

# *(The Somali Peninsula)*



*A New Light on Imperial Motives*



Published by the Information Services of the Somali Government

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## *Preface*

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**S**INCE the Somali Republic became an independent State on the first of July, 1960, the Government has become increasingly aware of the need for the publication of an authoritative guide to its border problems and their origins, in view of the friendly interest, particularly among other African nations, which these problems have aroused.

We Somalis occupy the eastern 'horn' of Africa, the largest, single homogeneous area in the continent. The country consists, for the most part, of scant pastures and two rivers, and has been the playground of international politics for many years.

Our country was divided and sub-divided by Euro-Abyssinian colonialism in the last two decades of the 19th Century. The value of our land was not the motive for annexation because the complexities of our pastoral life offered no inducement to the intruders who were more favoured in this respect than ourselves, for they already possessed an abundance of rich and fertile land in temperate zones. The aims of annexation, which are analysed in succeeding pages, were dictated by selfish policies which the colonial powers concerned found it expedient to pursue without regard to the interests of the Somali people.

Our misfortunes do not stem from the unproductiveness of our soil, nor from a lack of mineral wealth. These limitations on our material well-being were accepted and compensated for by our forefathers from whom we inherited, among other things, a spiritual and cultural prosperity of inestimable value: the teaching of Islam on the one hand and lyric poetry on the other. Moreover, our forebears developed techniques of animal husbandry which have not been easy to improve upon and applied their ingenuity to the total



utilization of the few natural resources available to them. By their skills we live today, and, with the generous assistance of wealthier nations, we shall lay new foundations, in accordance with our liberal and democratic Constitution, for the spiritual and material enrichment of future Somali generations.

No! Our misfortune is that our neighbouring countries, with whom, like the rest of Africa, we seek to promote constructive and harmonious relations, are not our neighbours. Our neighbours are our Somali kinsmen whose citizenship has been falsified by indiscriminate boundary 'arrangements'. They have to move across artificial frontiers to their pasture lands. They occupy the same terrain and pursue the same pastoral economy as ourselves. We speak the same language. We share the same creed, the same culture and the same traditions. How *can* we regard our brothers as foreigners?

*Of course* we all have a strong and very natural desire to be united. The first step in this direction was taken in 1960 when the Somaliland Protectorate was united with Somalia. This act was not an act of 'colonialism' or 'expansionism' or 'annexation'. It was a positive contribution to peace and unity in Africa and was made possible by the application of the principle of the right to self-determination. We adhere most rigidly to this principle which is linked to our pledge in Article VI of our Constitution that we shall promote 'by legal and peaceful means the union of Somali territories'.

ABDIRASHID ALI SHARMARKE  
*Prime Minister.*

Mogadishu,  
*January, 1962.*

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### ***A Note on the Revised (Shorter) Edition***

This edition is shorter by some 45 pages than the original edition. Almost all the appendices have been omitted with the exception of the text of Menelik's Circular Letter to European powers (appendix II) and a note (appendix XX) on the ancient map on page xi. References in the text to other appendices relate to the first edition.

Some minor errors and omissions in the text of the first edition have been corrected, in particular a correction on page 25 of the year that Theodore II was crowned; and an addition of one line, in parenthesis, to the first paragraph on page 45.

Some of the boundaries on the maps have been reprinted with bolder lines and the frontier on Map V, representing the Anglo-French Boundary of 1888, has been realigned to conform more accurately with the provisions of that Treaty.

An acknowledgement, omitted from the first edition, will be found on page 84. Pages 131-137 of the original edition have been renumbered. In other respects this edition is a reprint of the original.



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## Introduction ✓

**D**URING recent years of vicissitude and even danger on this continent the Somali nation has fortunately attracted little attention from outside, for it has not sought to provide foreigners with sensational news, nor has it exploited the tedious disputes which divide the world powers. Yet screened from publicity by Ethiopian 'frontier' posts, at present dividing artificially the Republic from its Somali kinsmen, incidents of a grievous character occurred in the Summer and Autumn of 1960 and again in 1961 when machine-gun attacks were made upon defenceless Somalis by the air and land forces of the Imperial Ethiopian Government.

The silence and restraint of the outraged Somali nation might suggest a lack of vigour or conviction on the part of the Somali Government to go out and defend the dignity and birthright of its countrymen. There is certainly no lack of conviction, but the Somali Republic is a young, free and democratic nation, wishing to refrain from any act which would loosen the bonds of African solidarity, and seeking a peaceful and sensible border revision based on the principle of self-determination. There is no desire for aggrandisement. No territorial ambition. But the Government of a free Somali State has a special duty towards its countrymen across the borders, who have a common cultural heritage and origin, and who live, against their will, under a system of Government which is not of their choosing.

The Somali Government has confidence that justice is on its side, and, in order to throw light upon its present difficulties, it has elected to illuminate the past by evidence from witnesses of truth. The following pages dwell, without malicious intent, on some distasteful features of Euro-Abyssinian conduct in the nineteenth







Map of Africa by Jacopo Gastaldi (Venice, 1564)

Map I

century. This has been necessary as part of a process of unfolding historical truths and, in particular, to correct historical distortions which have gained currency, and which, for the most part, have gone unchallenged. An example of such misrepresentation appears in a Memorandum of 1948 to the United Nations in which the Ethiopian Government claimed that:

*'Prior to the race of the European powers to divide up the continent of Africa, Ethiopia included an extensive coastline along the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.'*

Rather than provoke an international crisis over border problems with neighbouring States, as the Italians did at Wal Wal in 1935 before the regrettable invasion of Abyssinia, the Somali Government has searched for a remedy by presenting in the first instance an account of the origins of their problems. It is based on the best evidence available which has been adduced from books and documents cited in the footnotes of the text. These are available for anyone to examine. Relevant International Treaties and agreements are also contained in the Appendices, likewise a commentary by a leading expert (appendix XX) on the ancient map opposite this page.

In the climate of opinion which prevails today it would surprise nobody if the Somali Government attributed the responsibility for past events to European colonial powers only. It must be publicly stated, however, that Abyssinia herself was not blameless. During the nineteenth century scramble for Africa, Abyssinia had every right to safeguard her integrity, and the skill with which she conducted her external affairs, surrounded as she was by European colonial powers, is to be admired. Regrettably, however, the price of Ethiopia's continued independence was partly paid for by her Somali neighbours. And now that almost all European colonial powers have surrendered their colonial possessions, Ethiopia still clings, together with her French ally, to the ill-gotten gains of her Imperial past.

From an analysis of succeeding pages certain inescapable facts emerge. First, the ancient relations between the warring Abyssinian principalities and the Somali clans gave Ethiopia no historical claim to an empire including the Somali nation. (It should be explained that the term Abyssinia is used in its correct sense to refer to the ancient region of this name (Map III, p. 10) and the term Ethiopia refers to the modern Ethiopian Imperial Empire). Secondly, the preferential treatment secured for Abyssinia by European imperial powers in the Brussels General Act of 1890 enabled her to build up sufficient military strength in arms and ammunition, not only to assert her independence from Italy in 1896 (to which she was fully entitled), but



also to subjugate and to extend by force her dominion over some of her neighbours and to lay claim to suzerainty over the Somali people.

Moreover, in relation to their competitive interest in this part of Africa, Ethiopia in 1897 was able to persuade France, Britain and Italy to curtail the extent of their suzerainty over Somalis in contradiction to some of the treaties which these European powers had earlier concluded with them. Diplomatic sources reveal, for example, that in the Anglo-Ethiopian 'negotiations' of 1897, Britain took great care to ensure that the wording of the eventual treaty did not cede Somali territory to Ethiopia nor did she recognize Ethiopian rights to Somali territory. In this way Britain adhered at least to the letter of her Anglo-Somali Protectorate Treaties. However, fifty-seven years later, in 1954, the British Government evidently arrived at a new and different interpretation of the position and purported to recognise the sovereignty of Ethiopia over Somali territory to which she had no prior title.

The reader will find that the European Powers at the end of the nineteenth century were drawn to the Somali Peninsula for different reasons. The French wanted a coaling station to assist them with their war in Indo China and hoped to link the Gulf of Aden with French Equatorial Africa; Italy desired to colonize the highlands of Eritrea and Abyssinia; Britain was obsessed with the need to secure fresh meat for her garrison in Aden and was fearful of other Europeans gaining access to the headwaters of the Nile. Abyssinia's motives will become apparent in succeeding chapters. A responsibility for the mess that has been left behind rests with those that created it.

Britain now has an opportunity to make up for past actions by at least yielding to the desire of self-determination expressed by the Somali peoples who occupy the adjacent territory of Kenya. The transfer of Jubaland to Italy, following the secret agreement between Britain and Italy in 1915, was typical of many examples, which will be found in the following pages, of the way in which Somali territory was used by European powers as a pawn to be bartered in the wider interests of old-fashioned Imperialism. Though this could not at the time have been envisaged by Britain or Italy, the transfer of Jubaland was, in fact, the first step towards Somali reunification. The second step came in 1960 when the former Somaliland Protectorate merged with Somalia formerly under United Nations Trusteeship.

For successive steps the Somali Government relies on the proverb that '*truth and lies have different footprints*'. Thus anyone who wishes to treat this volume as the key to the door of a better understanding of Somali problems will be in no doubt about the accuracy of this Somali proverb.



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*'There is one-half of Kenya about which the other half knows nothing, and seems to care even less.'*

Negley Farson, *Last Chance in Africa*, 1949.

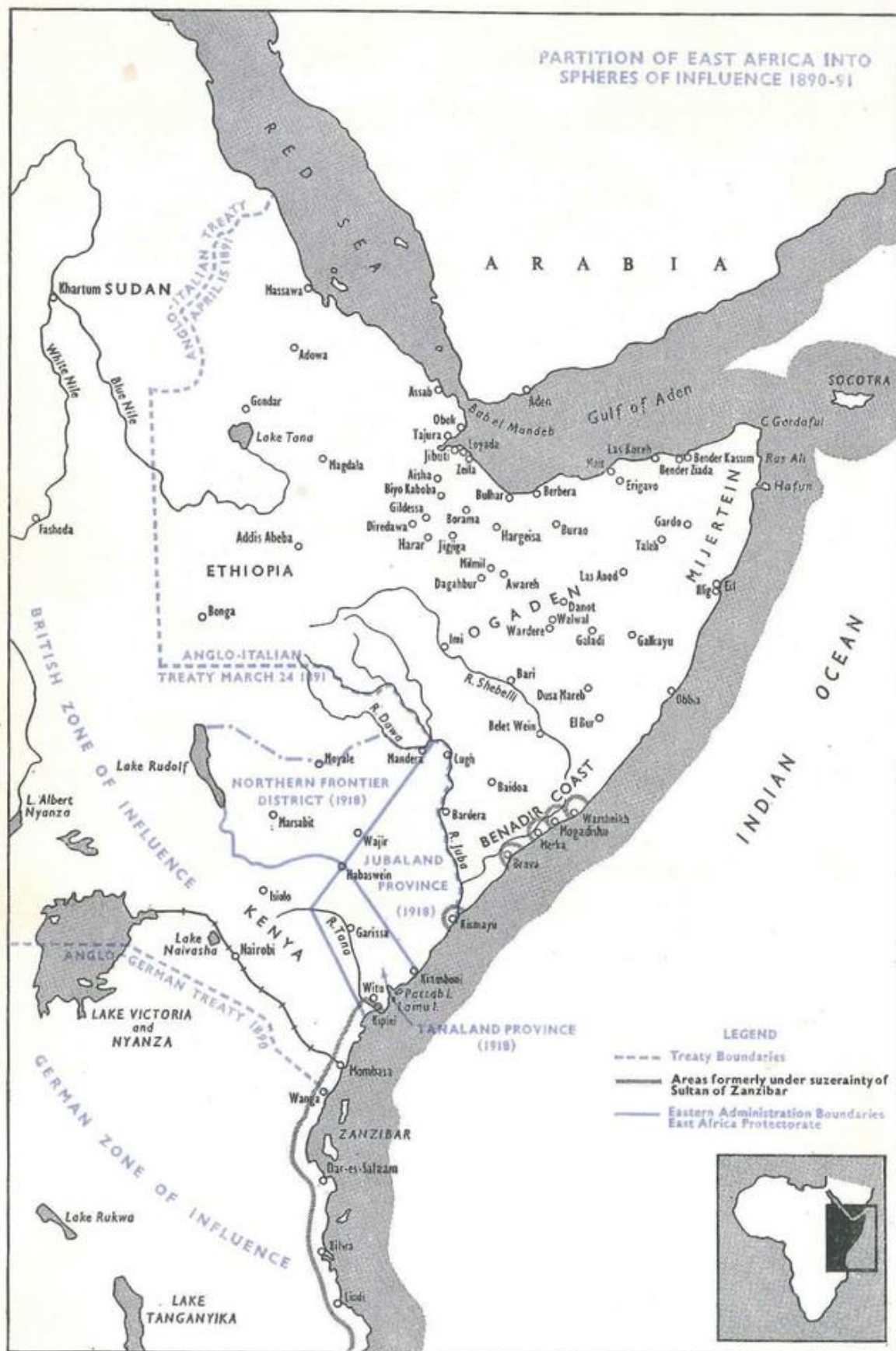
*'From some oversight on the part of England giving up territory on the south-east borders of Abyssinia in Somaliland, and by the Italian Government not having their Somali Hinterland defined, there is a great chance of difficulties arising on the south and south-eastern borders of Abyssinia.'*

Wylde, A.B., *Modern Abyssinia*, 1901.

*'The Ethio-Somaliland border problem, caused by the irrational artificial partitioning of the Horn of Africa in the last half of the nineteenth century has lived to plague the relations of two African states.'*

*The Ethio-Somalia Frontier Problem*, published by the Ministry of Information of the Imperial Ethiopian Government, 1961.

# PARTITION OF EAST AFRICA INTO SPHERES OF INFLUENCE 1890-91



Map II





LEGEND

treaty Boundaries  
 areas formerly under suzerainty of  
 Sultan of Zanzibar  
 eastern Administration Boundaries  
 of East Africa Protectorate



# ONE

## *Annexation of Jubaland*

IN 1886, Britain and Germany, who were both competing for 'Spheres of Influence' in East Africa, agreed to recognise the sovereignty of the Sultan of Zanzibar over parts of the East African coast to a depth of ten miles, including certain ports as far north as Warsheikh (map II). The two European powers divided the hinterland along a line running northwestwards from the mouth of the River Wanga to the eastern shore of Lake Victoria Nyanza. The British got the northern zone while the Germans got the southern.<sup>1</sup> Britain also accepted, by implication, a German claim to a protectorate over Witu and the coast 'fronting that Sultanate'.<sup>2</sup>

The vagueness of the 1886 Anglo-German Agreement gave Germany a chance to secure possession of the great lakes,<sup>3</sup> for not only was the country north of the River Tana left free to German enterprise but also the country to the northwest of the British Sphere, including Uganda.<sup>4</sup> The matter was settled in 1890 when Germany, in consideration for Britain's secession of Heligoland, withdrew her protectorate over Witu and over the adjoining coast up to Kismayu, and surrendered her claims to territories north of the Tana.<sup>5</sup> Thus a vast area, reaching to the western watershed of the Nile,<sup>6</sup> fell into the British sphere of influence. An influence then exerted by the Imperial British East Africa Company.

This Company was formed primarily as a trading venture,<sup>7</sup> but,

<sup>1</sup> Robinson, R., and Gallagher, J., *Africa and the Victorians*, 1961, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 197. Witu is to the west of the small island of Lamu (map II).

<sup>3</sup> Moyse-Bartlett, H., *The History of the King's African Rifles*, 1956, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Foreign Office Handbook* (1920), *East Africa*, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Moyse-Bartlett, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 95.



by Royal Charter in 1888, it was charged with the administration of a 'vast but ill-defined territory to be governed on the lines of a crown colony'.<sup>8</sup> Following Germany's withdrawal, therefore, the Company, by agreement with the Sultan of Zanzibar, assumed responsibility in 1891 for the administration of Witu<sup>9</sup> and the 'whole of Jubaland'.<sup>10</sup> Having already transferred to Italy the Sultan's lease (appendix I (a)) of the Benadir ports to the North of Kismayu, the Company delimited its North Eastern frontier with Italy along the middle of the Juba river to the Blue Nile (map II p. xiv); an immense area about which almost nothing was then known.<sup>11</sup> It is, however, difficult to reconcile the effective annexation of Jubaland with an earlier agreement<sup>12</sup> concluded between the Sultan of Zanzibar and the Somalis establishing a Protectorate on the coast of Jubaland.

Like the Sultan, the East Africa Company was only interested in economic and fiscal opportunities: a navigable river or an accommodating sea port. No foreign influence, other than arab slave-raiding caravans,<sup>13</sup> had penetrated further inland than the width of a series of narrow coastal strips. These were annexed by the Sultan of Zanzibar to shelter his sailing ships from fierce winds and to fill them with cargoes of ivory and slaves. In fact, the Sultan's writ could scarcely have been felt, other than by captive slaves, more than a mile or two from the shore.<sup>14</sup> The real focus of power in the Benadir coast at this time was the Somali Sultan of the Geledi who had cordial relations with the Sultan of Zanzibar. It was economic, not political aggrandizement that the Sultan sought; commerce, not conquest.<sup>15</sup> The same could have been said of the East Africa Company, but European rivalry and, for Britain's part, indirect threats to her interests in the Suez canal, such as control by some other power over

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District* (official publication), 1917, p. 22. This is accepted as an official publication in view of the Governor's prefatory note in which he says, *inter alia*, '... all particulars having been taken from official records, the historical part of the work may be accepted as an authentic summary of past events, those portions which deal with the plans and policy of the present time accurately represent existing conditions. . . .'

<sup>11</sup> Krapf, a missionary-explorer, fleeing in 1851 from a rain of poisoned arrows, was the first European to fall upon the upper reaches of the Tana river. (Coupland, R., *East Africa and its Invaders*, 1956.) An American, A. D. Smith, did not reach Lake Rudolf until 1895, traversing the N.F.D. (Smith, A. D., *Through unknown African Countries*, 1897.)

<sup>12</sup> Jubaland, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> Coupland, R., *East Africa and its Invaders*, 1956, p. 357.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 352.



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the headwaters of the Nile, incited political ambitions; and, as we shall see, embroiled the Company in unproductive military expenditure beyond its experience, capacity and inclination.

Whether the motives were commercial or political, the Somali coast was a formidable barrier to the unwelcome intruder. As early as 1506 Brava resisted the Portuguese, parading an army of 6,000 spearmen:

*'So stubborn was their resistance that over forty Portuguese were killed and over sixty wounded before the town was won. The invaders left it, like Mombasa, a stripped and smouldering ruin. They made next for Mogadishu, reputed to be one of the richest and strongest towns on all the coast. The beach, as they anchored, was thronged with soldiers, many of them horsemen. . . . Had time permitted, Mogadishu would doubtless have suffered the fate of Barawa [Brava].'*<sup>16</sup>

Again, in 1828, Mogadishu, 'away in the free-spirited north',<sup>17</sup> defiantly refused to submit to Seyyid Said, Sultan of Zanzibar.<sup>18</sup> As if to prove how slight was the Sultan's hold on the Somali Coast, a Somali force descended in 1841 on one of the Sultan's ports and massacred a number of Arab traders.<sup>19</sup> Finally, 'in deference to the independent spirit of its people' the Sultan appointed in 1843 a Somali, not an Arab, as the first Governor of Mogadishu. He sent no garrison 'but only a couple of soldiers to mount guard at the Customs-house'.<sup>20</sup>

The Somalis were far more akin to the Arabs than were the Bantu tribes to the South, and far more militant and better organized.<sup>21</sup> 'It is wonderful', commented Kirk, the British Consul in Zanzibar, 'how little we have yet managed to impress the Somalis, even those on the Gulf of Aden, with respect for our superior power'.<sup>22</sup> The Arab Sultan must have shared this lament when he received a letter<sup>23</sup> in 1885 from the Somali Sultan Yusuf Ali in which he said, 'I have taken Hopeia [Obbia] and I remain there on the part of

<sup>16</sup> Coupland, R., op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 337.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 335. See also Sir Charles Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate* (1905), chapter 3, for a comment on the Somali 'knowledge of European law . . . without parallel among the natives of East Africa . . . and . . . only rivalled among Indians'.

<sup>22</sup> Kirk to Granville, despatch No. 18, January 17, 1885.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, despatch No. 87, April 11, 1885.



Seyed Bargash bin Saeed [the Sultan of Zanzibar]. The duties, however, and income that arise therefrom are our own. . . .'

The Arabs seemed to have acknowledged that Somalis were not only adversaries to be reckoned with but had some judicial and fiscal talent. There is an account<sup>24</sup> by the British Commissioner Hardinge of a request for Somali assistance from the Island of Pattah (near Lamu). The Island was inhabited in the seventeenth century by a Perso-Arabian community who were divided between two States, the Sultanate of Pattah and the commonwealth of Siu.

