with a European prejudice against military intervention. It is not helpful to view Ethiopian history as an extension of European foreign affairs, nor is it wise to blind oneself to the fact that Ethiopia's destiny was in large part overseen, if not controlled, by the European limítrophe Powers. Had there been an anti-European reaction in Ethiopia, which had combined the fanaticism of Sayyid Muhammad or the Mahdiya, with the tactical ability of Menelik, then European intervention would have been necessary. Very likely it would have been disastrous to both sides. However there was no such problem, and Ethiopian affairs played a small part even in the policy
of Italy, which of the Tripartite Powers was most interested in Ethiopia. Ethiopia did not deserve the solutions that 'imperialists', with little appreciation of the wider context, prescribed.

Great Britain's long term problems were her desires to safeguard the headwaters of the Blue Nile and to maintain Ethiopian independence. These were connected, since a strong Ethiopia was the best defence against a threat to the Nile and the Suez Canal, as a strong Turkey was once thought to be the best defence of the Straits and the route to India. Apart from Britain's commitment to support the independence of sovereign states, Ethiopia was important to her to protect the right bank of the Nile and the left bank of the Red Sea route to India. At the end of the First World War, with the collapse of Germany and Russia, and the weakening of France and Italy, the potential threat to the route to India was not so great. Therefore the Suez Canal, Egypt and the Nile - the keys to India - seemed for a time less important;\(^1\) and in particular, Lake Tsana and the Abai system shared in this downgrading of importance. By 1935 even Ethiopian independence could be written off by Britain, in the hope that it would satisfy Italy and safeguard European peace.

\(^1\) Gallagher, \textit{ubi supra}, p. 10.
The immediate danger to Britain during the World War was not that she would lose her option on the Blue Nile waters (though this was implied), but that Ethiopia would declare herself for the Central Powers - or at least intensify her anti-Allied policy. Ethiopia's military reputation, against Turco-Egyptians, Mahdists and Italians alike, was considerable; and no doubt Ethiopian intervention in the lightly held Sudan, or in Sayyid Muhammad's Somaliland, or in hardpressed Aden and B.E.A., would have been troublesome if not disastrous. Britain could do little to prevent a Jihad by Lij Yasu unless she could obtain indigenous support. She could not easily bribe the Ethiopians, since Eritrea and Jibuti, the two areas most coveted by Ethiopia, were in other hands. However the uncertainty of the European military situation prevented Ethiopia from committing herself to one side or the other. She would never join a possible loser; and she lived up to Sir Edward Grey's dictum that "Diplomacy in war is futile."

1. The Sudan, except for Darfur, where 'Ali Dinar renounced his allegiance to the Government, was remarkably quiet during the War, Theobald, op. cit., pp. 138, 150; Sudan Handbook, pp. 170-1.

2. It is doubtful whether Yasu would have had much support for an attack other than on Eritrea or Jibuti, and except for Tafari's memorandum (supra, Ch. IV, p. 1) there is little hard evidence that he contemplated invasions of British territory.
without military success to back it."¹ What saved the Allies was that "German diplomacy was worse than that of the Allies".² Without the considerable Turco-German propaganda effort (whose effect was questionable), the Allies might have been less sensitive to Yasu's movements, and he might have succeeded in his designs. The job of the Shoan conspirators was made considerably easier by the Allied démarche of 12 September 1916, and it can be argued that the activities of the Central Powers' propaganda machine contributed to the awareness of the Allied Legations and indirectly caused Lij Yasu's downfall.

Lij Yasu is often looked upon as an anomaly in Ethiopian history, or as one who was totally debauched by self-seeking Muslim advisers. That there are these elements in Yasu's character is undeniable, but one must acknowledge that there are logical historical reasons for his actions. The Ethiopian throne had, since before the Zamana Masafint - the 'Era of the Princes' - been challenged by the Galla Muslims, and many an Emperor had come to terms with them by marrying into Galla families. Furthermore the conflict between the Church and the Throne had been endemic in