*'The aggressions . . . of Pattah upon Siu became so formidable that its people appealed to the Somalis living on the mainland opposite to protect them, promising them half their town and an equal share in their Government. . . . The Somalis agreed, and the Siu people, having further invoked the assistance of the Portuguese Government of Mombasa, the Pattah Sultan was overcome. . . . The Somalis were accordingly admitted to share . . . in the Government of Siu, and a curious dual Administration was established, consisting of a Famao and a Somali Sheikh, who jointly ruled the population, each administering justice to his own tribe through a Cadi appointed by himself. The system . . . lasted until quite recently.'*<sup>25</sup>

In the same report, Hardinge admits that 'the old chartered territory of the Imperial British East Africa Company and of the region between Tana and Juba, not included either in Zanzibar or Witu . . . is not, of course, technically under Her Majesty's Sovereignty. It is divided', he observes, 'among a number of tribes and races under our Protectorate, but it differs from Zanzibar and Witu in that the status of the chiefs exercising authority there is not recognised by international law or at least by any international engagement.'<sup>26</sup>

It was the Sultan of Zanzibar to whom international recognition was accorded and no separate Treaties or agreements (before 1891) were offered by European powers to individual Somali chiefs in this region. Yet, as Dr. Coupland points out,<sup>27</sup> the Sultan of Zanzibar himself inherited a 'queer political institution, unique in European experience, and unknown to international law. It defies definition in customary terms'. The best description of it, says Coupland, is

<sup>24</sup> Hardinge, Sir A. Report on the condition and progress of the East Africa Protectorate. Africa No. 7 (1897) c - 8683.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Coupland, R., *op. cit.*, p. 342.



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that given by Guillaing: 'It is neither suzerainty nor sovereignty; it is rather a kind of protectorate, constituting the protected town dependent but not subject'. Whatever the juridical position may have been the Imperial British East Africa Company found, in 1891, as others had found before them, that the Somalis would not acquiesce passively in the annexation of their territory.

## TWO

### *Partition and Isolation*

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**W**HILST the East Africa Company was acquiring its concession in Jubaland from the Sultan of Zanzibar, the Somalis on the coast, 'alarmed lest their country should be overrun',<sup>1</sup> arranged for a clause to be inserted in their Treaty with the Sultan to the effect that a further subsidy should be granted before a river steamer was permitted to ply on the upper reaches of the Juba river. The river steamer, called the *Kenia*, proved unmanageable; and Somali fears of being 'overrun' were thus assuaged for the time being. But not for long because of an absurd misunderstanding which was to leave its imprint on the history of Jubaland for many years to come.

Before the British East Africa Company established itself at Kismayu, Somali elders had sold plots of land to Indian speculators and registered the title-deeds at Zanzibar. Todd, the Company's representative, claimed that all unoccupied plots belonged to the Company under the Company's Treaty with the Sultan.<sup>2</sup> But this was disputed by the Somali elders. Todd was unyielding and so the Somalis petitioned Pigott, the Company's Administrator in Mombasa, to remove him. Pigott, 'who was apparently unaware of the dangerous nature of the negotiations',<sup>3</sup> ignored the petition, leaving Todd to resolve the conflict as best he could.

At Todd's suggestion, the Somalis then agreed to attend a public meeting, making it a condition that they should bring their 'arms'. Before the meeting began, Todd, who was accompanied by Count

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<sup>1</sup> *Jubaland*, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22.



Locatelli, an Italian visitor to Kismayu, arranged with H.M.S. *Widgeon*, standing off-shore, that sailors should advance on the Residency if the flag on the roof of the building was lowered. Todd also 'intimated his intention' of arresting the principal Somali chiefs if agreement was not forthcoming.<sup>4</sup>

Whilst the meeting was in progress, news of the landing party from H.M.S. *Widgeon* reached the Somalis. They began to show 'extreme nervousness and excitement'.<sup>5</sup> As Todd rose from his chair to reassure them, the Somalis stood up; and the Count, thinking that they intended to murder Todd, fired his revolver. Rioting broke out. Todd was stabbed in the neck and the *Widgeon* was signalled to commence a bombardment. A few days later, combined forces of Somalis, Indians and Arabs attacked Kismayu at dawn. Fighting spread to the surrounding districts and, to the Company's embarrassment, reinforcements of Hyderabad troops from Zanzibar mutinied, 'half of them joining the disaffected tribes'.<sup>6</sup>

What began then as a trading venture in Jubaland ended in a colonial war; and the Company, having been vested with political and administrative functions that were beyond its capacity,<sup>7</sup> eventually surrendered its charter in 1895. Shortly afterwards Mr. A. H. Hardinge of the British Foreign Office visited the 'Province' and proclaimed the establishment of British colonial rule.<sup>8</sup> During succeeding years the new administration was almost entirely preoccupied with colonial 'pacification'<sup>9</sup> measures and 'punitive expeditions'.<sup>10</sup>

The era of colonialism had begun and Sir Charles Eliot was British Commissioner. 'The Somali are not willing', he said, 'to agree to the simple plan of having a fair fight and then shaking hands when defeated, but constantly indicate that they think themselves our equals or superior, and not infrequently prove it'.<sup>11</sup>

Eliot acknowledged that the campaigns against the Somalis were 'lightly undertaken', and added that they terminated in 'elaborate explanations that we had gained a moral victory and achieved our real object, which proved to be quite different from what every-

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Moyse-Bartlett, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>8</sup> *Jubaland*, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>11</sup> Eliot, C., *The East Africa Protectorate*, 1905, Chap. 7.



body had supposed in the beginning'.<sup>12</sup> Again, when one of his officers had been regrettably murdered in 1900 he admitted that it would have been better to have treated it as a crime, rather than as an act of political revolt'.<sup>13</sup> Instead, he said,

*'war was declared against the Ogaden, and a costly expedition was despatched. It gained no success proportionate to its size and expense, for it was unable to capture or force a battle on the light-footed nomads, who vanished before it in a scrubby wilderness, well known to them, though pathless to strangers, while it was on the other hand, exposed to sudden attacks from fanatical desperados.'*<sup>14</sup>

By 1902 a despairing Eliot was convinced that the country was not 'worth the money spent upon it' and that the advantages of a fertile strip on the Juba could not seriously be set against the 'enormous military expenditure'.<sup>15</sup> But the Somalis, for their part, do not appear to have been quite so dispirited. There was a certain levity about the attitude of a Somali chief who had escaped from the Kismayu prison. He wrote a letter to his former captors to say that he had found a change of air absolutely necessary for his health. 'By-the-bye' he concluded 'I left a wife and a Koran behind. Don't trouble to return them'.<sup>16</sup>

Up to about 1880 the southernmost projection of Abyssinian power was not much more than a hundred miles from Addis Ababa.<sup>17</sup> But it was the large quantities of modern firearms that were imported from France and Italy that gave the King of Shoa, later to become Emperor, the opportunity to expand his territories.<sup>18</sup> Miss Perham considers that

*'it was the new challenge brought by European powers to Africa, and their conception of administrative control within fixed frontiers, which stimulated Menelik to carve out his own empire. Especially after his defeat of the Italians, at Aduwa in 1896, he turned his victorious generals to the task,*

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, Chap. 3. For an example of bewilderment by British officials about one outbreak of unrest after another – see *Jubaland*, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, Chap. 7.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, Chap. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Jubaland*, p. 35.

<sup>16</sup> Eliot, C., Chap. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Perham, M., *The Government of Ethiopia*, 1948, p. 293.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 293–4. See also *Foreign Office Handbook (Abyssinia)*, 1920, p. 61.



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which he had begun earlier, of pushing out the Ethiopian  
frontiers to the south and west before European competitors  
could anticipate him.<sup>19</sup>

Although an agreement about East Africa's northern boundary  
with Abyssinia was arrived at in 1897 when Menelik 'consented in  
general terms'<sup>20</sup> to a line marked on a map, the absence of effective  
administration in the North 'rendered it impossible to check  
Abyssinian raids in British territory'.<sup>21</sup> At first the British Govern-  
ment resorted to protests and Menelik would promise 'to issue the  
necessary orders'<sup>22</sup> or 'disclaim all responsibility and knowledge of  
the raids'.<sup>23</sup>

It is difficult sometimes to distinguish plunder from political  
intent. Both probably had equal force. As we shall see, there is  
ample evidence from official documents, disinterested sportsmen and  
scientific explorers during the 90's to establish beyond doubt that  
the official history of 'Jubaland and the Northern Frontier District'  
does not exaggerate when it observes that Abyssinian raiding parties  
seized livestock and tortured those who would not carry out their  
orders.<sup>24</sup>

As for political ambitions, Menelik sent a circular letter (appen-  
dix II) to European powers advising them of his intention to restore  
the 'ancient frontiers of Ethiopia as far as Khartoum and to lake  
Nyanza'. Miss Perham's view is that 'it is doubtful whether by 1891  
any Ethiopian had reached a point nearer to the lake than 300 miles'<sup>25</sup>  
(map p. 10). But there is also evidence that it was not only Menelik

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>20</sup> *Jubaland*, op. cit., p. 89. A boundary commission was appointed in 1902. Britain  
gave Italy an assurance in 1903 that she would not modify the frontier laid down  
in the 1891 Anglo-Italian Protocol (appendix III) without Italy's concurrence.  
(Hertslet, Vol. III, p. 953.)

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 90.

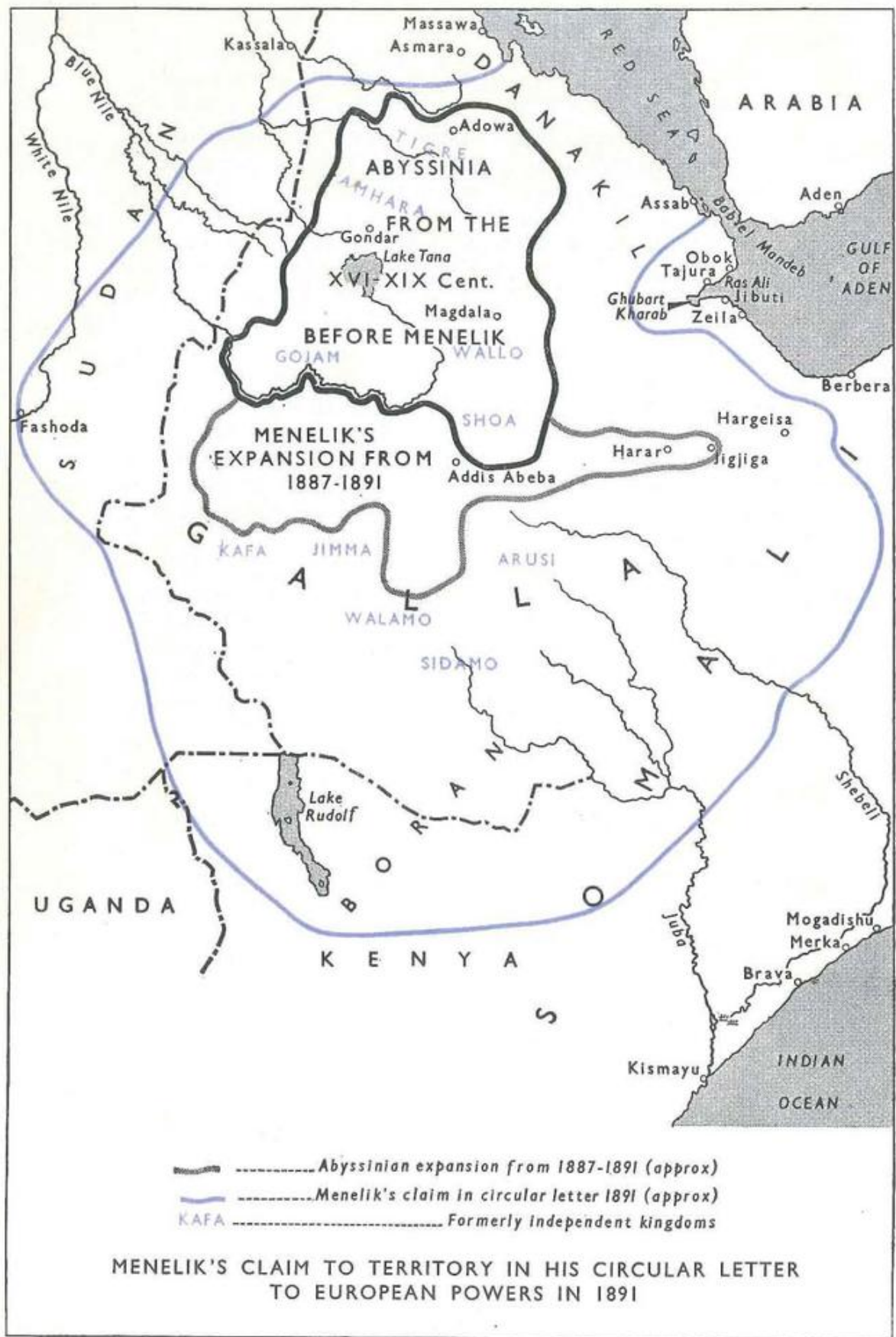
<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Eliot, C., op. cit., Chap. 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Jubaland*, p. 37. See also pages 42-43 and the following accounts (selected at ran-  
dom) of Abyssinian raiding parties in Somali territory: *India Office Records*, Vol. 7,  
Stace to Jopp, No. 1047, June 30, 1891. *India Office Records*, Vol. 7, Stace to Jopp,  
No. 1083, July 8, 1891. Memorandum Somali Coast Agency, No. 143, Feb. 14, 1895.  
Ferris to Cairo, No. 746 Sept. 21, 1896. Smith, A. D., *Through Unknown African  
Countries*, 1897, pp. 20, 46, 48. Pearce, F. B., *Rambles in Lion-Land*, 1898, pp. 163,  
175-6. Wolverton, Lord, *Five Months' Sport in Somaliland*, 1894, p. 107.

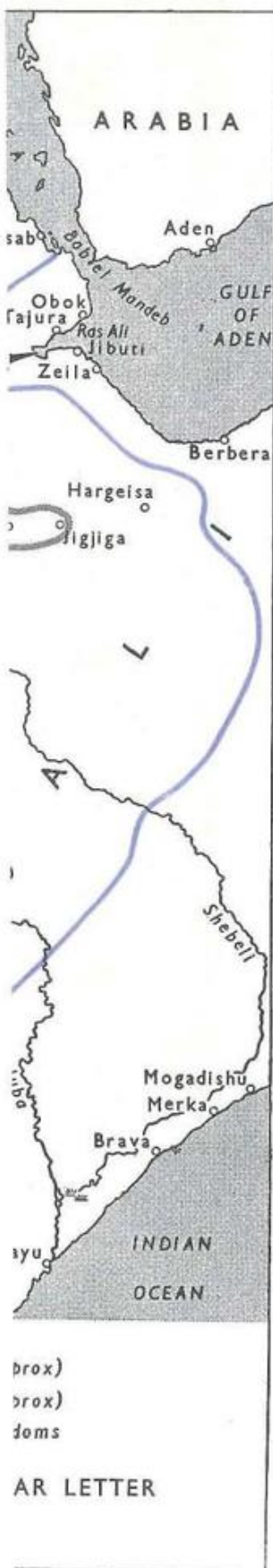
<sup>25</sup> Perham, op. cit., p. 434. See also Smith's account of his travels 100 miles north  
of Lake Rudolf in 1895 where he met a people called 'Mela' who had never heard  
of the word Kaffa nor of the existence of the Abyssinians. 'I do not think that Kaffa  
extends very far South of Abyssinia, or that the Abyssinians inhabit the country  
much below Bonga' (see map p. 12). (Smith, A. D., op. cit., p. 319.)





Map III





who suffered from hallucinations. Ras Walda Gabriel, an Abyssinian military commander, who had on several occasions raided the Boran, Arussi and the Ogaden,<sup>26</sup> also had his flights of fancy. He boasted in 1895 to Dr. Smith that 'Emperor Menelik owned the country all the way to Mombassa'.<sup>27</sup>

Evidence in succeeding pages amply supports the view that Menelik spoke with two voices: one allayed European fears of Abyssinian encroachment on their spheres of influence; and the other pushed out small detachments of armed marauders into the hot lowlands in order to rob defenceless Galla and Somali people of their limited possessions and to impress European colonialists with the 'effectiveness' of Abyssinian colonial 'acquisitions'.

Judging by reports, the Jubaland administration was alert to these depredations which tended to direct the colonial administration along a more purposeful path. One report in 1903 spoke of an 'Abyssinian invasion to the South' which unless 'stopped with a firm hand their occupation of the district between the Dana river and Wajheir would become an accomplished fact'.<sup>28</sup> Even Sir Charles Eliot was moved to comment that 'the southward movement of the Abyssinians is a serious matter'.<sup>29</sup>

Eliot feared, however, that it would be costly. 'It is true that all this region is very distant', said Eliot. 'People hardly think more of it at Mombassa than they do in London, and an expensive extension of our power and responsibility, which would probably not be commercially profitable, is to be deprecated'.<sup>30</sup> Eliot was in a dilemma. 'It is not wise', he said, 'to cede any territory on the assumption that it is desert'. And he thought it was desirable to keep the Abyssinians as far as possible from the Kenya highlands, but he was also anxious to 'avoid the cost of any elaborate system of defence in the future'.<sup>31</sup>

Eliot had long disappeared from the scene when a decision was on the point of being reached. The East African Protectorate had by then been transferred from British Foreign Office to Colonial Office control in London. It was inevitable, therefore, that a quadripartite exchange of views should ensue between British Colonial Office

<sup>26</sup> Silberman, L., *Cahiers d'études Africaines*, Vol. II, 1961, p. 50.

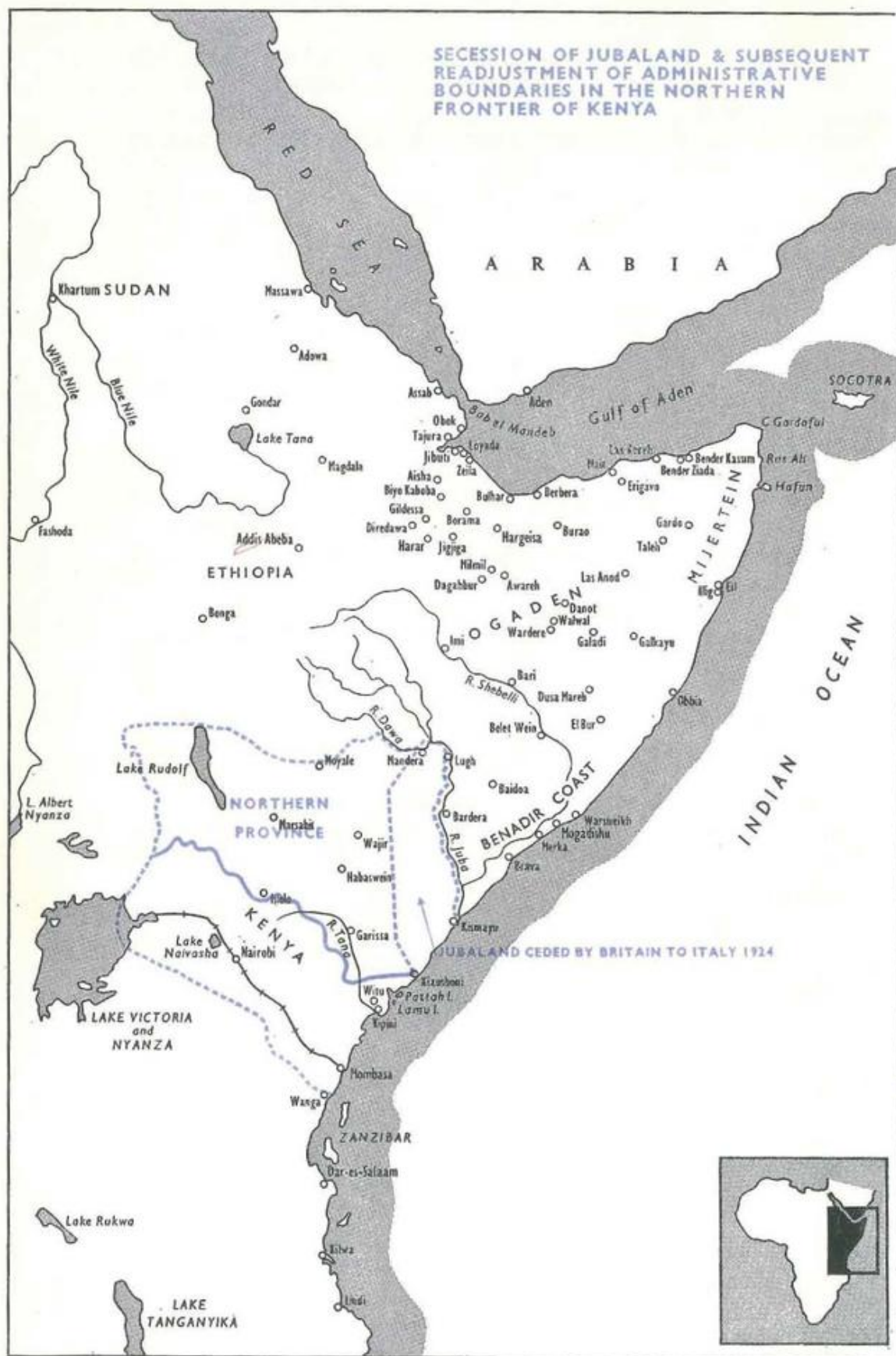
<sup>27</sup> Smith, A. D., op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>28</sup> *Jubaland*, p. 37.

<sup>29</sup> Eliot, C., Chap. 12.

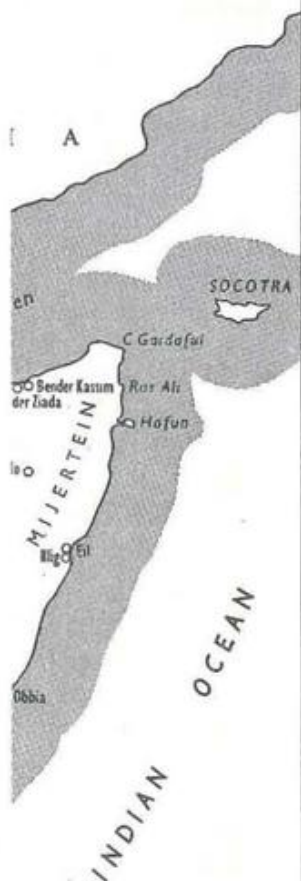
<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, Chap. 12.