¹. Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 290.
Ethiopian history. On two occasions the throne had attempted to change the official religion of the State; and even a fervent Christian like Tewodros had attacked the position of the Church. Yasu attempted to carry this one step further by attacking not only the Church (like Tewodros) and subverting Coptic Christianity (like Susneyos and Za Dengel), but Christianity as the state religion. It was thought at the time that Muslims outnumbered Christians in Ethiopia, and a Muslim-pagan alliance with Royal support - would have made Yasu the strongest ruler in the Horn of Africa. But why did he find this necessary? Yasu, though Menelik's grandson, was ethnically a Galla, a Wollo and a Muslim. Power in Ethiopia was highland, Shoan and Christian. He could have been accepted as a Christian, but he would never have been considered a Shoan highlander; so with the hope of anti-Shoan and anti-Christian support he tried to effect a 'cultural revolution'. This policy gradually evolved, and even on the eve of his overthrow, Yasu was probably unclear on elements of this 'revolution'. Though he acted and dressed in Muslim fashion, there is little hard evidence that Yasu underwent a canonical conversion to Islam; and although he was in contact with Sayyid Muhammad and 'Ali Sa'id Pasha, there is less evidence that he intended to extend his Jihād to the
adjacent colonial territories. No doubt, had he had his way, Yasu would have considerably reduced the influence of Shoa and the Church in Ethiopia, but the other accusations must wait for more proof.

Lij Yasu's reign, though outshone by those of Menelik and Haile Selassie, has some importance in modern Ethiopian history. The conflict between Yasu, the reactionary and the revolutionary, and Tafari, the traditionalist and the progressive, illustrates the contradictions and complexities implicit in the emergence of a 'medieval' state into the twentieth century. Perhaps Ethiopia was not prepared for her debut, and the expectations of her leaders and her European neighbours led to frustration and confusion.

1909 to 1919 also marks the period halfway between Adua and the Fascist conquest, and it includes the first revanchist agitation by Italy. It is the low point of national strength, when Menelik's legacy is squandered in internecine strife. Tafari would take Ethiopia from the nadir of political chaos to the threshold of unity and progress only to be crushed by European aggression. Though this period had considerable intrinsic interest - Yasu's Muslim policy is a bizarre episode with wide implications - it is more important as a transition; an epilogue to
Menelik's story, and an introduction to Haile Selassie's story.

The Tripartite Powers were successful in their attempt to remove Yasu and to thwart the threat of the Central Powers in the Horn of Africa - though it must be emphasized that they were at the mercy of the Shoan conspirators. The Tripartite Powers were united on the need to depose Yasu, but their co-operation on other matters was minimal. This is not surprising since the aims of their policies conflicted. British policy had been 'peaceful penetration' - i.e. to establish commercial and diplomatic links with the North and West so that, when the inevitable break-up of Ethiopia arrived, Britain would have a solid claim to the areas that affected British imperial security. Britain had no desire to precipitate the break-up, and she worked to strengthen the Ethiopian authorities. It was only when the internal upheavals of 1916-7 threatened to destroy Ethiopia that Britain made anything like a plan to intervene.

Ethiopia was not expected to survive the World War intact, and Italy was claiming Ethiopia as war-time compensation for her aid. Britain needed to be prepared for the partition of
Ethiopia, lest she forfeit her interests there. She was not however obliged to pay for Italian aid with Ethiopian territory, and this would have been a painful price, but the possibility remained that expediency would dictate the benefits of giving Italy a protectorate over Ethiopia. Britain proved less responsive to the Italian demands than either the Ethiopians or the Italians had believed and Ethiopia was not considered by the Peace Conference. Britain returned to her pre-War policy of upholding Ethiopia as stated by Major L. Athill:

What we do want there is an orderly government of the provinces which march with British Somaliland, Kenya, and the Sudan. We want the waters of Lake Tsana brought under control for the benefit of the Sudan and Egypt. We, in common with the Emperor of Ethiopia... want to see an end put to the barbarous practice of slavery. And we should doubtless be glad to increase the volume of our trade in a region where it is almost negligible today.

Italian policy was the key to the change in British policy. Italy had a more vigorous policy of penetration, and she had no desire to promote a strong Ethiopian Government. Yasu's and Zauditu's reign allowed her to extend her inroads into Tigré and Gondar, and she saw the Peace Conference as the opportunity to consolidate her interests.

into a protectorate. However her timing was bad, and she tried to do it on the cheap.\textsuperscript{1} Italy was not overly concerned with African questions, and her negotiators at Paris were no match for M. Simon and Lord Milner.\textsuperscript{2} However Italy did not return to her former reticence, and the Peace Conference marks the beginning of her attempt to avenge Adua.

France, like Britain, also took up a position which was a reaction to that of Italy. France had been the silent partner in the Tripartite Powers, proposing nothing, agreeing to little. Only when it seemed that Italy would acquire a protectorate over Ethiopia did France — really the French Minister — take the initiative. De Coppet organized the Ethiopian congratulatory missions to demonstrate that Ethiopia was a sovereign state, and he urged Ethiopia to apply to the Peace Conference and to the League. However had not Italian aggression been on the horizon, it is unlikely that de Coppet would have acted.

Britain would have liked some sort of European super-

\textsuperscript{1} "During the war and its aftermath the government, interested only in Europe, left the colonies to themselves", Baer, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 11, 13; Lloyd George, \textit{Peace Conference}, i, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{2} The Italian delegation was singularly unimpressive, Hess, \textit{ubi supra}, p. 124.
vision over Ethiopia, but Italy would have been reluctant to agree to anything that would have strengthened Ethiopia, and France would have been unwilling to make trouble. The Tripartite Agreement was a useless instrument for control without a strong Ethiopian authority; by the time Haile Selassie succeeded to the throne the Agreement had long ceased to be relevant. However as Ras Tafari absorbed more power he introduced internal reforms and foreign advisers. As Greenfield has written of Tafari:

He needed help but had no wish to become a foreign puppet - or in fact a puppet at all, for it soon became clear from his attitude to suggested administrative reforms and methods of accounting for financial assistance, that he was not interested in recommendations for greater efficiency if at the same time they tended to weaken his personal control.

In other matters Britain was also to have some qualified fortune. In 1923 Ethiopia, before gaining admission to the League, adhered to the Arms Conventions of 1919. However it was not until 1930 that the arms trade could be finally

1. In 1923 Curzon informed Italy that Ethiopia's entrance into the League had negated the Tripartite Agreement; Italy did not accept his interpretation, Baer, op. cit., p. 15, cit. I.D.D.I., 7th series, iii, pp. 364-5.


said to have stopped.¹ In any case, by 1921 the arms question was of less urgency than heretofore. Sayyid Muhammad, who had been the cause of the biggest Anglo-Ethiopian border problem for a score of years, was finally chased out of British territory by the Somaliland Camel Constabulary and the Royal Air Force; he died of influenza in the first days of 1921 near the headwaters of the Webi Shebele.²

The question of the Lake Tsana barrage was not settled in 1919, probably because the quest for security for the Nile waters was not quite so urgent.³ Italy resurrected the unanswered offer in 1922,⁴ but it was again ignored because by this time Britain was trying to settle the problem with Ethiopia alone.⁵ With Ethiopian admission to the League her independence was guaranteed and the Tripartite Agreement was nullified, and had it not been for other interests,⁶

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1. Perham, op. cit., p. 64.
3. Gallagher, ubi supra, loc. cit. East Africa had no strategic importance if Britain could not hold on to India.
6. Baer (p. 15) suggests that Britain only agreed in order to obtain Italian support to pressure Turkey to recognize British rights in Mosul in Iraq.
Britain probably would not have taken up Italy's Tsana offer in December 1925. Tafari lodged a protest with the League, and the two Powers "hastened to explain away the phrasing of their notes". \(^1\) Tafari's protest was published alongside of the Anglo-Italian notes in the League Treaty Series and nothing came of the agreement.

The central development in the post-war years is the rise of Ras Tafari. His succession was helped in 1921 when Lij Yasu was finally captured and imprisoned by his cousin Ras Kassa; \(^2\) and entrance to the League was a victory for him and the 'progressives'.

Up until 1923 intervention, pressure, exploitation of the good old kind was possible; from 1923 the integrity of Abyssinia is guaranteed. To violate it in 1906 was, though not indeed as so often assumed, a colonial question \(^3\), a national question. To violate it now is an international question.