<sup>31</sup> *Vide supra*.



Map IV





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representatives in London and abroad, and their counterparts in the British Foreign service. One way out of Britain's dilemma was to hand over the 'Boran and Gabbra' to Abyssinia. This was the suggestion<sup>32</sup> of Thesiger, the British Minister of Addis Ababa. A solution of this kind would undoubtedly have won for him much personal favour from Menelik, although by now at the end of his effective rule, and must have appealed to the Imperial Exchequer. But the British Colonial Office was not satisfied with the conduct of 'Shoan rule' and the suggestion was therefore dropped.

Something had to be done, and there were two factors which appear to have influenced Britain's decision to move into the unknown territory of Northern Tanaland,<sup>33</sup> a territory which was later to be known as the Northern Frontier District (N.F.D.). 'The two main causes' concludes<sup>34</sup> the official historian 'which impelled the Government to take this step were the ever-increasing raids by bands of Abyssinian soldiers and the westward movement of the Somali tribes. The country to be administered was not, and never had been, part of the territory of Abyssinia, and it was most necessary that as soon as circumstances allowed measures should be taken to protect against these marauders the tribes south of the frontier and to make provision for more than a nominal administration'.

It was not until 1910 that the first British Officer was appointed to take charge of the newly formed Northern Frontier District<sup>35</sup> (map II). Wajir was occupied by the new Administration in 1912, while in July of the same year the Garreh country was occupied to prevent raids by the Marehan and Abyssinians.<sup>36</sup> Thus the British Colonial Administration gradually extended its grip over this turbulent region.

In 1914 an administrative boundary between Jubaland and the N.F.D. was officially promulgated<sup>37</sup> (map p. xiv). It should not be supposed, however, that this boundary followed any particular ethnic

<sup>32</sup> *Jubaland*, p. 99. A commission from Ethiopia and British East Africa was appointed in 1907 to delimit the boundaries (appendix V).

<sup>33</sup> In Sir Charles Eliot's report to the Marquess of Lansdowne on the East Africa Protectorate in 1901 he observes that 'the most important feature of Tanaland . . . is the river from which it takes its name. . . . The country beyond this is little known, but appears to be sparsely inhabited and covered with brushwood'. Not much more appears to have been known in 1910 when the N.F.D. was first placed under British Colonial Administration.

<sup>34</sup> *Jubaland*, p. 101.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>36</sup> *Jubaland*, p. 119.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1., quoting *East Africa Official Gazette*, p. 308, 1914. The other boundaries of the N.F.D. were not defined until after the first world war.



division. It merely partitioned camel owning nomads in Jubaland from their kinsmen in Tanaland and the newly created N.F.D.<sup>38</sup> The traditional movement of Somali pastoralists in search of grazing provided the British with a colonial administrative problem<sup>39</sup> which they managed eventually to solve with credit. This movement, which stemmed from no central, political or military authority, but was impelled by the hazards of a pastoral economy, was entirely different in character from the fleeting incursions of bands of Amhara from the rich and fertile highlands of Abyssinia, who came down to the lowlands, not to settle, but to loot and plunder, and to claim a sovereignty in competition with other colonialists in their scramble for Africa.<sup>40</sup>

The new administrative boundary in 1914 did not prevent unrest in North Jubaland and the Eastern Sector of the N.F.D. which continued to cause the British Colonial Administration unceasing trouble during the first world war. Wajir and the whole of the territory to the north-west was evacuated between 1916-17 'as no troops could be sent to defend it'.<sup>41</sup> By 1921 it was evident<sup>42</sup> that Britain, in fulfilment of a secret pledge in 1915, would find it less painful to transfer to Italy the Province of Jubaland than a portion of her conquered territory.

In the event, though this could hardly have crossed the minds of the British authorities at the time, the transfer of Jubaland to Italy was a step in the right direction. However, the transfer still left incorporated with Kenya<sup>43</sup> a triangle of about 12,000 square miles of the former Somali Jubaland Province, together with other areas in Tanaland and in the Northern Province (map p. 12). It should also be recorded that the British Government was aware<sup>44</sup> that this new boundary cut across traditional grazing areas and that it gave the Somalis, without their knowledge or consent and at variance with Britain's Treaty with the Ogaden signed in 1896 (appendix IV), a new colonial nationality which they could not contest. Secession took place on June 29, 1925, and for one year, Jubaland was administered as

<sup>38</sup> For references to Somalis living in former Tanaland see Gilkison's report in January 1909, quoted in *Jubaland*, p. 40, and Salkeld's comment on p. 54 of the same publication.

<sup>39</sup> *Jubaland*, p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> See Miss Perham's comment, pp. 8-9.

<sup>41</sup> *Jubaland*, p. 136. See also Moyse-Bartlett, p. 447.

<sup>42</sup> Moyse-Bartlett, op. cit., p. 466.

<sup>43</sup> The East African Protectorate became the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya in 1920.

<sup>44</sup> See Cmd. Paper 2194, Treaty between U.K. and Italy, 1924, Articles VI and IX.



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a separate Italian Colony.<sup>45</sup> Thereafter it was integrated with Somalia under Italian Colonial rule.

Kenya's new international border called for internal revision of the boundaries of Tanaland and the Northern Frontier District. In the South the Witu Sultanate and the coastal area of Tanaland were lopped off. Subsequently in the north the Turkana and Samburu areas were added to the Northern Frontier District, and the whole was finally administered as the Northern Province (N.P.) (map p. 12).

It is an arid region on the whole; sparse vegetation, sand and lava, but still supporting large herds of camels, cattle, sheep and goats. Over 100,000 square miles in area, and inhabited by nomads 'behind a troublesome frontier nearly 500 miles in length'.<sup>46</sup> The total population of the Province is over 180,000 with a density of less than two persons per square mile.

Because of the low density of population, of their nomadic characteristics and poor economic potential, the Province has attracted from the Central Colonial Government little priority for public services. There is no electricity supply and only three public water undertakings.<sup>47</sup> The following is a comparative table of education facilities:

	Northern Province	Remainder of Kenya
Elementary Schools	8	4,083
Intermediate Schools	1	604

Account must, of course, be taken of the nomadic life of the majority of the N.P. inhabitants and of the higher density of settled people in the other half of Kenya - the ratio is about 28:1. Nevertheless, the table above illustrates the disparity in educational opportunities between the respective regions.

In the field of Local Government, the N.P. appears to have lagged seriously behind the rest of Kenya. The African District Councils Ordinance of 1950 was only introduced into the N.P. in 1961. It can be argued justly that there have been other urgent administrative problems,<sup>48</sup> that there have been military commitments; and some might argue with less validity that the N.F.D./

<sup>45</sup> The work of the Jubaland Boundary Commission. *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. LXXII, 1928.  
<sup>46</sup> Moyse-Bartlett, p. 449.  
<sup>47</sup> Statistics have been gathered from *The Atlas of Kenya*, 1st Edition, 1959, Nairobi.  
<sup>48</sup> Such as armed raiders, water and pasture control.



N.P. was for twenty years under military administration so that it could 'march with the boundaries of a great European power'.<sup>49</sup> This attitude of mind is presumably long out-dated but all these factors may partially explain why the N.P. appears to have remained static whilst the rest of Kenya has forged ahead.

Another inhibiting factor was probably the Special Districts Ordinance of 1934 which effectively insulated the Province from contact with the outside world, including the other half of Kenya. It is still in force and restricts the movement of everybody entering and leaving the Province. This measure contributed towards a feeling among Somalis and others in the N.P. of isolation and disembodiment from the rest of Kenya.<sup>50</sup>

When it came to the point of representation in the Kenya Legislative Council in 1955 the people of the Province expressed a wish that, until the Province could be represented by its own member, their interests should continue to be cared for by the Government.<sup>51</sup> The Commissioner appointed to enquire into methods for the selection of African Representatives sympathized with the feelings of the elders in the N.P. 'who', he said, 'ethnographically are quite distinct from the Africans in the rest of Kenya'.<sup>52</sup>

As far back as 1904, Sir Charles Eliot,<sup>53</sup> the Commissioner for East Africa Province, observed that 'if it were possible to detach the districts [areas] inhabited by Somalis, it would be an excellent thing to form them into a separate government, as they are different in population, economic and physical conditions from the other Provinces; but, unfortunately, they are too small to form a separate administration, and the adjoining Somali territories are not British'.

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<sup>49</sup> Moyse-Bartlett, p. 456. See also p. 466 for evidence of continuation of military administration of the N.F.D. in 1935.

<sup>50</sup> For a well-informed exposition see the *Kenya Weekly News*, Dec. 8, 1961, pp. 32-33, p. 46.

<sup>51</sup> Report of the Commissioner appointed to enquire into methods of selection of African Representatives to the Legislative Council, 1955, para. 69.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, para. 70.

<sup>53</sup> Eliot, C., *op. cit.*, Chap 12.



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## THREE

### *The Rise of Menelik* ✓

IT WAS the advent of the steamship that focused European attention on the Somali coast, south of Aden. With the consent of the Sultan of Lahej, Britain landed a stock of coal, in 1829, on an island in the Aden harbour,<sup>1</sup> and the steamship *Hugh Lindsay* was thus able for the first time to steam from Bombay to Suez in one month and three days. But as there was no labour in Aden to handle the coal an alternative port had to be found. The island of Socotra was considered, but even an offer of ten thousand dollars<sup>2</sup> failed to impress the owner, a Sultan living on the Arabian mainland. There appeared to be no other suitable island in the Gulf so the Bombay Government turned once again to Aden.

By then a ship from India, carrying pilgrims bound for Mecca, had foundered on the Aden coast. The survivors had been plundered and the ship had been looted. A British naval officer was therefore despatched to Aden to secure from the Sultan compensation for what had been stolen. The officer not only succeeded in this mission but at the same time he concluded an agreement with the Sultan for the secession of Aden in return for an annual subsidy.<sup>3</sup> But the Sultan's son objected to these arrangements and in 1839 British and Indian troops annexed the port by force.

But the annexation of Aden was not complete for Britain without some formal assurances from the people on the opposite shore in order to forestall international rivalry at the mouth of the Red Sea. A Treaty was therefore concluded in 1840 between the East India

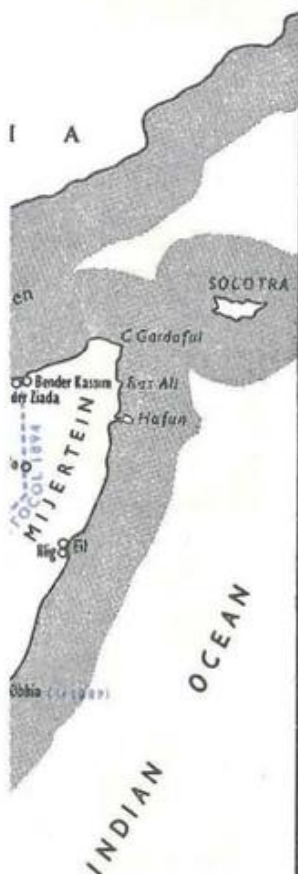
<sup>1</sup> Coupland, R., p. 464.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 465.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 466.

Map V





Company and the Danakil Sultan of Tajura<sup>4</sup> by which the Sultan 'engaged not to enter into any Bond or Treaty with any other power'. In addition the Sultan ceded the island of Mussa (near Tajura) for 10 bags of rice.<sup>5</sup> A similar treaty was drawn up in the same year between the East India Company and the Governor of Zeila; and in 1866 the British Political Agent in Aden succeeded in concluding an 'engagement' with the Somali Sultan Mohamed Yusef of the Mijertein in which both parties solemnly proclaimed their intention to prohibit the exportation of slaves. 'We will export none ourselves', the signatories declared, 'nor permit our subjects to do so'.

prohibition of the Somali people to export slaves, nor Somali was to be sold.

With France's acquisition<sup>6</sup> in 1862 (appendix VI (a) and (b)) of the harbour of Obok 'with the adjacent plain', over which she exercised no effective sovereignty, the Somali and Danakil coastline on the southern shore of the Aden Gulf remained undisturbed by foreigners (apart from Burton and Speke) until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Burton had visited Harar and Speke had travelled to the Nogal valley, east of Burao; but both departed from Berbera in 1855 pursued by spearmen. Burton received a spear through the jaw and Speke was wounded in eleven places.

In 1869, the Red Sea, formerly a cul-de-sac at Suez where ships' cargoes were handled by rail across the Egyptian isthmus to Alexandria, was open to shipping. Africa became an island, voyages round the Cape were curtailed and the Middle East pattern of commerce and strategy, politics and diplomacy, was to impinge on the Horn of Africa.

It was the Khedive of Egypt who took the initiative. A claim had already been established to Berbera in 1867; and in 1875 the Egyptians took possession of Zeila, marched inland and occupied Harar where they set up an administration which was to last ten years.<sup>7</sup> But this was not all. The Khedive claimed dominion over the whole Somali coast and despatched a naval expedition to the mouth of the Juba river to link the southern Sudan and the Great Lakes with East Africa. Egyptian troops were landed at Kismayu but they were with-

<sup>4</sup> The whole coast from Suez to Musa Dongola (21°N) had been in the Pashalik of Egypt ever since the fifteenth century, while South of 21° the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, whose Government was known as the Porte, claimed the coast as far as Zeila (11° 20'N). The various Danakil chiefs whose districts touched the coast were practically independent both of the Porte and of Abyssinia. See *Foreign Office Handbook* (Abyssinia), 1920, p. 22, also appendix VII.

<sup>5</sup> Hertslet, E., *Map of Africa by Treaty* (3rd Edition 1909), Vol. I, p. 408.

<sup>6</sup> Acquired for 50,500 francs. See *Foreign Office Handbook* (French Somaliland), 1920, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Hill, R., *Egypt in the Sudan, 1820-81*, 1959, p. 141. See appendix VII.



drawn following a protest from Britain on behalf of the Sultan of Zanzibar who had a 'convenient, if shadowy, claim to this part of the coast'.<sup>8</sup> Britain, however, was prepared to accept in 1877, under the suzerainty of the sublime Porte of the Ottoman Empire, Egyptian jurisdiction over Somali territory between Bab-el-Mandeb and Hafun on the Indian Ocean. It was conditional however on an undertaking by the Porte not to cede any portion of the Somali coast to a foreign power. A Convention to this effect was drawn up between Britain and the Khedive<sup>9</sup> but the Porte would not accept the conditional clause and the Convention thus became inoperative. Britain continued to recognise Egypt's *de facto* jurisdiction<sup>10</sup> over the territory between Bab-el-Mandeb and Hafun, including Harar.

Other powers also became interested in the new waterway. It was the western shore of the Red Sea and the southern shore of the Aden Gulf that aroused the most interest, and, for Britain, the most concern. 'I would strongly deprecate any foreign nation being permitted to gain any footing anywhere on the southern coast of the Gulf of Aden', wrote the British Resident at Aden in 1879.<sup>11</sup> By 1880 however Italy had established herself at Assab and the French, to counter this move, revived their interest in Obok. Whilst in 1884 the British occupied part of the Red Sea coast in order to evacuate Egyptian garrisons marooned by the Mahdi in the Sudan. At the same time Britain sought Abyssinian help by promising the Emperor John the ex-Egyptian territories behind the port of Massawa.<sup>12</sup> To counterbalance French activities on the Gulf of Tajura<sup>13</sup> Britain gave Italy in 1885 tacit approval to occupy Massawa. Not satisfied, Italy sought Harar as well, failing that, Zeila.<sup>14</sup>

Egypt by then had been gravely weakened by the Mahdi rebellion and was forced to withdraw from Harar and from the Somali coast. Britain was in a dilemma. She wished to annex Berbera to ensure

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>9</sup> Hertslet, Vol. II., p. 615.

<sup>10</sup> *Foreign Office Handbook* (British Somaliland), 1920, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Starkie, E., *Arthur Rimbaud in Abyssinia*, 1937, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Jones, A. H. M., and Monroe, E., *A History of Ethiopia*, 1935, p. 137 (1960 edition).

<sup>13</sup> Brigadier-General Hogg, Political Resident in Aden, on a visit to this coast in 1889, wrote that the country on the north side of the Gulf of Tajura belongs to the Danakil while that on the south is inhabited by the black Essa. 'Tajura, a small village with about 120 huts and a mosque at each end . . . is the sea-port of the Danakil; there are about 600 inhabitants and the name of the chief is Sultan Hamud Mohamed'. Hogg added that 'the population of Assab is now 5,000 having increased during the last four years from 1,500 . . . the population of Massawa is 4,000'. (*India Office Records* No. 5/425 of Feb. 11, 1889.)

<sup>14</sup> Starkie, *op. cit.*, p. 55.



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Aden's supply of mutton. This travelled on the hoof from the Somali hinterland to Berbera and thence by dhow to Aden. But Britain did not wish to extend much further east than Berbera, on economic grounds, and preferred that the coastline from Tajura to Zeila should continue under the suzerainty of the Porte, whom she could control, rather than that it should fall into French or Italian hands. The Porte was not satisfied with this coastal strip and protested that Berbera also was unquestionably under Turkish sovereignty. The Porte took no further action,<sup>15</sup> however, and the field was thus open to the manoeuvres of European diplomacy.

The ports of Assab and Tajura provided an outlet for Abyssinian trade from the Kingdoms of Tigre and Shoa respectively whilst the port of Zeila monopolised the trade from the independent city of Harar 'which had become, since the Egyptian occupation of 1874, the greatest trading town of the interior'.<sup>16</sup> Berbera too attracted caravans from Harar but trade from the Somali Ogaden country (map p. 18) was equally important to Berbera.<sup>17</sup>

It was over these ports that the three European powers were to concentrate their gaze, each as fearful and as jealous of the other, and it was from the three western ports that they were to compete for the favours of rival Abyssinian Kings by trading modern firearms and ammunition in immense quantities and with such disastrous consequences.

France was quick to establish and widen her influence along the Gulf of Tajura. She not only hoped to ensure that Abyssinian trade would thus be less likely to be diverted to the Italians in Assab but she needed a coaling station urgently to facilitate her war with Indo-China, for coal at Aden had been denied to her on the grounds of neutrality.<sup>18</sup> In any event, she had no wish to be beholden to Britain.<sup>19</sup> She thus concluded a Treaty in 1884 with the Sultan of Gobad, who agreed to place his foreign relations under French control, and 'on

<sup>15</sup> *Foreign Office Handbook*, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> Starkie, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Burton, R. F., *First Footsteps in East Africa*, 1856 (Memorial Edition, 1894), Vol. II, p. 94. See Swayne, H. G. C., *Seventeen Trips through Somaliland*, 1895, p. 2; also James, F. L., *The Unknown Horn of Africa*, 1888, p. 327, for a description of Somali merchants from Berbera and Bulhar meeting their colleagues from Merka and Mogadishu on the Webbe Shabelli in Ogaden country.

<sup>18</sup> *Foreign Office Handbook* (French Somaliland), p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Starkie, E., p. 1, quotes D. de Ryvoire in *Mer Rouge et Abyssinie* (1880) as saying that France hitherto had been obliged to rely on *l'hospitalité parfois preciaire et toujours jalouse de l'Angleterre*.



September 21 the French acquired [appendix VI (c)] from the Sultan of Tajura the cession of his territory from Ras Ali . . . to the Ghubbet-el-Kharab [map p. 10]. In 1885 the Sultan of Gobad accepted a Protectorate [appendix VI (e)], and this course was also followed by the Chiefs of the Issa (or Essa) Somalis [appendix VI (d)]. These gains were consolidated by the enactment of a French law of August 12, 1885, for the foundation of a Colony of Obok and a Protectorate over Tajura and the adjacent territories'.<sup>20</sup> In spite of Britain's former Treaty of 1840, which bound the Sultan not to treat with any other power, Britain made no protest about these Treaties with France.

This does not mean that Britain viewed these activities with favour. She was too preoccupied with the disposal of Harar and with the occupation of Berbera and Zeila. British troops were despatched first to Zeila as the Porte was not evidently going to accept Britain's offer<sup>21</sup> of sovereignty, and during the course of the next two years separate Treaties were made with five independent Somali clans from Zeila eastwards. The Treaties concluded with the Somali clans were divided into two parts. Treaties between 1884-85 [appendix VIII (a)] provided for the preservation of Somali independence, law and order. The preambles to some of these Treaties referred explicitly to the impending withdrawal of the troops of the Khedive of Egypt and made it clear that the clans were mainly concerned with arriving at an arrangement with the British Government which would be effective in the maintenance of their independence and the preservation of order.<sup>22</sup> In return the tribes agreed, among other things, not to cede, save to the British Government, territories inhabited by them or under their control. The Treaties did not make any provision for the transfer of Somali lands to the British Government.

In 1886 a supplementary Treaty [appendix VIII (b)] was concluded with each clan. Articles I and II, set out below with necessary adaptations, were common to all the Treaties:

<sup>20</sup> *Foreign Office Handbook* (French Somaliland), p. 11. By the decree of May 20, 1896, Obok and its dependencies were given the title of *Côte française des Somalis* (ibid., p. 16).

<sup>21</sup> *Foreign Office Handbook* (British Somaliland), p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> See petition dated 1955 from Somali Representatives of the former British Somaliland Protectorate addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations concerning 'the illegal transfer or cession of a substantial portion of our territories known as Reserved Area and the Haud of approximately 25,000 square miles and affecting about 300,000 of our people - nearly half our population - by the Protecting Power (the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) to Ethiopia in pursuance of an agreement arrived at between them on November 29, 1954, in reaffirmance of the Anglo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1897'.