In 1926 the Abuna Matewos and Fitwary Hapta Giorgis died - removing the elder statesmen of Menelik's generation who had acted as a buffer between Tafari and the 'progressives' and Zauditu and the 'conservatives'. \(^4\) Tafari now claimed

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the title of **Negus**, and four years later, after crushing a revolt by **Ras** Gugsa Wolye, succeeded to the throne of Solomon as **Haile Selassie I.**

1. His climb to the throne had been difficult. His youth had prevented his gaining support from the traditional centres of power, and he had built his power mainly based on his loyal Harari troops. His appeals for reform and economic development did not move the masses, who were traditionally reluctant to change or improve their environment.

4. The Church, the "primary sociological limit to imperial authority", also did not favour change, especially the kind of land reform that Tafari had pioneered in his governorships in Sidamo and Harar. He also faced opposition from the nobles - Seyoum of Tigre and Hailu of Godjam - and from the lesser **balabatoch**, who wanted to retain their modicum of local control. Tafari, opposed by Court, Church, chiefs and peasants, had hardly 'prevailed' when Europe was ready to intervene. Britain, which had always supported a strong central government in Ethiopia,

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2. Levine, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
4. "In addition to feeling that innovation is ineffectual, the Amhara peasant tends to feel it is immoral", *ibid.*, pp. 86-7.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 154. **Woliso** Manen, a devout churchgoer, was Tafari's link with the Church.
had lost most of her interest there by the time Italy forced her claim. Britain still had an interest in Egypt, the Canal and the Sudan, but it was not as great as that before 1914, and she felt she could sacrifice her interests there for Italian friendship. Wingate's dream of an Ethiopian 'El Dorado' had long been written off, and Thesiger's hope for Ethiopian development under Tripartite tutelage was dismissed; they were subordinated to the need for European peace and the mission of Crispi, Colosimo and Mussolini.

Anglo-Ethiopian relations from 1909 to 1919 are not vital in the context of world, European or African history. Ethiopia did not play an important role in European or British affairs, and her part in North-East African affairs is small. Britain, likewise, did not greatly affect Ethiopian internal politics. Yet there is a great amount of interest in this period, not only for students of Ethiopian history, but to those of the 'Partition of Africa' and of 'The Causes of the Second World War'. As a branch of European history, and British Imperial history in particular, this period is also of interest. With Britain's acquisition of an interest in the Suez Canal, Egypt, the Sudan and Aden - i.e. everything that affected the Nile,
the Red Sea and North-East Africa - increased their importance in the formation of British policy. India was the centre of the British empire, and security for India became the basis of British imperial policy. The Suez Canal shortened the route to India, and so British interest shifted from the Cape (the previous port-of-call of the Indian run) and Constantinople (the barrier to Russian aggression against India) to Egypt and the Nile.¹ The story of 'Urabi, Tel-el-Kebir and the Mahdi is well known, but it can be emphasized that the Nile became the first line of defence to the route to India. This not only involved Britain in the Sudan, but in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia as well.

Ethiopia demonstrated her strength at Adua in 1896, and the fact that Ethiopia was virtually the last African stronghold to withstand European pressure makes a study of Ethiopian history intrinsically valuable. The innate political, military and cultural strengths of the highland kingdom helped defend Ethiopia from the European Powers,

¹ For Britain, Egypt and India before the Partition of Africa of H. L. Hoskins, British Routes to India, (London, 1966); for during and after the Partition of R. Robinson et al., The Official Mind of Imperialism, Africa and the Victorians, (London, 1965),
who were usually divided in their aims as well as their methods. The Powers undermined the empire by protests and meddling; at the same time they preserved it by preventing any one of their number from acquiring supreme power. As the gap between the military strength of Europe and Ethiopia widened, the primitiveness of Ethiopia was emphasized and her vulnerability was increased. As the European and African situations changed, the unity of the European Powers was more important to Britain than the independence of Ethiopia, and the designs of one Power, Italy, could be carried through to their logical conclusion.
The House of Menz: The Line of Negus Sahala Selassie

Negus Sahala Selassie (1813 - 1847)

Negus Haile Mikael (1847-55)