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#### Article I

*'The British Government, in compliance with the wish of the undersigned elders of the [clan inserted here], hereby undertakes to extend to them and to the territories under their authority and jurisdiction the gracious favour and protection of Her Majesty the Queen Empress.'*

#### Article II

*'The said Elders of the [clan inserted here] agree and promise to refrain from entering into any correspondence, agreement, or treaty with any foreign nation or power except with the knowledge and sanction of Her Majesty's Government.'*

It will be seen from the foregoing that the Somalis themselves invited the British Government to undertake the protection of their territories but they did not transfer the ownership or title of their lands to the protecting power. The territories were referred to in general terms as territory under the authority and jurisdiction of the clan concerned. From this, it should not necessarily be inferred that the British Government were ignorant of the extent of the territories in question. Burton had traversed and mapped<sup>23</sup> the principal areas (showing some clan dispositions) during his travels to and from Harar in 1854-55. A British Protectorate was established on the Somali coast from Jibuti to Bandar Ziada on July 20, 1887, and it was administered by the Government of India through Aden and Bombay. One year later Britain abandoned Jibuti and ten years later she abandoned people and their territory over whom she had established these Treaties of Protection. More will be said about this in subsequent chapters.

Returning to 1884, the year in which the Egyptians withdrew from the old Muslim city of Harar, the Abyssinian King Menelik of Shoa, anticipating the withdrawal, offered France support in the acquisition of Harar if France in return would secure for him a port on the Red Sea.<sup>24</sup> Britain, for her part, did not wish to annex Harar; nor, for that matter, did she wish to see Harar fall into either Abyssinian, French or Italian hands. She decided to compromise and to make the son of the last Emir Governor of the City and to retain at a distance of some 200 miles a tenuous authority over Harar. Major Hunter, Britain's first Consular Agent on the Somali coast,

<sup>23</sup> Burton, op. cit., map opposite p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Starkie, p. 48.



wrote to the new Emir Abdillahi Mohamed with the admonition, 'Be obedient in all things to our representative . . . at Harar'.<sup>25</sup>

The Harar people claim to be descendants of Arab and Persian exiles who settled in that part of Africa in the early thirteenth century: they have a language of their own and a special script which is no longer used.<sup>26</sup> Harar was built, for the greater part, in the sixteenth century, and soon became the richest town in East Africa,<sup>27</sup> an independent city State, and a centre of commerce and of Islamic learning.<sup>28</sup> It was the greatest prize that Menelik, the King of Shoa, could win, for not only was Harar and the neighbouring highland rich and fertile, it was the mountain stronghold that protected the Somali lowlands from Abyssinian penetration and *vice versa*. On the withdrawal of the Egyptian garrison Harar was within the grasp of the Shoa King.

Menelik's rise to power, in the event helped rather than hindered by European diplomatic manoeuvres, invites a short excursion into Abyssinian history as subsequent events will show. Nineteenth century Abyssinia, for the most part, was characterized by 'the struggle among the great chiefs'.<sup>29</sup> In the early part of the century the principals in the struggle had been reduced to four: the rulers of Tigre, of Amhara (who controlled Gondar), of Gojam and of Shoa (map p. 10).<sup>30</sup> Gondar and Gojam fell out of the race around 1850, leaving Tigre and Shoa to fight it out. Meanwhile, 'a kind of highwayman in the lowlands' intervened. He was known as the scourge of the Moslem merchants that plied on the caravan routes towards the Nile.<sup>31</sup> His name was Kassa, and, joined by 'malcontents and adventurers', became so powerful that in 1854 he ruled Gondar and Gojam. His rivals were the Ras of Tigre and the King of Shoa. The former proclaimed himself King of Kings on the death of the old Chief of Gondar; but the Abuna, as head of the coptic church, agreed instead to crown Kassa on the understanding that he would expel all Roman

<sup>25</sup> Starkie, p. 49, quoting Foreign Office paper 141, 222.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8. Addis Ababa was not built until 1883.

<sup>28</sup> Trimingham, J. S., *Islam in Ethiopia*, 1952, p. 140. The author on pp. 226-7 makes a recent comparison of the different racial groups living within the city's ancient walls: 'two thousand Christians, . . . twelve thousand Hararis proper who speak the unique city language, ten to fifteen thousand Galla, a thousand Arabs, and a thousand or more Somalis'. See also Lewis, I. M., *A Pastoral Democracy*, 1961, p. 17, for an account of Harar as the sixteenth century capital of the Muslim Sultanate of Adal, formerly based on the port of Zeila.

<sup>29</sup> Jones and Munroe, p. 127.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 127-8.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p. 128.



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Catholic missionaries.<sup>32</sup> War followed with Tigre. Kassa was triumph-  
ant, and was crowned in 1855 Theodore II, King of Kings. By 1860  
he had conquered Shoa taking Menelik captive and thus became the  
undisputed ruler of Abyssinia.

Eight years later Theodore shot himself, following the defeat  
of his Army at Arogee on April 10, 1868, in an encounter with  
General Napier. Again the country was thrown into internecine  
struggles of the past. By 1872 Tigre triumphed and the Ras was  
crowned King of Kings with the title of John IV. But Menelik, who  
had escaped from Magdala, re-established himself as King of Shoa  
and, by playing off the European powers one against the other, he  
was to become dedicated, like the Europeans around him, to an  
imperialism that knew no bounds. Power lay in the superiority of  
modern weapons of war. These were the principal imports from the  
Italian and French ports,<sup>33</sup> and King Menelik, rather than Emperor  
John, was the recipient.

Italy was then moving inland from her base at Massawa towards  
Tigre country, pushing out a succession of small forts and outposts  
ostensibly to protect the caravan routes.<sup>34</sup> Alarmed by these incursions  
the Tigreans seized some members of an Italian 'scientific mission'  
which had penetrated into the highlands. An Italian relief column  
of 500 men set out in 1887 to rescue them but came up against a  
force of some 20,000 Abyssinians and were almost totally  
annihilated.<sup>35</sup> The Italians evidently thought better of fighting it  
out on the ground and approached Menelik with an offer of 5,000  
firearms and support for his claim to the Emperorship if in return  
he would help them against Emperor John.<sup>36</sup> Menelik accepted the  
firearms but did not have to complete the rest of the bargain because  
John, who had begun to feel nervous of Menelik's growing strength,  
had come to terms with him. They agreed on the division of future  
conquests. Menelik was to have Harar, Kaffa and the Galla countries  
and John the Wollo Gallas.<sup>37</sup> John's son of twelve was to marry  
Menelik's daughter Zauditu, aged seven, and Menelik would succeed  
John as King of Kings.

But Italy was not alone in buying Shoan goodwill for the price  
of a rifle. She had a serious rival in the arms trade.<sup>38</sup> Italy com-

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>36</sup> Starkie, p. 102.

<sup>37</sup> Jones and Munroe, p. 136.

<sup>38</sup> Starkie, p. 71.



plained to Britain that the French were offering arms to Menelik if in return he would direct Shoan trade to Jibuti and not to Zeila.<sup>39</sup> Whether these bargains were met or not they certainly stimulated a lucrative trade in guns, ammunition, lead and powder which by 1886 had reached large proportions. The French poet Arthur Rimbaud, who was himself an arms dealer in 1888, and a resident of Harar of some seven years standing, estimated that Menelik 'had received in the last five years more than twenty-four thousand guns of various kinds'.<sup>40</sup> A trans-shipment order from Aden to Obok in 1885 quotes the French trader Savouré as having trans-shipped on June 27, 1885, in one journey alone, 30,000 cartridges, 600,000 percussion caps and 3,000 muskets.<sup>41</sup>

By a Convention with France in 1886, Britain attempted to prohibit the import of arms on the grounds that they might fall into the hands of 'uncivilized tribes'. Enid Starkie argues<sup>42</sup> that this was not the real reason for Britain's objection to the arms traffic. Britain's fear was that the arms might help a power in Abyssinia unfavourable to herself. Whatever the reason, the Convention was not adhered to by France and a similar attempt by Britain in 1888 to limit the import of arms was circumvented. The French view was that it would be possible to prevent the acquisition of arms by neighbouring chiefs of 'small and barbarous tribes' but that 'both the Emperor and King Menelik were powerful and independent princes, possessing considerable military forces which could not, practically, be prevented from equipping themselves with arms not manufactured in their country'.<sup>43</sup> It is probable that Britain's main anxiety was commercial for not only was she losing a lucrative trade by adhering to a principle that no other nation was observing, but the revenues accruing from Zeila and Berbera markets were expected to support the coastal administration. The livelihood of Zeila was now threatened by the probability of an alternative port at Jibuti.

France not only claimed Jibuti but Zeila as well.<sup>44</sup> The issue was to be fought out in a Gilbertian fashion by an Englishman and a Frenchman with contrasting personalities and precepts. Major

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 91 (quoting Rimbaud's report, published in *Lettres de la vie littéraire*).

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 108-9. Britain also unsuccessfully approached Italy with a view to restricting the import of arms through Assab (*ibid.*, p. 71).

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63. It should not be imagined that Jibuti was then anything more than 'a coral island about 40 ft. high connected with the mainland at low water with [in 1889] two houses built of stone'. (*India Office Records: Letters from Aden, 1889-96*, Vol. 7, Brigadier-General Hogg to India Office No. 5/425 of Feb. 11, 1889).



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Hunter of the Indian Army represented Britain and M. Henri was the French Consular Representative.<sup>45</sup> Hunter was honest, and had a fidgety sense of his own importance but no sense of humour. He was dogged and somewhat blustering. Henri was also pertinacious; on the other hand he was cheerful and full of sparkle and vigour. Hunter would stick to constitutional means for settling disputes whilst Henri would prefer to plant the French flag provocatively on the wrong side of the imagined boundary. Hunter would protest loudly, but went no further than the letter of his instructions. Henri would just slip along the coast a little further, then still a little further until Hunter could stand it no longer and would race from one end of the sweltering coast to the other, chasing the French flag from palm tree to sand-dune, doing everything to preserve the honour and dignity of his country, and losing his temper at the same time.

The dispute raged unceasingly until the French finally came to rest at Jibuti.<sup>46</sup> An agreement (appendix IX) was then reached between the two countries in 1888 which provided for a boundary starting approximately half-way between Jibuti and Zeila (map p. 28) and proceeding south-westerly along the caravan route to Harar, which both Governments agreed not to annex.<sup>47</sup> The contest over, Hunter and Henri left the Somali coast at the same hour and on the same day in order that 'neither should appear to have yielded to his opponent, so that the honour and national pride of their respective countries should be safeguarded'.<sup>48</sup>

France thus acquired Jibuti although Britain had notified other Powers on July 20, 1887 'that a British Protectorate had been established on the Somali coast from Ras Jibuti . . . to Bandar Ziada'.<sup>49</sup> Again by an Order in Council on December 13, 1889, the British Protectorate of the Somali coast was described as extending from Ras Jibuti on the south coast of the entrance to the Bay of Tajura eastwards, to and including Bandar Ziada, as notified on July 20, 1887.<sup>50</sup> The inland boundaries were still undefined because Britain could not reconcile her need for Somali territory (to secure meat supplies for Aden) with the cost of giving protection to the five clans with whom she had entered into solemn Treaties. One thing was certain: Harar had been saved from being conquered by Europeans, but,

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>47</sup> *Foreign Office Handbook* (French Somaliland), Appendix I.

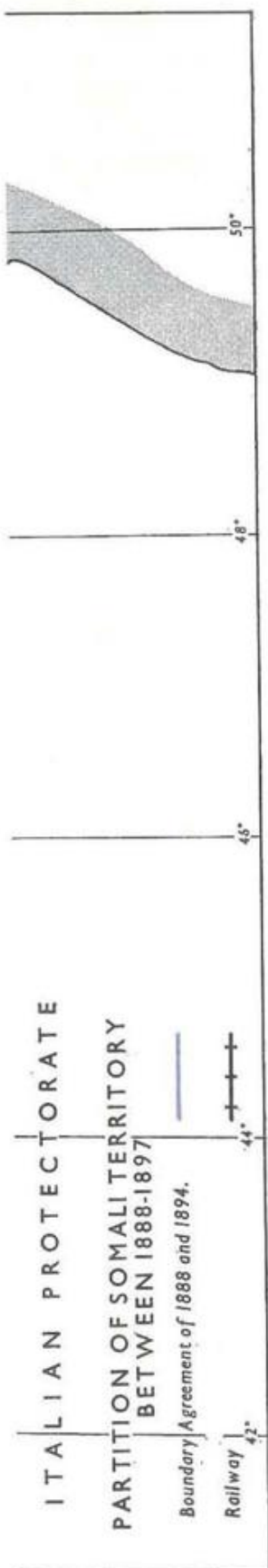
<sup>48</sup> Starkie, pp. 66-7.

<sup>49</sup> Hertslet, Vol. II, p. 617.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 410.







ironically, she was to lose her independence by the supply of European arms to Menelik.

In 1886 a small party of Italian explorers on their way from Zeila sent a message to Emir Abdillahi of Harar to say that they were bringing him expensive gifts. The Emir instructed his soldiers to kill the intruders. Having issued the instruction he had second thoughts and revoked them; but the soldiers were still determined to carry them out and not one of the Italians survived the subsequent massacre. This savage incident is said to have provided Menelik with the pretext for occupying Harar in support of his fellow Christians. Enid Starkie, quoting from a report<sup>51</sup> by Hunter, suggests that Menelik feared Italian annexation of Harar, in retribution for the massacre, and wished to forestall them. Menelik had good reason to fear, not Italy, but the Emir of Harar who would only agree to acknowledge Menelik's overlordship if he would become a Muslim. First Menelik sent an army against Harar under Ras Waldo Gabriel but it was defeated by the Emir. Then he himself with an army of 30,000 met the Harari at Chalauko and routed them in a battle lasting a quarter of an hour.<sup>52</sup> Thus in February 1887 Menelik took revenge for the sixteenth century conquest of Abyssinia by the Kingdom of Adel and wrote this letter<sup>53</sup> to the British Resident in Aden:

*'From Menelik King of Shoa, and of all the Gallas good and bad! How are you? By the Grace of God I am well! Amir Abdillahi would suffer no Christian in his country. He was another Gragne.<sup>54</sup> But by the help of God I fought him, destroyed him, and he escaped on horseback. I hoisted my flag in his capital and my troops occupied his city. Gragne died. Abdillahi in our day was his successor. This is not a Muslim country, as everyone knows!'*

Menelik seized a substantial arsenal inside the city walls, arms which the British had insisted should be left by the Egyptians for the Emir's protection against attack, yet Britain had done everything to prevent Menelik from obtaining arms from the coast.<sup>55</sup> Ras

<sup>51</sup> Starkie, p. 87, Foreign Office 78.3972 of April 21, 1886.

<sup>52</sup> Perham, M., *The Government of Ethiopia*, 1948, p. 310.

<sup>53</sup> Starkie, p. 38, quoting Foreign Office 78.4078 of Jan. 20, 1887.

<sup>54</sup> Reference to Immam Ahmed ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi (1506-43) nicknamed Gran 'the left-handed' who embarked on a conquest which brought three-quarters of Abyssinia into the power of the Muslim (mostly Somali) Kingdom of Adal from 1529-43 when 'Gran' was killed and his army defeated by the Abyssinians, supported by Portuguese, at Wayna Daga near Lake Tana. See Trimingham, J. S., *Islam of Ethiopia*, 1952, pp. 84-90.

<sup>55</sup> Starkie, p. 68.



Makonnen<sup>56</sup> Menelik's cousin, was appointed Governor of Harar which 'brought the Abyssinians for the first time into direct contact with the warlike Somali peoples'.<sup>57</sup>

Menelik followed his conquest of Harar in 1887 by sending his forces under command of Fitaurari Manguseh sixty miles east of Harar to Jigjiga, the important watering centre in Somali country and the meeting-place for camel caravans from Harar, Berbera and the Ogaden. Apart from fleeting Abyssinian raids to the south, Jigjiga was the most easterly point that substantial Abyssinian forces were to penetrate into Somali territory until 1901. In that year they were called upon<sup>58</sup> to give military assistance to the British who were fighting the Somali dervishes led by the Ogaden Somali Sheikh, Mohammed Abdille Hassan.<sup>59</sup>

Menelik was too preoccupied following his occupation of Harar to consider any further expansion into Somali territory. His attention was directed to the north where 60,000 Mahdist forces from the Sudan swept through Gojjam and sacked Gondar. Menelik moved up his forces but decided to leave the Sudanese dervishes to John, returning in 1888 to Shoa where he met the Italian plenipotentiary, Count Antonelli, with whom he arranged for the delivery of a consignment of 10,000 rifles. John was now attacking Gojjam, and again looked for Menelik's support, but the Shoans, though ready for battle, were diverted by Menelik to subdue the Galla in the Kingdom of Wallo.<sup>60</sup> In the following year the Sudanese dervishes struck once more, and John, again without Menelik's support, met them at Metemma and appeared to defeat them, but in the last moment of the engagement the Emperor was mortally wounded, and his army retired when its leader had fallen.<sup>61</sup>

The incorrigible Antonelli returned to Shoa in January 1889, as the bearer of a friendly gift of 5,000 rifles and some million cartridges from Humbert the King of Italy. He seized the opportunity

<sup>56</sup> The late father of the present Emperor Haile Selassie.

<sup>57</sup> Trimingham, op. cit., p. 129. See also Swayne, op. cit., p. 119, who describes Harar before Menelik's occupation as having been a 'buffer State' against Abyssinian encroachments on the Somali.

<sup>58</sup> From 1901-04, at Menelik's own suggestion, Abyssinian forces cordially co-operated with the British Forces. *Foreign Office Handbook* (Abyssinia), p. 43.

<sup>59</sup> The Somali dervishes had attacked the Abyssinian frontier post at Jigjiga in March 1900 but were repulsed with heavy losses which the Abyssinians claim amounted to 2,800 killed. The Somalis, however, 'behaved with the greatest gallantry, charging right up to the Abyssinian defences'. See McNeill, M., *In pursuit of the Mad Mullah*, 1902, p. 5.

<sup>60</sup> Perham, p. 55.

<sup>61</sup> Ullendorff, E., *The Ethiopians*, 1960, p. 91.



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of this timely visit to negotiate a Treaty (appendix X (a)) with the new Emperor Menelik.<sup>62</sup> Under the 'Treaty', named 'Uccialli', the Italians received formal recognition of their sovereignty over Eritrea;<sup>63</sup> more important was an article containing the provision that the Emperor 'consents to make use of the Government of His Majesty the King of Italy in treating of all matters that may arise with other Powers or Governments'.<sup>64</sup> This provision, which Menelik was to contest vigorously a year or two later, gave Italy a 'Protectorate' over Abyssinia.

Events were to show however that Menelik had no intention of allowing Abyssinia to become a dependency of any other foreign power. He was merely exploiting Italian favours to satisfy his ambitions, and could still make use of the Italians. Menelik was in need of more firearms, for he feared John's son, Ras Mangasha, whom John just before his death had nominated heir to the throne, contrary to his former undertaking. Menelik thus sent his cousin Ras Makonnen to Italy to negotiate a supplementary Treaty (appendix X (b)) which secured a loan of £40,000 on the security of the Customs at Harar. King Humbert added a useful gift of 38,000 rifles and 28 cannon, weapons which were later to be used with devastating effect against their donors at Adowa.<sup>65</sup> Not the least of the consequences of this battle was the ultimate abandonment by Italy of parts of Somali Ogaden country.

<sup>62</sup> Menelik was crowned in Entoto and not in Axum, where all previous Emperors had been crowned, because of his aversion to Tigre and his determination that the Imperial residence should be nearer to the most active (though newly acquired) city in his realm - i.e., Harar. See Starkie, p. 126.

<sup>63</sup> From *Mare Erythraeum*. See Ullendorff, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>64</sup> *Foreign Office Handbook* (Abyssinia), p. 31.

<sup>65</sup> Jones and Monroe, p. 139.

## FOUR

### *Conflict of Interests*

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THE AGREEMENT in 1888 between France and Britain, in which the two countries recognised each other's claims to a 'Protectorate'<sup>1</sup> on the west and east side respectively of the Zeila to Harar caravan route, was bound to conflict with Italy's interpretation of the Treaty of Ucciali with Abyssinia. By this Treaty Italy acquired, in her view, a Protectorate over the whole of Abyssinia. Britain acceded to this view but France contested it, and Menelik either ignored it or was genuinely ignorant of it. The focal point of the dispute was Harar. France was no more acquisitive about Harar than Britain<sup>2</sup> but she was determined to divert the Harar trade from Zeila to her new port at Jibuti and looked upon Harar as within her sphere of influence. Italy, on the other hand, regarded Harar as a dependency like the rest of Abyssinia. Thus Britain was directly affected by the conflicting interests of Abyssinia, France and Italy; and pursued, as we shall see, a cautious and negative policy on her Somali border with the Province of Harar. From now on Somali interests were to be subordinated to 'Imperial' interests.

The first manifestation of Italian sensitivity to British policy on the Somali coast came in 1890 when Italy expressed anxiety about 'the effect' a British punitive expedition of 500 soldiers against the Essa clan would have on Harar. Even the British Ambassador in Rome, fearful of upsetting Anglo-Italian relations, urged his Government for exact information 'to allay Signor Crispi's anxieties'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Article 2 of the *Agreement between the British and French Governments with regard to the Gulf of Tadjura and the Somali Coast*, February 2-9, 1888. (See appendix IX, p. 100).

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Article 4, 1888 Agreement (see footnote <sup>1</sup> above).

<sup>3</sup> *Red Sea and Somali Coast Papers*, India Office, London. Salisbury to Dufferin, Tel. No. 1 of Jan. 14, 1890 and Dufferin to Salisbury, Tel. No. 3, Jan. 18, 1890.



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ty to British policy y expressed anxiety '500 soldiers against British Ambassador relations, urged his r Crispi's anxieties'.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Salisbury to Dufferin, No. 3, Jan. 18, 1890.