Woizero Ayahilush Meridazmatch Haile Mikael

Woizero Tananya Worq + Dej Walda Mikael

Negus Walda Giorgis Dej Lemma Fit Tekla Mariam (d. 1908) (d. 1895)

Dej Haile Mikael Menelik II (d. 1889) (1865-1913)

Negus Sahala Selassie (1813 - 1847)

Haile Mikael Nene1ik (1847-55)

Dej Haile Mikael Nene1ik Haile Mikael

Dej Birru Shoaraga Asfa Wossen Zauditu Dej Haile Mariam Fit Taye (d. 1915) (d. 1897) (d. 1888) (1916 - 30) (d. 1965)

Ras Kassa (d. 1959)

Tafari (1930 - )

Ras Imru Mangasha

LiJ Yasu Wassan Sagad (1913-6) (d. 1908)

Ras Duge (d. 1900)

Woizero Tisamma + Hailu of Lasta Ras Hakonnen Ihita Mariam (d. 1906)

Dej Haile Mikael Menelik II (d. 1889) (1865-1913)
Family Relationships of the Noble Houses of Ethiopia

Imām Liban of the Worra Himanot Wello Galla

Ahmad

Imām Liban

Imām 'Ali

Negus Mikael (d. 1918)

Woizero Sehin + Asfau of Amba Sel (1913-6)

Woizero Kanen - Haile Selassie II (d. 1961) (1930 - )

Yohannes III (1840-5, 50-1)

Kanen - Alula (d. 1847)

Ras 'Ali II

Tewabatch

Tewodros II + Yatamanu (1855-68)

Bafana + Menlik II + Taitu (1865-1913) (d. 1918) (d. 1919)

Ras Wolye

Yohannes IV (1872-89)

Ras Mangasha (d. 1906)

Ras Area Selassie + Zauditu (1916-30) (d. 1888)

Seyoum Ras Gugsa Area (d. 1960) (d. 1924)

Kassa (d. 1920 ca)

Haile Selassie II

Dej. Haile Mariam of Simien (d. 1836)

Haile Selassie II

Dej. Boutoul

Dej. Amadi

Dej. Boullo

N.B. The names of emperors are underlined and their reign is enclosed in parenthesis.
Glossary

The following translations and definitions are taken from a variety of sources, but among the most helpful are Professor Hill's *Bibliographical Dictionary of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, and Greenfield's political history of Ethiopia, especially appendix II, pages 460-3.

Abun (Abuna before a name): 'our father'; archbishop.

Afa Negus: 'mouth of the king'; Lord Chancellor or Chief Justice.

Agafari: master of ceremonies, protocol officer.

Al-Hāj (Hājji): title of a Muslim pilgrim.

Alika: leader of soldiers, officer.

Amīr: Commander, Prince.

Arada Zabagnock: The Adis Ababa town guards or night watchmen.

Ase: Emperor.

Ato: 'gentleman'; mister.

Azaj: commissioner or commander.

Bajirond: Chief accountant or treasurer; guardian of royal property.

Balabat (pl. balabatoeh): landowning chief.

Balambaras (Bal): 'commander of a fort'; major.

Bayrām: feast which ends the Muslim fast of Ramadan at the end of the ninth month.
Betwosed: 'the beloved'; king's first counsellor.

Damoz: a casual marriage in which the 'wife' is a combination of mistress and housekeeper.

Debtera: an unordained church official or scribe.

Dejazmatch (Déj): 'commander of provincial headquarters'; a general or a count.

Dhow: small Arab sailing craft.

Dragoman: interpreter or Oriental Secretary.

Faras Magala: market square.

Ferenji (pl. ferenjoch): 'Frank'; a European.

Fitwary (Fit): 'commander of the vanguard'; brigadier or knight. Turk-basha fitwary: Minister of War.

Ganazmatch (Gan): 'commander of the right wing'; colonel.

Garazmatch (Gar): 'commander of the left wing'; colonel.

Ghebi: palace.

Haroūn: fortress-village.

Hegira (hijra): the 'emigration of Muhammad from Mecca to Yathrib in September 622 A.D., which starts the Muslim calendar.

Imām: hereditary leader or khalīfa.