To accord further with Italian wishes, Queen Victoria<sup>4</sup> was obliged to address Emperor Menelik through the King of Italy. The Emperor unwillingly agreed to adopt the same procedure in reverse. According<sup>5</sup> to M. Ilg, the Swiss engineer, who became Menelik's 'conseiller d'État',<sup>6</sup>

*'Menelik formerly had a most high opinion of England and the Queen . . . and was extremely desirous of friendly relations with England but the first shock to this state of opinion was a letter from the Queen in reply to a letter sent by Menelik to her . . . in which the Queen said she regretted she could not accept communications from him except through the King of Italy . . . Menelik said "what is this, am I a servant that the Queen should answer me so?" Menelik asked his advisers what was the meaning of this reply of the Queen and he was referred to the Treaty of Uccialli. Menelik sent for the Treaty and then discovered the wrong meaning that had been given to the Italian interpretation of the Abyssinian original . . . then he protested against the treaty . . . with the results that are known to all of us now.'*

In October 1890, however, Menelik wrote to the Queen rescinding his former undertaking to communicate through the Italian Government, explaining that the Abyssinian text of the Treaty with Italy made this optional and not obligatory. This was not Salisbury's interpretation of the Treaty, and he assured Italy that if the Queen replied to Menelik's letter she would reply, as before, through the Italian Government.<sup>7</sup> But the issue had far wider implications, challenging the whole basis of Italy's Protectorate over Abyssinia. The Italian text of Article XVII of the Treaty of Uccialli contained the provision that the Emperor 'consents to make use of' the Italian Government in treating of all matters that may arise with other powers or Governments; whereas the Amharic text, according to Menelik's letter to the King of Italy on September 27, 1890, read that he 'may make use of' the Italian Government.<sup>8</sup> Antonelli was sent to Addis Ababa to sort it out. Meanwhile, Italy, anxious to define the limits of her

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, Menelik to Queen, 27 (Abyssinian calendar) Yekatit, 1882 (May 1890).

<sup>5</sup> *Letters from Aden, 1889-96*, Vol. 7, India Office, London. Ferris to Cromer, confidential D/O Dec. 1, 1896. The offending letter from the Queen to which Menelik refers is probably No. 4 of Feb. 20, 1890, which can be seen among the *Red Sea Papers*.

<sup>6</sup> Gleichen, C. A. E. W., *With the Mission to Menelik, 1897-98*, p. 118.

<sup>7</sup> *Red Sea Papers*, Salisbury to Dufferin, No. 68, Dec. 28, 1890.

<sup>8</sup> *Foreign Office Handbook (Abyssinia)*, p. 31.



East and North East African possessions with Britain, proposed,<sup>9</sup> in November 1890, negotiations for delimitation. A Protocol (appendix III) was drawn up by both parties in March of the following year which divided East Africa from Italian Somaliland (map p. 18).

Antonelli was instructed on his visit to Abyssinia to induce Menelik to address a circular letter (appendix II) to the European Powers defining the boundaries of Abyssinia; and a letter written<sup>10</sup> by Antonelli from Aden to Rome on March 26, 1891, states that 'the draft for this circular which Antonelli had submitted to the Emperor was discussed at length. The Emperor was not satisfied with the draft, and protested that Lake Stefanie and Lake Rudolf were included within the Ethiopian boundaries'.

A circular letter *was* received both in Italy and in Britain, and probably in Germany. It is necessary to stress this because the contrary was then (and still is) believed<sup>11</sup> and this factor had a bearing on later developments. The circular can be traced to Stace,<sup>12</sup> the Consular Agent on the Somali coast, who forwarded it to Jopp, the Political Resident in Aden on June 18, 1891, with the comment that the 'letters were sent simultaneously to the Czar of Russia, the Emperor of Germany, the King of Italy and the President of the French Republic'. Jopp forwarded the letter to the India Office on June 20<sup>13</sup> and on July 24, Salisbury asked the Germans and the French if they had received Menelik's letter.<sup>14</sup> The reply, if any, cannot be traced but on August 22, Salisbury forwarded<sup>15</sup> to Tornielli in Rome the Queen's reply to the circular, enclosing the 1891 Protocol with Italy and informing Menelik that the British Government intended to abide by it. Tornielli confirmed<sup>16</sup> on September 7 that 'all possible care' would be taken to ensure delivery of the Queen's letter and that Italy would also send a copy of the 1891 Protocol to Menelik. The Queen in her letter of August 22 specifically asked for confirmation that Menelik had received her letter but there is no record of such confirmation having been received and it does not appear to have been pursued. There the matter rested for six years, ignored and forgotten.

<sup>9</sup> *Red Sea Papers*, Foreign Office to India Office, No. 19, 1890.

<sup>10</sup> Pankhurst, E. S., *Ex-Italian Somaliland*, 1951, pp. 22-23.

<sup>11</sup> 'This remarkable document . . . was never circulated; possibly Menelik gave it to his Italian allies to pass'. Jones and Monroe, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>12</sup> *Letters from Aden*, Vol. 7, Stace to Jopp, No. 992, June 18, 1891.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, Jopp to India Office, No. 7/1910, June 20, 1891.

<sup>14</sup> *Red Sea Papers*, No. 149, July 24, 1891.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, Salisbury to Tornielli, Aug. 22, 1891.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, No. 5 (Africa), Dering to Salisbury, Sept. 7, 1891.



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Antonelli may have persuaded Menelik to issue the 'remarkable circular' but he failed to persuade him to accept the Italian interpretation of the Ucciali Treaty, and from now on Italian influence in Abyssinia started its downward trend. But the relative advantages of the alliance were by no means entirely weighted on the Italian side alone. Italy in September 1890 secured Abyssinia's accession to the Brussels General Act of 1890. This Act was intended to protect 'the aboriginal populations of Africa'. But in Christian Abyssinia's case her accession to the General Act merely 'legalized' the import of firearms, giving her an immense military advantage over her neighbours.

The arms traffic from the Red Sea and the Gulf to Shoa and to Harar continued apace. Britain, having given up hope of persuading Italy and France to restrict imports, was faced with the embarrassment, now that Jibuti was becoming a trading competitor, of withholding arms from Menelik and from Makonnen, the Governor of Harar, and thus depriving Zeila of much needed commerce. Replying<sup>17</sup> to a letter from Menelik, the Queen sympathised with his difficulties in 'repelling his enemies' and in 'suppressing the slave trade' which were 'aggravated', she added, 'by the prohibition in force on the Somali coast against the importation of arms and munitions of war destined for your country'. She reassured Menelik that the arms agreement with France was no longer in force. Thus Salisbury<sup>18</sup> permitted Makonnen, on his return to Harar in 1890 from a visit to Italy, to import 2,000 rifles through the port of Zeila.

The arms were more likely to have been earmarked for border raids than for suppressing the slave trade. Stace reported<sup>19</sup> on June 30, 1891, that there was a severe famine in Harar and that it was 'doubtless this which drove the Abyssinian force into the Ogaden . . . for the flocks and herds of these districts must be most tempting'. But the problem became embarrassing for Stace when Somali clans under British protection were being molested by armed Abyssinian raiders. 'Last month' reported Captain Swayne,<sup>20</sup> 'the Rer Yunis Jibril [a sub-clan of the Habr Awal] received an emissary from the Abyssinians at Jigjiga . . . demanding two tobés per kraal as a compromise to stave off attack by the Abyssinians . . . [the elders] held a meeting between Medir and Suurel at which they decided not to pay the Abyssinian tribute'. Swayne wrote in an account of his

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, Queen to King of Ethiopia, No. 4, Feb. 20, 1890.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, Salisbury to Lytton, F.O. 24, Jan. 21, 1890.

<sup>19</sup> *Letters from Aden*, Vol. 7, Stace to Jopp, No. 1047, June 30, 1891.

<sup>20</sup> Excerpt from a report by Captain Swayne enclosed with Stace's letter above.



travels<sup>21</sup> that the Somali were 'quite persuaded in their own minds that our [British] Government will never stand by and see them seriously pushed by the Abyssinians without giving them, at any rate, moral help of some sort. They turn to us [British] as their natural protectors, as they would have turned to the Egyptians had that Government continued to hold the coast'.

The moral support that Swayne talked about bordered on the ridiculous. Hearing that the Abyssinians were about to raid the Somali Ogaden, Her Majesty's Ship *Kingfisher* was requested to proceed to Berbera, some two hundred miles from the Ogaden, 'to inspire confidence'.<sup>22</sup> When Stace was asked<sup>23</sup> by Sheikh Maddar of Hargeisa to be given some rifles, 'paying the men to whom they would be given himself', Stace refused because 'it would be equivalent in a measure to sending an armed force to Hargeisa and there is no sanction for such action'. Jopp took a more imaginative view of the situation because he felt Britain's prestige was at stake:

*'In the event of actual invasion the situation becomes exceedingly embarrassing, for on the one hand, I submit, no effort should be spared to avoid any collision with the Abyssinians – while on the other hand our prestige and influence throughout Somaliland, and indeed much further, would suffer ruinously if we should shrink from taking such measures as may be deemed advisable to check invasion of tribes to which the protection of Her Majesty has been granted.'*<sup>24</sup>

As an additional irritant, the Abyssinians from Jigjiga sent a small force in 1891 to Biyo Kaboba (map p. 28), a watering centre for Somali Essa livestock just off the caravan route, on the British side, and some forty miles north-east of Gildessa. This simple and unlawful move by the Abyssinians was to plague the British for the next six years. It is, of course, possible that the occupation of Biyo Kaboba by eleven<sup>25</sup> soldiers was directed towards safeguarding the caravan route. Makonnen said as much in a letter to Ferris, the new British Consul and Agent on the Somali coast: 'it was not for bad purpose but for the travellers who pass peaceably and to arrest our soldiers who run away from us'.<sup>26</sup> But the Somali Essa, according to Swayne who was visiting the area in October 1891, had a different interpreta-

<sup>21</sup> *Seventeen Trips through Somaliland*, 1895, p. 120.

<sup>22</sup> *Red Sea Papers*, Incl. to No. 43, Baring to Salisbury, Feb. 21, 1891.

<sup>23</sup> *Letters from Aden*, Vol. 7, Stace to Jopp, No. 1083, July 8, 1891.

<sup>24</sup> *Letters from Aden*, Vol. 7, Jopp to India Office, No. 8/2018 of July 2, 1891.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, Memorandum No. 945 by Somali Coast Agent, Sept. 30, 1894.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, Makonnen to Ferris, received Aug. 27, 1896.



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tion. A chief called Mudan Golab of the family of Gedi said<sup>27</sup> to Swayne 'we ask you now to rid us of these intruders. They wish to treat us as they treated the Geri,<sup>28</sup> to seize our flocks, kill our people, and burn our karias.<sup>29</sup> They wish to settle in our country and oust us. We will not have it.'<sup>30</sup>

The Essa clan were divided by the caravan route between French and British territory and, as Biyo Kaboba was near to the French border, the British considered a joint approach to the Abyssinians about their occupation of the water-hole. The Italians would have none of it and asked<sup>31</sup> Britain to desist from seeking France's intervention as she was a 'power whom the Italian Government necessarily considers as a rival in Ethiopia, and more especially in the Gulf of Aden'. Britain yielded and sought Italian intervention instead. On November 3 the Italian Consul-General in Aden received an assurance<sup>32</sup> from Makonnen that he would withdraw his troops from Biyo Kaboba; but on November 25 Jopp in Aden telegraphed<sup>33</sup> that Makonnen 'now refused withdrawal of troops, insists that Gadabursi and Essa [are] under his Government.'

Makonnen's claim to these clans was based on Menelik's 'circular letter' (p. 34 and appendix II) in which he claimed, among other territories to which he had no title, the Somali 'Province of Ogaden, the Habr Awal, the Gadabursi and the Essa, and looked forward "if God gives me life and strength" to re-establishing the ancient<sup>34</sup> frontiers (tributaries) of Ethiopia up to Khartoum, and as far as Lake Nyanza with all the Gallas. . . .'<sup>35</sup> The Circular was of course a declaration of intention only as the map on p. 10 indicates.

<sup>27</sup> Swayne, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>28</sup> A Somali clan inhabiting the Jigjiga area.

<sup>29</sup> Somali nomadic hamlet. See Lewis, I. M., *A Pastoral Democracy*, p. 68, for the plan of a nomadic hamlet and for other material on Somali pastoral life in this authoritative work.

<sup>30</sup> Swayne was Rennell Rodd's principal adviser during talks with Makonnen in 1897 over the future Somaliland Protectorate boundary. The area around Biyo Kaboba, described by Rodd as 'worthless', was abandoned by him. See Rodd, R., *Social and Diplomatic Memoirs*, 1923, p. 182.

<sup>31</sup> *Red Sea Papers*, Dering to Salisbury, No. 149, Sept. 24, 1891.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, Dufferin to Salisbury, No. 49 of Nov. 3, 1891.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, Jopp to Cross, Tel. No. 25, 1891.

<sup>34</sup> See appendix XX for comment on Ethiopia's 'ancient frontiers'.

<sup>35</sup> Foreign Office 1/32 (*Abyssinia Diplomatic Correspondence*), Public Records Office, London, Enclosure No. 2 to Despatch No. 14, Rodd to Salisbury, Addis Ababa, May 3, 1897. (Acknowledgment is accorded to the late Mr. Leo Silberman for having drawn attention to this series of records in his article 'Why the Haud was ceded', published in *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, No. 5, Vol. II, 1961. As it was a posthumous publication, and the proofs were evidently not examined by the author, readers should beware that some of the references require re-checking with the original source.)



The British Resident was disposed to address Makonnen direct about Biyo Kaboba, in view of the Italian failure to secure redress, but again in deference to Italian wishes Jopp reluctantly concluded that the meaning<sup>36</sup> of the instructions from the India Office 'was that he (Makonnen) should not now be addressed officially regarding the occupation of Biyo Kaboba'. There the matter stood, and in a memorandum<sup>37</sup> by the Consular Agent on the Somali coast three years later he wrote 'in spite of our repeated protests the Italian Protectorate of Abyssinia was powerless to get it removed'.

By 1892 Italy's influence in Abyssinia had reached a low ebb. Menelik distrusted her and Britain was uncomfortable about becoming involved in a dispute between them. Thus, when Italy asked Britain to start negotiations on their inland Somali boundaries Britain prevaricated by sending Captain Swayne back to the Somali coast to complete the information he had been collecting about nomadic movements, and intimated that it was 'premature to consider the question of the inland boundaries'.<sup>38</sup> Besides, Britain must have suspected that she was backing the wrong 'horse' as Menelik had now switched his attention to the French by offering to construct a series of wells along a new trade route to Jibuti which he desired to see established to that port.<sup>39</sup> Thus France took the decisive step of transferring her administration from Obok to Jibuti.

Jopp, meanwhile, had visited London where he received approval in principle for the despatch of an officer to Makonnen with presents from Queen Victoria to Menelik, together with an invitation to Makonnen to explain the circumstances of his occupation of Biyo Kaboba. It was also suggested<sup>40</sup> that the officer should inform Makonnen of the British Treaties of Protection with Somali clans and should seek tacit recognition of the British Protectorate 'as vaguely defined by Essa and Gadabursi boundaries'. Makonnen was also to be asked to restrain his soldiers from raiding these tribes. Other matters 'which need not be prominently brought before Ras Makonnen' were that 'Harar is a recent acquisition of Abyssinia and that no opposition was offered by England, though the Ruler, really placed upon the throne by the British, was displaced'; and that

<sup>36</sup> *Letters from Aden*, Vol. 7, Jopp to India Office, No. 440, Dec. 7, 1891.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, Memorandum No. 945, Sept. 30, 1894.

<sup>38</sup> *India Office, Home Correspondence, July-Aug. 1892*, Vol. 131, India Office to Foreign Office, July 27, 1892.

<sup>39</sup> *Foreign Office Handbook* (French Somaliland), p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> The suggestions were 'generally accepted as in accordance with the views of the home authorities', i.e. the Foreign Office and the India Office. See *Letters from Aden*, Vol. 7, Jopp to Bombay, No. 305, July 25, 1892.



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it would be 'advisable for Makonnen to abstain from raids on the Ogaden'; and to explain that 'our friendship with Italy will in no way be used to his disadvantage, or that of Abyssinia'. In the event the Italians cavilled at the mission on the grounds that they themselves were going to send a mission to Harar but this proved to be false.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless the mission was indefinitely postponed 'in deference to Italian wishes' and the Queen's presents were to be 'sent by ordinary messenger'.<sup>42</sup>

Britain, in contrast with the French, must have appeared to Menelik and Makonnen as uninterested and half-hearted spectators, regretting their involvement on the coast. M. Ilg, as reported by Harrington, throws some light on this.<sup>43</sup> 'He said that the indifference shown by [the British] Government at Zeila had convinced Abyssinia that [Britain] did not consider the place worth anything . . . as [Britain] had not built a jetty nor even a house since [she] had been there . . . to sum up - he said the Egyptians had been more beneficial to commerce than any of the European powers.' It is tempting to conclude, though the evidence is weak, that Makonnen felt he could take liberties with the British. He was certainly not deterred by anything that the British had said or done hitherto and continued his raids into Somali territory.

The defencelessness of the Somali clans from raiders with modern weapons was beginning to impinge upon the conscience of the British Government. The official view was explained<sup>44</sup> with cold logic:

*'The Abyssinian authorities have hitherto obtained large quantities of arms and ammunition through the French Protected port of Jibuti, in addition to the supplies which have been furnished to them by the Italian Government through Zeila and Massowah, and it is said that it is the possession of these arms which has enabled the Abyssinians to raid the Somali tribes of our Protectorate with impunity, the latter not being permitted to obtain firearms in the ports of the British Protectorate. The Government of Abyssinia having, however, adhered to the Brussels General Act, is entitled to receive arms for the use of its authorities.'*

But the Earl of Rosebery agreed<sup>45</sup> that Britain 'cannot with

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, Jopp to India Office, No. 344, Aug. 29, 1892.

<sup>42</sup> *Red Sea Papers*: Memorandum by Mr. Bertie (extracted from Eastern Department Memorandum of Oct. 15, 1893, confidential paper No. 6404).

<sup>43</sup> See footnote 5, p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> *Red Sea Papers*: Foreign Office to India, July 14, 1893.

<sup>45</sup> *Red Sea Papers*: Foreign Office to India Office, July 31, 1893.



justice withhold from the Somali tribes under [British] Protectorate such limited supply of arms as may suffice to enable them to protect themselves against the incursions of predatory bands of Abyssinians'. The Eastern Department of the Foreign Office went a stage further. 'Our Protectorate Treaties amount to an undertaking to intervene actively on behalf of the protected tribes in case of unprovoked attack on their territories.'<sup>46</sup> The intentions were not carried out.

Meanwhile, Menelik officially denounced the Treaty of Ucciali between Italy and Abyssinia and repaid the Italian loan. Britain continued, however, to give Italy her support on the grounds that Article XVI of the Treaty did not entitle the parties to give notice of its termination, but only to come to an agreement about modifications.<sup>47</sup> With this juridical problem neatly 'solved' Britain appears to have taken more seriously the necessity for reaching agreement with Italy over the inland boundaries. Italy recommended that the British Somaliland Protectorate should be confined within the limits of '43° 20' East longitude to the 9th parallel North and on to the 45th degree East'<sup>48</sup>. The Government of India and the Bombay Authorities were not impressed with this suggestion. It meant that the Somali's principal grazing areas to the south and west, called the 'Haud', would be thus severed by an international boundary. Italy's proposed line 'is entirely unacceptable to all Indian authorities' the India Office wrote<sup>49</sup> on November 16, 1893, and went on to explain that:

*'The line favoured by the Government of Bombay would follow the Northern edge of the Haud, a waterless desert, but as recent surveys have shown that the tribes on the north of the Haud, within the British Protectorate, graze within the Haud, the Government of India are of the opinion that in these circumstances it would be expedient to include . . . that part of the Haud to which the said tribes usually resort.'*

There was, however, another factor to be considered which made the India Government hesitate to extend unnecessarily the responsibilities which they had assumed on the Somali coast.<sup>50</sup>

*' . . . the tribes in the interior will expect protection from Abyssinian raiders if they be included within the limits of the British Protectorate. The western frontier of Ogaden is much*

<sup>46</sup> See footnote 42, p. 39.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> See Silberman, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-71, for an account of these 'negotiations'.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, quoting India Office to Foreign Office, No. 16, 1893, No. 67.

<sup>50</sup> *Red Sea Papers*: India Office to Foreign Office, No. 16, 1893.



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*exposed to the attacks of plundering bands of Abyssinians, and without doubt, one of the earliest results of the inclusion of Ogaden within the British zone of influence would be an appeal for protection against Abyssinian marauders. We are at the present moment face to face with such a difficulty on the Harar frontier, and it is in contemplation to supply some of our protected Somalis with arms for purposes of defence. The extension of such a scheme to the inhabitants of the Ogaden country would lead to conflicts with the Abyssinians, and involve an outlay out of all proportion to the Indian interests concerned.'*

On the other hand the Governor-General of India recognised that British interests in the Ogaden country were firmly established and that 'its exclusion from the British sphere of influence would tend to reduce the importance of our position on the south shores of the Gulf of Aden'.<sup>51</sup> Similarly Rosebery pointed out<sup>52</sup> to Tornielli that

*'... the northern Ogaden is the starting point for the greatest part of the Berbera and Bulhar trade, and that Abyssinia exercises no authority in the country beyond the temporary influence produced by the raids of armed and undisciplined Abyssinian gunmen into the extreme western limits of the country. . . . The natural outlet for (the Ogaden) trade is through the ports of Northern Somaliland.'*

The debate was concluded by the signing of a Protocol (appendix XI) between Britain and Italy on May 5, 1894,<sup>53</sup> which defined their respective Spheres of Influence (map p. 28). Italy also agreed to permit Britain to send a mission to Harar but it was again postponed, this time in deference to the French who maintained that Harar was in their Sphere of Influence.

As far as Somalis were concerned the only influence that was making itself felt on the western fringes of the Ogaden was the terrorising activity of Abyssinian gunmen. 'Our camp'<sup>54</sup> wrote Captain Pearce in 1896 'was in the so-called Italian sphere of influence, and the Somalis living in this part of Somaliland would, I suppose, be considered under the protection of that nation. But, of course,

<sup>51</sup> *Red Sea Papers*: Governor-General of India in Council to the Earl of Kimberly, Oct. 18, 1893.

<sup>52</sup> *Red Sea Papers*: Rosebery to Tornielli, Dec. 29, 1893.

<sup>53</sup> Hertslet, Vol. III, p. 951.

<sup>54</sup> Pearce, F. B., *Rambles in Lion-land*, 1898, p. 163.

they had never heard of any such people, much less had they seen them, and it doubtless seemed strange [to them] why England . . . allows the rifle-armed Abyssinian raiders to loot and oppress them without hindrance.' Captain Pearce went on to describe<sup>55</sup> how, in a country where water is so scarce,

*'the centres of population are around the scattered wells and water-holes dotted sparsely about the land. . . . The vast herds of camels and flocks of sheep . . . must be brought to be watered at intervals, and when they do this, the Abyssinians impose taxes and forced labours on the tribesmen as payment for being permitted to water their flocks at their own wells. What can the brave but unarmed Somali do? . . . The Abyssinians themselves have no more claim (except that of might) to dominate the wells than a Fiji Islander would have to interfere with a London waterworks company.'*

There can be no doubt from the evidence of many disinterested witnesses who chronicled the events at the time that the Somalis were oppressed by these alien marauders. There is little doubt about the depth of Somali feeling: Pearce gives some indication of it in his narrative:<sup>56</sup>

*'I saw my shikaris suddenly crouch behind a bush and calling out something which I did not catch. . . . My head shikari . . . pointing down the valley whispered in a highly dramatic tone "Abyssinians".'*

*'"Go on, you duffers," I shouted and with unwilling steps they trailed in behind me. . . . Sure enough at the bottom of the valley, over the water-hole for which we were making, I saw a small encampment, and the smoke from a fire rising slowly. About the fire lounged some figures with rifles slung over their right shoulders, and grazing, a few yards apart were three mules. . . .'*

Another account<sup>57</sup> by a traveller in the early 90's, who was shooting wild game some 200 miles south of Berbera in the Ogaden country, has a particular ring of truth.

*'Every day we hear more and more of the doings of the Abyssinians, and on the ninth we come up with them. We find that they consist of ten men, all armed with rifles, and that*

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<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 176-8.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>57</sup> Wolverton, Lord, *Five Months' Sport in Somaliland*, 1894, p. 107.



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*they have taken eighty sheep and sixty camels. . . . As they can produce no documents to show that they are in any way authorised in what they are doing, we feel justified in returning the camels and sheep to the Somalis who had been robbed, and telling the Abyssinians that they had better return whence they came.'*

If the Somalis had been as well armed as they were when Sheikh Mohammed Abdille Hassan, the so-called 'mad mullah', kept the British at bay from 1900-20, these bands of Abyssinian soldiers would not have dared evidently to raid the lowlands. The Somalis, denied the right to import<sup>58</sup> firearms, were thus forced to acquire them surreptitiously, but only, as we shall see later, after spheres of influence had been allocated between the Euro-Abyssinian powers to suit their political aims at that time.

<sup>58</sup> In 1894 Italy made a special treaty with the Sultans of the Mijertein and of Obbia (on the Indian Ocean) which forbade them to import firearms. Silberman, op. cit. p. 55.

## FIVE

### *Placating Menelik*

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AS Menelik's dislike<sup>1</sup> for Italy increased, his relations with France became more cordial and by a concession in 1894 and again in 1896 he permitted the French to construct a railway connecting Abyssinia with Jibuti.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, the Italians in Eritrea, who had flirted earlier with the idea of supporting Ras Mangasha of Tigre against Menelik (in spite of the Treaty of Ucciali), ignored Mangasha for two years whilst their army engaged in a series of campaigns against the dervishes from the Sudan.

By 1895, Mangasha, 'tiring of an alliance which seemed to be bringing him no good',<sup>3</sup> threw in his lot with Menelik who issued a proclamation calling upon all his armies to 'meet at three points on the way to the north'.<sup>4</sup> The Italians strengthened their forces on the Tigrean border and in the last days of 1895 the opposing armies were poised for battle. Nothing happened. By February the Italian General, who was relying upon defections from Menelik's forces, was urged to battle by his Prime Minister. 'This is a military phthisis, not a war' he explained, 'we are ready for any sacrifice in order to save the honour of the army and the prestige of the monarchy.'<sup>5</sup>

The Italians attacked at Adowa but they were 'overwhelmed' and 'outmanoeuvred',<sup>6</sup> resulting in a 'complete victory for the Emperor'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Foreign Office Handbook* (French Somaliland), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> The line reached Addis Ababa on May 21, 1915, and is 492 miles long. But see Appendix XII for the effect of this Railway on Italy and Britain also *Foreign Office Handbook* (French Somaliland), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Jones and Munroe, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> Perham, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> Jones and Munroe, p. 145.

<sup>7</sup> Perham, p. 57.



A peace Treaty was signed in the autumn of 1896 in which Italy renounced the Treaty of Ucciali and recognised the full sovereignty and independence of Abyssinia. Surprisingly, Italy was able to retain her sovereignty over Eritrea (refer to pages 76–77 for a probable explanation).

The Italian defeat at Adowa was a decisive event in the history of the Horn of Africa because it appears to have forced the three European powers to a recognition of Menelik's independence which made it desirable for them to secure from Menelik recognition of their colonial boundaries, without, incidentally, much thought to Menelik's own colonial ambitions.

Even before the battle of Adowa, Makonnen had shown signs of stepping up his interference in the affairs of Somalis under British colonial protection. A small shooting lodge, constructed in Hargeisa by Lord Delamere in 1895, was resented by Makonnen, who presumably regarded it as a symbol of British sovereignty and ordered its destruction. This incident was described<sup>8</sup> by Ferris as throwing further light on 'Abyssinian ambitions'. He continued

*'... in August of last year Ras Makonnen wrote to the Habr Awal tribes around Hargeisa claiming them as Abyssinian subjects and calling upon them to destroy a small zareeba built there by Lord Delamere, which he said was in Abyssinian territory. ... Ras Makonnen was asked twice why he wrote to British subjects and tried to seduce them from their allegiance, but failed to reply.'*

A year later the Abyssinians attempted to encroach even further into Somali territory by building some grass huts at Alola, a spring south-east of Biyo Kaboba. 'Some of Your Excellency's subjects', complained<sup>9</sup> Ferris on Aug 1, 1896, 'have built huts near the medicinal springs at Alola in the territory of our tribes of the Gadabursi. . . . We shall always be glad to offer facilities for your subjects to enjoy the benefit of these springs, but buildings should not be erected within the territory of Her Majesty the Queen of England.' In September the Abyssinian flag was hoisted at Alola 'with the intention', wrote<sup>10</sup> Ferris in a letter to Consul General Rodd in Cairo, 'of establishing a claim to the suzerainty of that part of the country'. He added that 'Ras Makonnen ignores the delimitation of the 1894 [Convention] between

<sup>8</sup> Vol. 7, *Letters from Aden*, Political Agent and Consul Somali Coast to Consul General, Cairo, No. 746 of Sept. 21, 1896.

<sup>9</sup> Vol. 7, *Letters from Aden*, Ferris to Makonnen, No. 6, Aug. 1, 1896.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, Ferris to Rodd, No. 705 of Sept. 1, 1896.



Italy and Britain and lays claim not only to the Gadabursi country but to a considerable portion of the British Protectorate beside.'

The hoisting of an Abyssinian flag at Alola alarmed the British Foreign Office, and Salisbury telegraphed<sup>11</sup> that 'the flag at Alola should not be removed in the presence of superior force'. In reply, Ferris reminded Rodd in Cairo of the background to this latest encroachment and of Makonnen's earlier claims to Abyssinian sovereignty.

*'The present incident is the corollary of the events of September, 1891 when Ras Makonnen built a fort, within our territory at Biyo Kaboba and garrisoned it. . . . In a letter dated 24th November, 1891, he [Makonnen] stated that the Essa and Gadabursi countries belonged to Abyssinia. . . . Biyo Kaboba fell within the British limit when fixing the boundary with the French on 2nd February, 1888. . . .*

*'owing to the view accepted at the time that the Italian Protectorate over Abyssinia was something more than a nebulous phenomenon, the Italian Government was requested to remonstrate with King Menelik and secure the removal of the fort or, at any rate, of the garrison. . . both are still there a standing monument of Abyssinian successful encroachment.'*

In October, two Somalis were sent by the British to Alola to observe whether the Abyssinian flag was still flying. They reported<sup>12</sup> that Alola was deserted, that the flag staff appeared to be the trunk of a tree and that no flag was visible. The Political Resident therefore ordered the huts to be burnt down. That did not however accord with the wishes of the British Government and the Resident was obliged to apologise for 'exceeding instructions' but pointed out<sup>13</sup> that Makonnen had originally ignored a request to remove the huts.

It is evident that the British Government were now seriously weighing their wider imperial interests in Abyssinia against their lesser colonial interests in the Somaliland Protectorate. Following Italy's defeat at Adowa, Britain's immediate fear was that the Sudanese dervishes would be strengthened by Abyssinian forces and that Menelik's cordial relations with France would increase the possibility of a joint Franco-Abyssinian threat to the Nile. 'As the Sirdar built his railway deeper into the Sudan, French policy grew more enterprising in Ethiopia. It covered the eastern approaches of the

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, Ferris to Cairo, No. 746 of Sept 21, 1896.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, Ferris to Aden, No. 844, Oct 28, 1896.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*, Cunningham to India Office, No. 49 of Nov 12, 1896.



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Nile. It offered a river route to Fashoda. . . . At the end of 1896 Lagarde was despatched [to Addis Abeba] to reach . . . an agreement'.<sup>14</sup>

The British were now beginning to question the need to retain the Somali coast if it was to draw them into conflict with Menelik. Thus, the British Government telegraphed<sup>15</sup> on November 17 asking 'whether Aden can be made independent of Somali coast for its provisions' and whether the 'Protectorate is needful in the interests of India'. Cunningham, the new Political Resident in Aden, wrote that he had 'no hesitation' in replying that it was needful, and explained that 'in former years we obtained what we wanted from Berbera without holding the coast, but at that time there was no opposition and we commanded the market. Now were we to reduce our Protectorate either in breadth or in depth that market would of necessity leave us, as it is not in a position to stand the strain which would then be put on it'.

Any ideas that the British may have had of abandoning their colonial responsibilities in the Protectorate had to be discarded. The British Political Agent on the Somali Coast put the Somali issue squarely to his Government.<sup>16</sup>

*'In 1884, the British Government entered into a Treaty with the Gadabursi, which was ratified by the Governor General in February 1885, both events are of more than 10 years. In the first article of the Treaty, the Gadabursi are pledged not to cede, sell, mortgage or otherwise give for occupation, save to the British Government, any portion of the territory inhabited by them or under their control, this has always been looked upon as a Protectorate clause, and was given further effect to when the Delimitation Protocol placed the Gadabursi country within the British sphere of influence. . . .*

*'By his present letter<sup>17</sup> Ras Makonnen takes up an unmistakable position which he asserts his determination to hold to, nothing further can be done from here. . . .*

*'It appears to me now a question for decisions with King Menelik and not for controversy with Ras Makonnen who is but a subordinate, but I would urge that early action may be taken as I apprehend that the latter will follow up his letter by some overt act of sovereignty, which I have no means at my*

<sup>14</sup> Robinson, R. and Gallagher, J., *'Africa and the Victorians'*, 1961, p. 359.

<sup>15</sup> Vol. 7, *Letters from Aden*, D/O Batty to Cunningham, Bombay, No. 20, 1896 quoting Secretary of State's telegram No 17 and despatch No. 29 of July 17, 1896.

<sup>16</sup> Vol. 7, *Letters from Aden*, No. 995 of Dec 23, 1896.

<sup>17</sup> See footnote 18 on next page.



*disposal to make practical protest against, and which, at the same time, may be productive of most disastrous consequences in the Protectorate.'*

Britain was obsessed with fear that Abyssinian claims to territory under British sovereignty would develop into a clash of arms. What were these claims? They were based on Menelik's circular letter of 1891 (now forgotten)<sup>18</sup> and were expressed on the ground by a handful of irregulars at Biyo Kaboba, by six grass huts at Alola (now deserted) and by a demand that some clans should pay, under threat, 'tribute' to Abyssinian robbers, and that Delamere's hunting lodge should be destroyed. Lord Hamilton, however, seemed to take it more seriously and telegraphed<sup>19</sup> in January 1897 that

*'Her Majesty's Government consider that Imperial interests in Somaliland Protectorate are insufficient to justify their contributing towards its defence or continued occupation, except by the employment of the navy [sic]. . . . If military occupation takes place avoid collision and retire on ports.'*

Yet seven years earlier the British Government could land five hundred troops at Zeila to carry out a punitive expedition against the Somali Essa clan<sup>20</sup>.

'The question', wrote<sup>21</sup> Cunningham from Aden, 'has assumed an acute phase which demands early settlement . . . question of mission to that sovereign [Menelik], which was temporarily abandoned last year, should now again be considered. . . .' Rennell Rodd, the British Consul General in Cairo, was thus selected to lead the mission; and first consideration was given to the selection of gifts for Menelik. 'I dare say we could manage an elephant from India' commented<sup>22</sup> the India Office 'if the King has someone to ride it . . . as to the one pounders [guns] one would fancy that the French had supplied Abyssinian wants'. The Russian gifts now on their way commented<sup>23</sup> Rodd 'are said to be very magnificent. We shall suffer in comparison if we only take ordinary gifts. . . .' A fortnight later

<sup>18</sup> 'It will be seen that Makonnen definitely claims Gadabursi country as the territory of King Menelik and declines to abandon it. He speaks of having notified to the Powers the fact of sovereignty, but, so far as I am aware, no intimation has been given to this agency and consulate, while the delimitation of the frontier with the Italian Government, on behalf of Abyssinia in 1894, is a distinct negation'. Vol. 7, *Letters from Aden*, Somali coast to Aden, No. 995, Dec 23, 1896.

<sup>19</sup> *Red Sea Papers*, Hamilton to Government on India, Telegram Jan 2, 1897.

<sup>20</sup> See p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> Vol. 7, *Letters from Aden*, No. 56 of 1896.

<sup>22</sup> *Public Record Office, Foreign Office 1-32) Abyssinia*, manuscript Lee Warner to Sanderson, Jan 27, 1897.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, Rodd to Foreign Office, manuscript, Jan 15, 1897.



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Rodd wrote<sup>24</sup> '... Things are getting rather complicated there. It is not the French I am afraid of, but the Russians. They are always the formidable element. What do you say to a G.C.M.G. for Menelik?' And for the Somalis Rodd brought 'stocks of cotton cloth, handkerchiefs of brilliant design, pocket knives, beads, and all the objects dear to the simple African'.<sup>25</sup> It was partly in this frame of mind that Rodd approached his mission to Menelik.

Rodd was reminded in his instructions<sup>26</sup> that one of the principal objects of his mission was 'to come to arrangements with King Menelik for a definite understanding as to the frontier between Abyssinia and the Protectorate'. He was authorized

*'if absolutely necessary, to make concessions in regard to the frontiers of the Protectorate, as defined in the Protocol signed with Italy on the 5th May, 1894, provided such concessions are not of a nature to interfere with the main object for which the Protectorate was assumed; viz., the securing of adequate supplies for the support of Aden, and the administration of the Protectorate itself on a basis which shall, as far as possible be at least self-supporting, and should afford some prospect of further development of the resources of the country. ...*

*'In the event of your finding it necessary, for the purpose of your negotiation, to agree to the transfer to Abyssinia of any tribes now under British protection, you will be careful to obtain pledges that they will be treated with justice and consideration'*

Rodd was also reminded that

*'Her Majesty's Government cannot pronounce upon any claims which the Italian Government may wish to advance to districts lying within the sphere of influence assigned to Italy by the Protocols of the 24th March and the 15th April, 1891, and of the 5th May, 1894 ... the language of any instrument you may sign must contain nothing inconsistent with the rights of Italy as defined in stipulations to which Great Britain is a party ...*

*'The question of the frontiers of Abyssinia to the south-west and south is one which may be more properly left for discussion between King Menelik and the Government of Italy, within whose sphere of influence, as recognized by*

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, Rodd to Foreign Office, manuscript, Jan 30, 1897. G.C.M.G. (Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George) considered appropriate decoration for Menelik.

<sup>25</sup> Rodd, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>26</sup> *Public Record Office, Foreign Office (1-32)*, Salisbury to Rodd No. 2 of Feb 24, 1897.

*Great Britain in the Protocol of the 24th March, 1891, those frontiers would seem to lie. . . .*

*'It will be essential that in your discussions and in my eventual agreement upon this point, you should bear in mind the terms of the Protocol signed with Italy on the 5th May, 1894, and that any recognition of the territorial claims of Abyssinia outside the British sphere of influence, as defined in that Protocol, should be made on behalf of Great Britain alone, without assuming to deal with claims or rights of others Powers?'*

Rodd and his *entourage* thus set off along the Zeila-Harar caravan route for Addis Ababa passing *en route* Biyo Kaboba, Makonnen's so-called fortress. 'It is here' wrote<sup>27</sup> Count Gleichen who accompanied Rodd

*'that the Abyssinians have established their farthest outpost eastwards. The post consists of a fragile block-house built of loose stones and thatched with straw, the whole inclosed within a thorn fence, on top of a small conical hill overlooking the wells; it is garrisoned by seven men . . . a nondescript and ragged riff-raff of Somali and Sudanese – no Abyssinians amongst them . . . these poor devils, who receive no pay . . . only live on passing caravans. . . .'*

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<sup>27</sup> Gleichen, Count, *With the Mission to Menelik 1897-98*, p. 27.



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## SIX

### *Abyssinian Participation*

RODD began his series of talks with Menelik by questioning<sup>1</sup> him on 'some Proclamation or Declaration of the King's, about which, as far as he knew, the British Government had no knowledge'. Menelik produced a copy of his circular letter<sup>2</sup> and Rodd immediately denied any knowledge of it, although it had been received by the British Government in 1891. The only reason that can be deduced for this careless attitude to a colonial document addressed to Heads of European States is that it contained such extravagant and questionable material that it was not taken seriously. But six years had elapsed since the circular, with its unjustified claims to territory, had been issued. Rodd believed that Menelik 'had been for years actively engaged in rendering his occupation effective'; but his colleagues on the mission admitted that there was considerable difficulty in procuring accurate information on this subject'.<sup>3</sup>

Rodd emphasised in his first despatch,<sup>4</sup> before the 'negotiations' had started, that this circular letter, and Menelik's 'effective' advance, made it an 'extremely difficult task' to 'negotiate' with a King whose pretensions were publicly known and remained undisputed. This is not entirely true. Makonnen's claims to Somali clans *had been* disputed,<sup>5</sup> and counter claims were made by the British on a basis which, though equally colonialistic, at least carried a cloak of validity among the colonial powers. Rodd's assertion that Makonnen had 'tightened

<sup>1</sup> Public Records Office - Abyssinia, General Correspondence - Diplomatic - 1897, volume 32; F.O. 1/32, Rodd to Salisbury No. 15, May 4, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> The full text can be seen in Appendix II. See also p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Public Records Office, Rodd to Salisbury, Inc. No. 3 to No. 18, May 15, 1897.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, No. 15, of May 4, 1897.

<sup>5</sup> *Vol. 7, Letters from Aden*, Ferris to Makonnen, No. 6, Aug. 1, 1896 and No. 746 of Sept. 21, 1896.

his grasp' over districts to which the British had established claims had no foundation. Biyo Kaboba cannot be said to have been occupied at all, as Rodd himself witnessed on his journey from the coast, and there is some doubt as to whether the Abyssinian flag was ever hoisted 'on a tree trunk' at Alola; in any event, Alola was vacated after a month or two, and the grass huts were burnt down. There was no other evidence of 'effective' occupation by Abyssinians.

One must therefore conclude that before Rodd's 'negotiations' with Menelik began he felt unnecessarily uneasy about the juridical position. When his British colleagues examined<sup>6</sup> the text of the 'circular letter' they admitted that the terms of the Proclamation were 'very vague as to the actual Abyssinian boundaries on the eastern frontier'. They explained that

*'as far as can be ascertained here, the countries in question have been so recently occupied that it is at present impossible to define the actual limits of Menelik's authority in these directions, but here, as on the south-eastern frontier, raids on a large scale from the mountainous districts into the maritime plains would appear to be the usual methods by which the Abyssinians maintained their influence. . . .'*

*'As the settlement of the new frontier between the British and Abyssinian Governments forms one of the principal subjects of discussion between Her Britannic Majesty's Mission and the Emperor Menelik, it is unnecessary to refer further to the matter here, suffice it to say that Ras Makonnen has established a fort at Biyo Kaboba on the British side of the frontier as defined by the Anglo-French Treaty of March, 1888, and another at Jigjiga which is just outside the British frontier as defined by the Anglo-Italian Protocol of May 1894, and that moreover, the Abyssinian flag has been hoisted from time to time at Alola within the Gadabursi country.'*

Thus Rodd began<sup>7</sup> serious 'negotiations' with Menelik on May 13, obsessed with the idea that the problems were formidable. So much so that his first despatch leaves an unmistakable impression that he was convinced before the 'negotiations' began that the 'concessions', which he was entitled to make 'if absolutely necessary', were unavoidable if agreement was to be reached on the boundary question; and if, as an important corollary, an assurance was to be given by Menelik that he would not help either the French or the Dervishes in

<sup>6</sup> See footnote 3 on p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> Public Records Office, Vol. 1-32, Rodd to Salisbury, No. 20, May 13, 1897.