Ishi naga: 'yes, tomorrow'; the Ethiopian form of mañana.

Itegue: Empress.

Jan Medr: the Imperial race course at Adis Ababa.

Jantara: the special title for the ruler of Amba Sel.

Jabarti: Muslim highlanders.

Jihād: Muslim 'Holy War'.

Kantiba: mayor.
Khalīfa: the successor or regent of Muhammad; the supreme head of the Muslim community.

Lij: 'boy'; honorific title for the sons of noble houses.

Likamaquas: the king's A.D.C., impersonator and equerry.

Madhaab: a Muslim legal system.

Mahal Safari: the Ghebi guard of about 300 to 1000 men.

Mahdi: 'the (divinely) guided one'; the ultimate deliverer and restorer of Islam, who must be of the Prophet's family.

Maria Theresa dollars: the legal currency of Ethiopia since the mid-1800's.

Mascal: the feast of the discovery of the True Cross by St. Helena. It is celebrated after the New Year in September, and it marks the end of the rainy season and the beginning of Spring.

Moti: the Ruler of Leka-Lellem.

Nagadras (Nag): chief of trade and head of markets, customs and caravans. Very often Muslims.


Qolla: the hot lowlands below 5000 feet.

Ras: 'head' or chief; Marshal-Djike.

Shahada: Islamic confession of faith.

Shaikh: tribal or religious notable.

Shangalla: the Negroid tribes living on the South and West borders of Ethiopia. Used for slaves.

Sharif: descendant of Muhammad.

Shifta: armed bandit.

Shir alika: commander of 1000 men.

Sirdar: commander-in-chief of the Egyptian Army.

Tariqa: 'the Way'; a Muslim brotherhood.

Tedj: honey-mead.
Ughaz: Somali chief.

Vali: Governor-General of a province of the Ottoman Empire.

Vekil: deputy or agent.

Wagshum: the hereditary ruler (shum or seyoun) of Wag-Lasta; a descendant of the Zagwe kings.

Watawit: mixture of Arab and Berta peoples.

Woizero: Mrs.

Zamana Masafint: 'the Era of the Judges or Princes', 1769 to 1855, when the Emperors had no real power.
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The chief sources for this thesis have been the Foreign Office Political Abyssinia files at the Public Record Office. These contain not only reports of matters affecting the Legation, but also a great deal of information on Ethiopian personalities and politics. A very convenient source of information were the Sudan Intelligence Reports (S.I.R.), a monthly precis of data collected at Khartoum and sent to the War Office. These reports usually had a section on Ethiopia, and so they were sent to the Foreign Office, which filed them with the Abyssinia or the Egypt papers.

The Colonial Office papers include material on Ethiopia's borders, and the India Office papers include comments on the arms trade; but most of these papers can also be found in the F.O. Abyssinia files. Nevertheless, it was interesting to see the remarks of the Colonial and India Office establishments, even if they did not significantly differ from those of the F.O. However, the India Office documents contained all copies of the Arab Bulletin (A.B.), a weekly compilation of intelligence by the Cairo Arab Bureau, which often contained material on Ethiopia, Somaliland and the Sudan.
The Sudan Archive (S.A.) at Durham University Library contains much of Sir Reginald Wingate's papers, but, in most cases, these documents can also be found in the F.O. files.

The published material on Ethiopia is voluminous, but most of it glosses over the Lij Yasu episode without comment. Mosley's biography of Haile Selassie however covers this period well, and he seems to have had access to the F.O. Confidential Print on Ethiopia; yet the amount of factual errors in Mosley's work makes its value questionable. On the other hand, Greenfield's history of Ethiopia is a mine of useful information on the World War I years. Dr. Mérab's Impressions was helpful up until Menelik's death, and Guèbrè Selassie's Chronique was useful up until the battle of Sagale in 1916. Levine's study of Amhara culture was valuable for an understanding of Ethiopian life and customs. On the European side, I found Hess' article on "Italy and Africa" particularly helpful for Italy's post-war policy; and Gallagher's monograph on British imperial security was helpful for an understanding of British post-war policy.

In the bibliography which appears below I have used the following organization:
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   B. Published documents.

II. Secondary sources.
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