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the Sudan. Rodd attached far too much importance to 'forts' at Biyo Kaboba and at Jigjiga (in fact a fenced stockade) and to the flag at Alola.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Rodd from a later despatch,<sup>9</sup> appears to have adopted a calmer and more rational approach during subsequent 'negotiations' in spite of his anxiety about Menelik's capacity to parley from strength.

'I drew attention to the fact that the Declaration he [Menelik] had furnished me with . . . lays claim to districts which cover more than half of our Protectorate as defined in an Agreement, which we had every reason to believe would, under the Uccialli Treaty, as we at the time understood it, have been brought to his notice. That we had concluded Treaties dating from 1884 and 1886, with the tribes included in that line and considered our rights then fully established.

'Looking at the way in which the frontier was traced, he [Menelik] exclaimed: "But you are advancing right up to the gates of Harar". I pointed out that it was Abyssinia which had advanced up to us; that we were the reversionaries of Egypt in those districts, and had established ourselves then by Treaties with the native tribes before the Abyssinians had come to Harar.

'The Emperor then again referred to the ancient limits of Ethiopia. I asked him how the Somalis, who had been established in those regions for so many centuries, could possibly be looked upon as included within the ancient limits of Ethiopia.

'His Majesty then propounded the extraordinary doctrine that the Somalis had been from time immemorial, until the Moslem invasion, the cattle-keepers of the Ethiopians, who could not themselves live in the low countries; they had had to pay their tribute of cattle to their masters, and had been coerced when they failed to do so.

'I replied that we could not consider claims based on such grounds as this; that by all recognized international law it was the actual occupant that must be dealt with and we were, as I had already explained, the reversionaries of Egypt.

"Then," said the Emperor Menelik, "accepting this view, let me deal with you. What I would prefer, so as to give the French no

<sup>8</sup> Swayne, who accompanied Rodd's mission, visited Jigjiga in 1892 which he described as the 'ill-famed Abyssinian stockaded fort, which had been such a thorn in the side of the Jibril Abokr tribe', and added, 'we found it untenanted; and as the Bertiri made no objection, we went over it and took some photographs'. (Swayne, op. cit., p. 141). Rodd in his memoirs mentions that the burning of the Alola huts caused some anxiety. In London perhaps, but there is no evidence that it caused any local anxiety. (Rodd, op. cit., p. 182.)

<sup>9</sup> See footnote 7.



grounds for complaining of differential treatment is to draw a line parallel to the coast, corresponding to that which I have agreed upon with them, namely about 100 kilom. in depth, and recognize all on the lee side as the British Protectorate."

"I pointed out in reply, that such an arrangement could not be acceptable in our case, as the tribes in [the British] Protectorate were for the most part pastoral and nomadic, changing their pastures according to the seasons, and in any arrangement to be made the habits and migration of the tribes must be carefully studied before a line was fixed.

"The Emperor confessed himself as much disappointed that I did not immediately adopt his views. I then told him that I was ready to meet him in a spirit of concession. He complained of our proximity to Harar; I would suggest, therefore, *cutting off the triangle included between Bia Kaboba, Gildessa, and Makanis*, which would transfer the white Essa tribe to Ethiopia, and remove the line of demarcation a good many marches further from Harar. I was also prepared to offer concessions on the eastern side, but I considered the Gadabursi and certain other tribes indispensable to us, in view of the main object for which our Protectorate is maintained. I should mention that these concessions were proposed after due discussion with Captain Swayne. The tribes in the eastern part of the Protectorate are, he reports, at present practically out of our control, while the white Essa, *since the erection of the Abyssinian fort*, which has been suffered to remain six or seven years at Biyo Kaboba, has practically been living *under the shadow of Abyssinian influence*. . . .

"His Majesty's attitude was distinctly Oriental. England was a great Power; could we not cede these small parcels of territory, which meant so little to us and so much to him? He had gained Harar by conquest, and looked on all these regions as part and parcel of the Harar province. I assured him that this was not so; we were established in these countries long before the expedition which resulted in his annexation of Harar, and though he had conquered Harar, he had not conquered us. I showed him on the map the pastures frequented by the tribes under our protection. . . . But His Majesty replied he could not understand maps sufficiently to judge - should we not rather agree to maintain the *status quo*? I replied that the *status quo* must be defined in an Agreement, for it was impossible to know what the actual conditions of occupation were, since Ras Makonnen had hoisted a flag, and raised a claim to jurisdiction at Alola, which we were unable to admit his right to do. His Majesty *had never heard of the Alola incident* . . . but as he felt quite unable to discuss the line himself,



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having no local knowledge of the country or the tribes, he would send for Ras Makonnen. . . .

Rodd elected to see Makonnen in Harar but, before leaving Addis Ababa and in accordance with his instructions,<sup>10</sup> he sought and received Menelik's assurance *that in the event of a possible occupation by Abyssinia of territories inhabited by Somalis formerly under British colonial protection they would be decently treated and would not lose by any transfer of suzerainty*. An exchange of letters to this effect formed an integral part of the Treaty.<sup>11</sup>

This confident expectation from one colonial power to another contrasts somewhat strangely with Britain's opposition to Abyssinia's application for admission to the League of Nations in 1923 on the grounds that 'steps should first be taken to investigate the internal conditions of the country and her capacity to carry out the obligations she would have to undertake as a member of the League'.<sup>12</sup>

In Harar, Rodd and Makonnen embarked upon a long wrangle which, according to Rodd,<sup>13</sup> was 'wearing and trying . . . on account of the very exorbitant nature of the Abyssinian pretensions and the theory they cling to, that the dependencies of Harar extended to the sea'. Makonnen held the same views as Menelik. 'It was here at the very outset' wrote Rodd 'that I perceived that logic or argument were entirely unprofitable and wasted, for the Ras, after listening patiently, produced a small and very inaccurate Italian map, on which a line was drawn in red chalk marking out a sphere about 100 kilom. in depth parallel to the coast similar to that accepted by the French and starting from the same point on the Zeila-Harar road.'

Rodd expressed surprise that the same proposal should come up again and said that he could not negotiate on such a basis. Makonnen 'then drew a line about half-way between this line and the boundary defined in the Anglo-Italian Protocol of May 1894 and suggested that this would fairly represent an equal division of reciprocal concession'. Rodd was 'quite unprepared to consider a proposal of this kind'. Makonnen on the other hand could not understand how the British could claim regions 'where the subjects of Ethiopia were established' and 'where they had posts, and even forts'. At this point the negotiations nearly broke down. 'Without us being prepared', wrote Rodd, 'to assert our claims in some more convincing manner than we have hitherto done, or as far as I can judge from my instructions, intend to

<sup>10</sup> *vide* footnote 26, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> See appendix XIV.

<sup>12</sup> Newman, E. W. P., *Ethiopian Realities*, 1936, p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Public Records Office, Vol. 1-32, Rodd to Salisbury, No. 35, June 4, 1897.



do, any understanding would be impossible without much larger concessions that I had at first proposed to make.'

On June 4, 1897, Abyssinian recognition of the British Colonial Protectorate (map p. 57), but not British recognition of an Abyssinian colonial possession, was effected by means of an exchange of notes which formed an integral part of the Treaty (appendix XIV). The relevant portions of these notes is given below.

'Mr. Rodd to Ras Makonnen

*'... I have understood that His Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia will recognise as frontier of the British Protectorate on the Somali coast the line which starting from the sea at the point fixed in the Agreement between Great Britain and France on the 9th February, 1888 ... to Arran Arrhe, near the intersection of latitude 44° east of Greenwich with longitude 9° north. From this point a straight line is drawn to the intersection of 47° east of Greenwich with 8° north. From here the line will follow the frontier laid down in the Anglo-Italian Protocol of the 5th May, 1894, until it reaches the sea.'*

'Ras Makonnen to Mr. Rodd

*'... the boundary of the British Somali Protectorate upon which we have agreed is as follows: starting from the sea-shore opposite the wells of Hadou (as on which the French and the English Government's agreed in February 1888), it follows the caravan-road ... to ... Arran Arrhe on 44° east of Greenwich and 9° north, and again in a direct line until 47° east and 8° north. After this the boundary follows the line on which the English and the Italians agreed on the 5th May, 1894, until the sea. ...'*

This exchange of notes does not purport to cede territory by Britain to Abyssinia, nor, of course, does it cede Abyssinian territory to Britain. 'I succeeded', reported Rodd<sup>14</sup> 'in getting rid of any phraseology which necessarily implied a recognition of Abyssinian rights beyond our frontier.' Rodd was expressly forbidden to 'pronounce upon any claims which the Italian Government may wish to advance to districts lying within her sphere of influence'.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the exchange of notes carry an acknowledgement by Abyssinia of the validity of the Anglo-French boundary of 1888 and the Anglo-Italian Protocol of 1894.

Rodd tried, he said,<sup>16</sup> to bring the boundary down to the wells of

<sup>14</sup> Rodd to Salisbury, No. 35, of June 4, 1897.

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 26, p. 49.

<sup>16</sup> Rodd to Salisbury, No. 35, of June 4, 1897.



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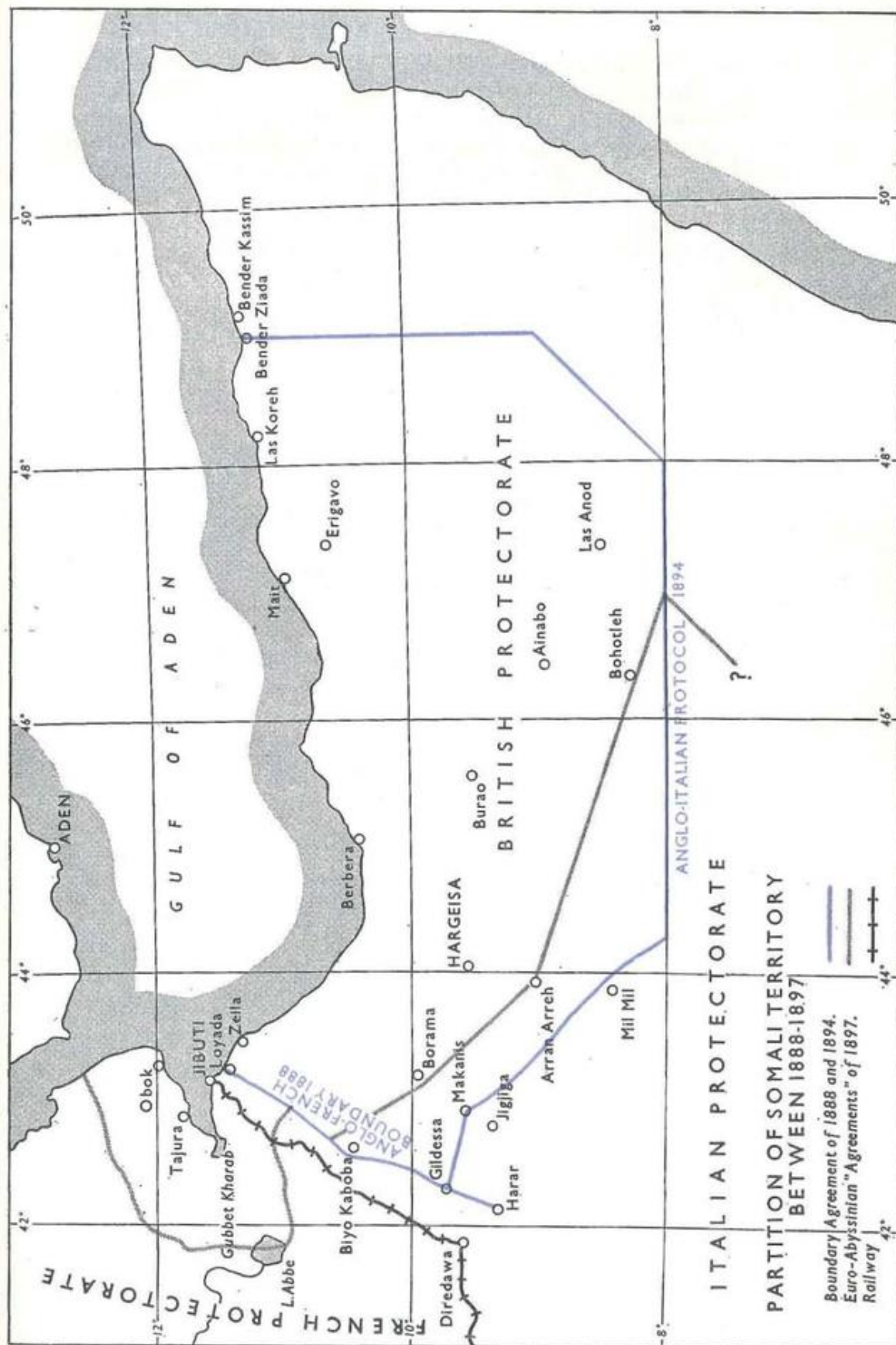
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Map VII

Milmil, which would have met the boundary of the Anglo-Italian Protocol of 1894 'but the Ras on his side fought for the 9th parallel as the boundary line . . . to its intersection with the 48th meridian'. Rodd agreed to a 'certain compromise' which, in Captain Swayne's opinion, *would not involve the abandonment of any districts of particular importance to us* so long as grazing rights and access to water on the far side of the line were secured. 'In accordance with my instructions,' Rodd added, 'it was necessary for me here as it had been in drafting Article II of the Treaty to find a form which would only involve Abyssinian recognition of our Protectorate *without in any way admitting recognition on our part of a cession to Ethiopia*'.

'My instructions were to avoid any mention of the claims of Italy, but I found in the course of our discussions that the line of Anglo-Italian Protocol was a *recognised historical landmark*, and the Ras had *frequently referred to it* as indicating the furthest limit of British claims on the territory in question, so that it did not seem that I could incur the risk of opening any controversy by referring to it, and the *regions beyond the British limit to the west appeared to be generally acknowledged as remaining under Italian influence*.'

What had Rodd achieved? His object<sup>17</sup> was to keep Menelik neutral in the colonial struggle between Britain and the Sudanese dervishes and to ensure that Abyssinia did not become a French base for an approach to the Nile from the east. 'The most that Rodd could get was a promise that the Emperor would not give guns to the Dervishes and a vague assurance of neutrality in the war against them.'<sup>18</sup>

What had been lost? Rodd acknowledged<sup>19</sup> that the people were 'for the most part pastoral and nomadic, changing their pastures according to the seasons, and in any arrangement to be made the habits and migration of the tribes must be carefully studied before a line was fixed'. To some extent these principles had been taken into account during negotiations between the British and the Italians under the 1895 Protocol, but even that boundary did not accord with the pattern of elliptical pastoral movements established by an 'Anglo-Abyssinian boundary commission' in 1934 (see 'Haud', map p. 73).

It was the activities of this colonial boundary commission that first brought to light, in the areas concerned, the fact that the British

<sup>17</sup> Robinson and Gallagher, op. cit., p. 361.

<sup>18</sup> *Vide supra*. 'His Majesty at once said that the enmity between his Empire and the Dervishes was irreconcilable. . . . I said that an assurance to that effect was all that we asked for, and handed a draft Article I had framed'. (Rodd to Salisbury, No. 20, May 13, 1897.)

<sup>19</sup> Rodd to Salisbury, No. 20 of May 13, 1897.



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Government had in 1897 concluded a Treaty with Abyssinia, without the consent or the knowledge of the Somalis. A Treaty which, whilst not ceding territory to Abyssinia, abandoned territory belonging to a people over whom Britain exercised a Protectorate, guaranteeing their independence. Not unnaturally the reaction of the Somalis was violent and during the ensuing disturbances Herr Beitz, the assistant commissioner of the Abyssinian section of the Colonial boundary commission, was unfortunately killed and many of the boundary pillars were destroyed or defaced.

This bilateral Treaty between Britain and Abyssinia, which was irreconcilable with Britain's former Treaties of Protection with Somali clans, presumably influenced 'negotiations' for boundary recognition between Italy and Abyssinia. These followed closely upon Rodd's visit to Abyssinia. No Treaties or agreements were signed, but a 'line' was defined 'as a result of direct conversations between Major Nerazzini, representing the Italian Government, and His Majesty the Emperor Menelik II, on the basis of an ordinary map on which the frontier was drawn following a line of delimitation "which runs at a distance of 180 miles parallel to the coast of the Indian Ocean, and joins [the Juba] to the north of Bardera"'.<sup>20</sup> (see '?' on map p. 57). One copy of the map (Von Habenicht Map of 1891) was retained by Menelik and the other was taken back to Italy. A message from the Stefani News Agency<sup>21</sup> on August 9, 1897, announced that the 'delimitation line runs at a distance of 180 miles from the coast. . . . No time limit has been fixed for decisions by the Italian Government, which is free to accept or reject the proposed frontier line, the present *de facto* line remaining unchanged in the meantime.'

There was no change in the *status quo* until 1908, other than an alleged telegram to Menelik on September 3, 1897 from the Italian Government purporting to accept 'the proposed line'. In 1908 Captain Felizzano entered into an agreement with Menelik (appendix XV (a)) attempting to settle finally the frontier between 'Italian possessions in Somaliland and the provinces of the Ethiopian Empire'. Articles I-IV of the agreement partitioned one Somali 'tribe' from another, either under Abyssinian 'dependence' or Italian 'dependence'. Article IV describes part of the boundary in this manner:

*'From the Webi Shebelli the frontier takes a north easterly direction according to the line accepted by the Italian Government in 1897. All territory belonging to the tribes toward the*

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum by the Imperial Abyssinian Government on the incidents at Wal Wal between November 23 and December 5, 1934.

<sup>21</sup> Reproduced as an appendix to U.N. document A/3463 of December 19, 1956.



*coast shall remain under the dependence of Italy; all the territory of Ogaden and all the territory of the tribes toward the Ogaden shall remain under the dependence of Abyssinia.'*

By Article V 'the two Governments undertake to mark materially on the field, and in the shortest possible time, the above described frontier line'. Neither Italy nor Ethiopia were able to agree on the colonial line 'accepted' by the Italian Government in 1897 as the two Habenicht maps could not be found. In recent negotiations, before Somalia's independence and exclusive of Somali authority, Italy favoured a line about 180 miles from the coast but Ethiopia, contrary to the view expressed in her memorandum<sup>22</sup> of 1934, maintained that a 'drawing appended to Caroselli's "Fire and Sword in Somaliland"' included a reproduction of the line drawn on the Habenicht map'.<sup>23</sup> This line supports the Ethiopian argument that the Habenicht line is less than 180 miles from the coast.

Whatever might have been the cartographic agreement between Italy and Abyssinia, which followed, in a matter of a week or so, the talks between Rodd and Menelik, Nerazzini could not have failed to have been aware of Rodd's delimitation, '*determined by a geographical line drawn to the intersection of the 47th meridian with the 8th parallel*'.<sup>24</sup>

The French also signed a convention with Menelik, just before Rodd's arrival, accepting a 'conspicuous'<sup>25</sup> curtailment of their Protectorate claims on the Somali coast (map p. 57). They were represented by M. Lagarde who was sent to Menelik 'with one hundred thousand rifles and orders to make a Treaty'.<sup>26</sup> On March 14, 1897, Lagarde was instructed in Addis Ababa to 'encourage the Emperor to push a force up to the right bank of the Nile near Fashoda; this was "indispensable"'.<sup>27</sup> The need for haste was the news of Rodd's approaching caravan and uneasiness about his beguiling manner.

Lagarde had left Addis Ababa before Rodd's arrival and, apart from the new boundary on the French Somali coast, there was an air of secrecy about the rest of his negotiations with Menelik. Rodd supposed that Lagarde had been 'gravely disappointed' by the negotiations and reported<sup>28</sup> that 'instead of enlarging his borders as he had

<sup>22</sup> See footnote 20 *supra*.

<sup>23</sup> *Vide* U.N. document footnote 21.

<sup>24</sup> Rodd to Salisbury, No. 35, of June 4, 1897.

<sup>25</sup> Rodd to Salisbury, No. 35 of June 4, 1897.

<sup>26</sup> Robinson and Gallagher, p. 360.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid* quoting French Minister of Colonies to Lagarde, March 14, 1897. *Document diplomatiques français*, 1st series, XIII, No. 149.

<sup>28</sup> Rodd to Salisbury, No. 41 of June 22, 1897.



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But Rodd was not aware that France had just entered into a  
Convention with Abyssinia establishing Menelik's authority on the  
right bank of the White Nile in support of the French on the left  
bank.<sup>29</sup> Nor did Rodd realize the purpose of Prince Henri d'Orlean's  
sojourn in the Abyssinian capital. 'He is preparing for an expedition',  
reported <sup>30</sup> Rodd, 'nominally to the Kaffa district, but his objective is  
most probably the Nile Valley.' In fact it was neither: he was arrang-  
ing for the opening up of the 'Equatorial Province' of Ethiopia, to  
which 'Menelik had just appointed as governor a rather shady  
Russian, Count Leontie'.<sup>31</sup> This 'Province' was said<sup>32</sup> to include the  
territory between 'the Juba, the whole of the Blue Nile, Gallaland, the  
Oromo and Lake Rudolph', which would have brought Ethiopian  
territory up to Khartoum and Uganda. But Menelik for his part  
'meant to back the winner in this struggle between Europeans'.<sup>33</sup> It  
culminated in an absurd and unworthy incident at Fashoda which  
ended Kitchener's advance 'by browbeating a few men marooned by  
the side of the Nile'.<sup>34</sup>

Thus the evidence at present available tends to discount Rodd's  
assertion that the French had any great interest in the Danakil<sup>35</sup> and  
Somali hinterland. The French withdrawal to the coast at Menelik's  
behest appears to have been lightly acceded to, in view of their am-  
bitious plans elsewhere; and the retention of Somali lowland was  
probably claimed, if at all, with no great conviction. By the Franco-  
Abyssinian Convention of 1897 (appendix XVI) the French, like the  
British, abandoned their moral and legal obligations attaching to  
their Treaty of Protection on March 26 (appendix VI (d)) with the  
Somali Essa clan (from whom they secured the Port of Jibuti) by

<sup>29</sup> Robinson and Gallagher, p. 360 (footnote 4) quoting *Documents diplomatiques  
français*, 1st series, XII No. 159. Rodd was however aware of Clochette's intention to  
make for Fashoda on the White Nile. 'Menelik appeared considerably taken aback by  
my knowledge of the details of the [Clochette's] expedition'. See Rodd to Salisbury,  
No. 19 of May 10, 1897.

<sup>30</sup> Rodd to Salisbury, No. 19 of May 10, 1897.

<sup>31</sup> Robinson and Gallagher, p. 364.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*, footnote 4, quoting *Documents diplomatiques français*, 1st series, XIII, No. 291.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid*, p. 364.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*, p. 376.

<sup>35</sup> 'It is difficult to procure accurate information as to the extent of Abyssinian in-  
fluence over the powerful Danakil countries lying to the north of the French sphere,  
and described in Menelik's Proclamation as 'the province of our ancient vassal  
Mohammed Anfari'. See Incl. No. 3 Rodd to Salisbury, No. 18 of May 9, 1897. The  
Danakil people were divided by the Franco-Italian Protocol of 1901 between these two  
countries.

abandoning Essa territory in the hinterland on March 20, 1897.

It is useful to compare the 1897 European boundary retractions (map p. 57) with the limits of Abyssinian expansion as described by Dr Smith, the American scientific explorer, who travelled from the Gulf of Aden to Lake Rudolf at about this time. Smith wrote on November 24, 1896, that 'a line run from Imi, on the Shebelli River, to a point immediately below Bonga, in Kaffa, will mark the southern limits of any country to which the Emperor Menelik can at present lay claim, either by virtue of peaceful occupation by treaties with the native chiefs, or by conquest. To the west, Abyssinia is bound by a line running north and south along the western border of Kaffa'.



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## SEVEN

### *Opportunities for Unification*

**D**URING the first twenty years of this century the Somali Sheikh Mohammed Abdille Hassan 'led with conspicuous success the rebellion against the British, Italian and Ethiopian governments, which earned him the nickname of "The Mad Mullah"'.<sup>1</sup> His object was to establish his suzerainty 'over the whole of the Somali country'.<sup>2</sup> During the course of the struggle Sheikh Mohammed met Commendatore Pestalozza, a representative of the Italian Government, at Illig on the Indian Ocean and conducted with him negotiations for a peaceful settlement.<sup>3</sup> With Britain's concurrence, an agreement was drawn up between Sheikh Mohammed and the Italian government on March 5, 1905, which 'assigned' to the Sheikh and his followers territory of the 'Nogal and the Haud, comprised within the limits of the Italian sphere of influence'.<sup>4</sup> This agreement (appendix XVII (a) and (b)) was followed by a supplementary British-Italian Agreement on March 19, 1907, which recognised the former agreement between Italy and Sheikh Mohammed, and extended the limits of the grazing right 'granted to the Dervishes . . . in Italian territory until it reaches the ponds of Kurmis' (map p. 64). Sheikh Mohammed was a Somali from the Ogaden country<sup>5</sup> but, 'despite the claims of Menelik, the Ethiopians in

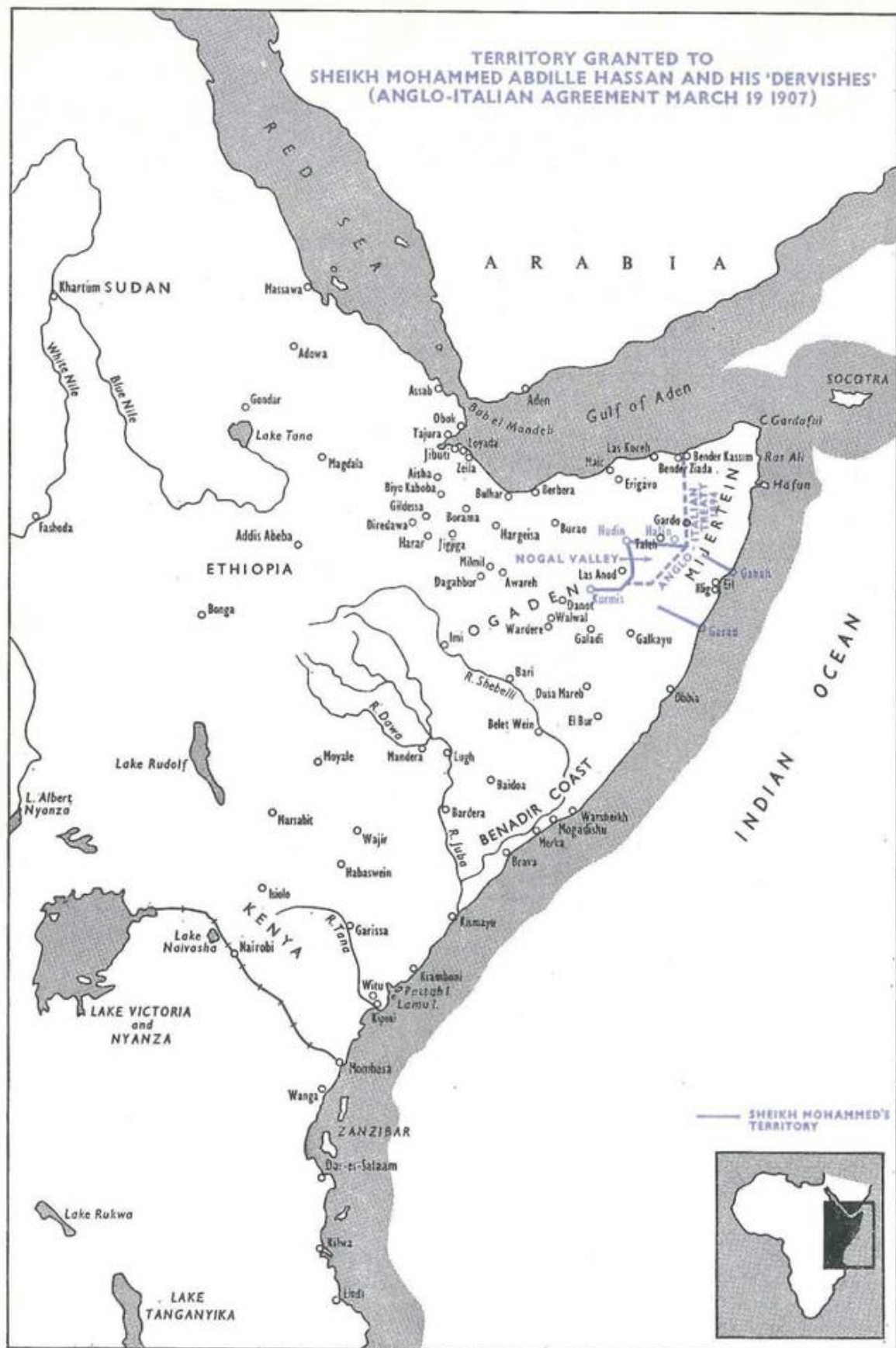
<sup>1</sup> Lewis, op. cit., p. 226. See also reference to Sheikh Mohammed on p. 30

<sup>2</sup> Jardine, D., *The Mad Mullah of Somaliland*, 1923, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 156.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p. 158.

<sup>5</sup> Sheikh Mohammed and his Dervishes forced the British to retire to the coast from 1910-13. It was not until the advent of the aeroplane that his fortress could be assailed. In spite of air attacks in 1920 he eluded all his adversaries and travelled from the Nogal to Imi in the Ogaden where he died from natural causes on Nov. 23, 1920.



Map VIII







Italy demanded the 'outright annexation of all the non-amharic<sup>13</sup> regions of Abyssinia and a mandate over the rest'.<sup>14</sup>

'Was it possible', asked<sup>15</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare, Britain's Foreign Secretary, 'to find some inducement . . . that might at least open the way to further negotiation? . . . Somehow or other we had to find a card of re-entry in a hand that was almost lost. This was the history of the proposal that Eden took with him to Rome for ceding to Abyssinia a narrow tract of territory [to Zeila] in British Somaliland as an outlet to the sea in compensation [sic] for substantial Abyssinian concessions to the Italian demands'. This plan, however, was thwarted by its premature disclosure to the British press by the Parliamentary Private Secretary of one of the Ministers. 'As it was, the disclosure at once excited an agitation against the transfer of any British territory to the Italian dictator,<sup>16</sup> *even though* it was desert in Somaliland.'<sup>17</sup> The proposal was rejected by the British House of Commons.

The League of Nations then appointed a Committee to examine the problem. This Committee recognized Italy's 'special interest in Abyssinia's economic development' and proposed the appointment of a 'mission of foreign specialists to reform the Ethiopian administration, while adding that Britain and France were prepared to *facilitate the territorial adjustments*. The Abyssinian Government accepted the Report, and even the Italian Government in rejecting it did so in conciliatory terms'.<sup>18</sup>

'In the meantime, the Italian Secret Service succeeded in photographing in the British Embassy in Rome, the Committee's Report, and divulged the fact that British experts were not worried over Italian predominance in Abyssinia so long as the head waters of Lake Tana were safe. The Report, together with several other confidential documents that were also secretly photographed in the Embassy, strengthened Mussolini's belief that we [British] were playing a double game with him'.<sup>19</sup> No further compromise was possible and Italy invaded Ethiopia.

It was Italy's invasion and subsequent sovereignty<sup>20</sup> over Ethiopia

<sup>13</sup> Amharic is a linguistic description covering the area, formerly known as Abyssinia, before Menelik invaded the neighbouring independent Galla regions.

<sup>14</sup> Amery, L. S., *My Political Life*, Vol. III, 1955, p. 169-70.

<sup>15</sup> Templewood, Viscount, (formerly Samuel Hoare), *Nine Troubled Years*, 1954, p. 155.

<sup>16</sup> A part of British Somaliland on the eastern fringe was also to be ceded to Italy.

<sup>17</sup> Templewood, op. cit., p. 155.

<sup>18</sup> Amery, op. cit., p. 170.

<sup>19</sup> Templewood, p. 156-7.

<sup>20</sup> *de jure* recognition of Italy's sovereignty over Ethiopia was accorded by Britain (see text) on April 16, 1938, in a Treaty known as *Accordo di Pasqua*.



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from 1935-41 that brought a large part of Somali territory together under one administration. This area was again substantially increased by Italy's invasion of former British Somaliland in August 1940. Thus for the 'first time . . . both sides of the boundary came under a single control. . . .'<sup>21</sup> It was not to last long, however, following Italy's defeat in March 1941, and Britain's military conquest of the Horn of Africa. Somalis were thus snatched, as it were, out of Italian hands and plunged into a British Military administration; but they were at least under single, albeit Colonial, tutelage.

In the meantime two significant events had taken place. During the British advance in Eritrea, the Royal Air Force, at Emperor Haile Selassie's behest, showered leaflets over Eritrea with this Proclamation:<sup>22</sup>

*'Eritrean people and people of Benadir!<sup>23</sup> You were separated from your mother, Ethiopia, and were put under the yoke of the enemy, and under the yoke of the enemy you still remain.*

*'Our cruel enemies, the Italians, have taken your green and fertile land: they prevent you from ploughing it and from grazing your cattle on it.*

*'But now the day has come when you will be saved from all the ignominy and hardship.*

*'I have come to restore the independence of my country, including Eritrea and the Benadir, whose people will henceforth dwell under the shade of the Ethiopian flag.*

*'In this struggle we are neither alone nor without arms. We have the help of Great Britain, therefore I summon you to strive to deliver yourself from the alien slavery. . . .'*

The next significant event was a speech<sup>24</sup> made on Feb 4, 1941, in the British House of Commons by the then Foreign Secretary, Mr. Eden.

*'His Majesty's Government would welcome the reappearance of an independent Ethiopian State and recognize the claim*

<sup>21</sup> *The Haud Problem*, op. cit., p. 6, para. 12.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted, together with a photographic copy of the Ethiopian National Flag which appeared on the leaflets, by Miss Sylvia Pankhurst in a pamphlet entitled *British Policy in Eastern Ethiopia, the Ogaden and the Reserved Area*. Privately published (undated). See also Pankhurst, E. S. and K. P., *Ethiopia and Eritrea*, 1953, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Benadir is a Somali Province with Mogadishu as its administrative centre; but in this context, according to Miss Pankhurst, it purports to describe former Italian Somaliland.

<sup>24</sup> Perham, op. cit., p. 417 quoting H. of C. Debates, Col. 804.



*of the Emperor Haile Selassie to the throne. They [the British Government] reaffirm that they have themselves no territorial ambitions in Abyssinia.*

On January 31, 1942, full sovereignty was restored by Britain to Emperor Haile Selassie but an agreement was concluded by the two parties which provided for the continuation of British Military Administration in two distinct areas. One, known as the Reserved Areas, was

*'conceived as Cantonments and as needed for Military operations, viz. against the Vichy French in Jibuti, and for the operation of the Franco-Ethiopian Railway, and it was clearly envisaged that their extent might be increased or contracted according to the situation and as might be agreed'.<sup>25</sup>*

The other area was the Ogaden, formerly part of the Italian *Governo della Somalia*, and its extent was not to be so varied and was to remain under British Military Administration during the period of Agreement;

*'... this was arranged so as to retain the shape of Somalia as it had been taken over from the Italians, and for the convenience of the administration in Somalia'.<sup>26</sup>*

These arrangements did not, however, satisfy the Ethiopian Government and the Emperor 'showed that he was irked by these reservations, especially that of the Ogaden'.<sup>27</sup> Thus on May 25, 1943, he gave the British three months' notice of the termination of this agreement 'and asked for a new one to be negotiated'.<sup>28</sup> Miss Perham comments<sup>29</sup> that 'it was clear that the question upon which the Ethiopians felt most deeply was the extreme reluctance of the British to hand back the administration of the Ogaden and of the so-called "Reserved Area"'. A new agreement was therefore signed on December 19, 1943: it was known as the 'Agreement of 1944' (appendix XVIII). The new Agreement made a number of changes directed towards 'reasserting the untrammelled sovereignty'<sup>30</sup> of the Ethiopian Government. It reduced the extent of the Reserved Area but 'provided that the Ogaden should still remain under British Military Administra-

<sup>25</sup> *The Haud Problem*, op. cit., p. 6, para 14.

<sup>26</sup> *vide supra*.

<sup>27</sup> Perham, op. cit., p. 392.

<sup>28</sup> *The Haud Problem*, p. 7, para 16.

<sup>29</sup> Perham, op. cit., p. 393.

<sup>30</sup> *The Haud Problem*, *vide supra*.



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tion . . . without prejudice to British recognition of the Emperor's sovereignty'.<sup>31</sup> (map p.69).

The war ended in 1945 and during succeeding years the Somali peninsula was again thrown into the cauldron of international politics. The two former Italian Colonies, Eritrea and Somaliland, were to be 'disposed of' by the United Nations. Ethiopia claimed some medieval right to sovereignty over both territories and Ethiopia's Prime Minister wrote a letter to the London Times on March 8, 1946, 'reiterating his claims for the "lost provinces" of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland which the Ethiopians generally call Benadir'.<sup>32</sup>

In June Mr. Bevin, Britain's Foreign Secretary, explained in Parliament a proposal which he had submitted to the Foreign Ministers of France, Soviet Russia and the United States on April 29. In his speech<sup>33</sup> Mr. Bevin said:

*' . . . In the latter part of the last century the Horn of Africa was divided between Great Britain, France and Italy. At about the time we occupied our part, the Ethiopians occupied an inland area which is the grazing ground for nearly half the nomads of British Somaliland for six months of the year. Similarly, the nomads of Italian Somaliland must cross the existing frontiers in search of grass. In all innocence, therefore, we proposed that British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, and the adjacent part of Ethiopia, if Ethiopia agreed, should be lumped together as a trust territory, so that the nomads should lead their frugal existence with the least possible hindrance and there might be a real chance of a decent economic life, as understood in that territory. . . . If the Conference do not like our proposal, we will not be dogmatic about it; we are prepared to see Italian Somaliland put under the United Nations' trusteeship'.*

The Foreign Ministers did not like the proposal for a variety of reasons, not always connected with the welfare and interests of the Somalis, and Ethiopia objected strongly. 'In an interview given to Reuters on the 16th of June, the Emperor refused to admit that there could be any question of the Ogaden not being returned to Ethiopia, and he refused to regard this matter as one within the scope of the Peace Conference'.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *vide supra*.

<sup>32</sup> Perham, op. cit., p. 439; see also reference on p. 67.

<sup>33</sup> House of Commons debates June 4, 1946, Cols. 1840-1.

<sup>34</sup> Perham, p. 448.



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In the same year negotiations took place between Britain and Ethiopia 'in which the possible exchange of a part of Northern Somaliland and the Haud was discussed, with a view to granting Ethiopia direct access to the sea while permitting the British administration to remain permanently in charge of the territories in which Somali tribes from the British Protectorate grazed their livestock during part of each year. However, when, by the Federation of Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Ethiopians added the coast of Eritrea to their territory, this point of their proposed exchange, so far as they were concerned, lost its significance, and so the negotiations proved fruitless'.<sup>35</sup>

Ethiopia's view was expressed in a Memorandum<sup>36</sup> to the United Nations:

*'Prior to the race of the European Powers to divide up the Continent of Africa, Ethiopia included an extensive coastline along the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. It was only in the last 15 years of the 19th Century that Ethiopia had been deprived of access to the sea by the loss of Somaliland and Eritrea. The first step in this direction was to seize Massawa by the Italians in 1885. This was followed by a similar seizure of the Benadir and other areas of Somaliland, as well as by a series of agreements concerning Ethiopia, but in regard to which she had not been consulted. It was under these conditions that agreements were concluded in 1888, 1890, 1891 and 1894.'*

The Somali view was put forward verbally and in a series of Memoranda submitted to the Four-Power Commission of Investigation on ex-Italian Somaliland. In a Memorandum<sup>37</sup> to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organisation dated October 18, 1948, the Somalis said:

*'In order to ascertain the extent of Somali feeling on this question, the Somali National League and the Somali Youth League jointly organised a Conference at Mogadishu in February 1948, which was attended by delegates from all over the Somali areas. . . . The results of the Conference clearly show the wishes of the great majority of our people, viz:—*

*(a) 85 per cent of the population desire their unification into one Somali Nation to be administered on their behalf a*

<sup>35</sup> Latham Brown, D. J., *The Ethiopia-Somaliland Frontier Dispute*, (International and Comparative Law Quarterly, April, 1956).

<sup>36</sup> A/C. I/W 8 of October 20, 1948, para 16.

<sup>37</sup> *Memorandum to the United Nations Organisation concerning the need for the Unification of the Somali people*, October 18, 1948, paras 25, 27, 28.



*Joint Trusteeship of the Four Big Powers of the United Nations Trusteeship Council.*

(b) 5 per cent expressed a desire to be administered by any other Government than Italian.

(c) 5 per cent wished to be placed under United Nations Trusteeship with Great Britain as the Administering Power.

(d) 5 per cent desired to be administered by Italy, under United Nations Trusteeship. . . .

*'It will be observed that the great majority of our people wish to be united in one Somali Nation and is very willing to be placed under United Nations control on a Four Power basis. We do not pretend that we can stand on our own feet at the moment, but ask the United Nations Trusteeship Council to decide questions relating to the formation, boundaries, and administration of a Somali Trust Territory to be known as SOMALIA; this Territory to consist of all areas at present predominately populated by Somalis. . . .'*

By 1947 it was apparent to Britain that 'the time was approaching when the British would have to abandon Somalia either to the Italians or to some International régime; and that this would entail the return of the Ogaden to Ethiopia'.<sup>38</sup> Thus Britain abandoned the Ogaden and part of the Reserved Area which were occupied by Ethiopia on September 24, 1948. By this act of abandonment, the British Government left behind in 1948 an 'ethnic' boundary dividing the Ogaden Somalis from their kinsmen to the East but this boundary was moved even further to the east in 1950 as an angular projection of the eastern boundary of the former British Somaliland Protectorate. It was named (and still retains the name) 'provisional administrative line' to which Italy, the subsequent Administering Power over the United Nations Trusteeship of Somalia, 'expressed the widest reserves'.<sup>39</sup> With the agreement of the Ethiopians, and still under the Agreement of 1944, it was possible to retain British Military Administration within the Haud, with boundaries approximating to the limits of grazing rights of the British Protected Tribes as determined by the Anglo-Ethiopian Boundary Commission'.<sup>40</sup>

In the meantime prolonged debates in the United Nations over

<sup>38</sup> *The Haud Problem*, p. 8, para 18.

<sup>39</sup> Document T/527 of March 29, 1950, and letter of March 15, 1950, from Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs to President of Trusteeship Council.

<sup>40</sup> *Vide supra*. See pp. 58 for an account of the Boundary demarcation.



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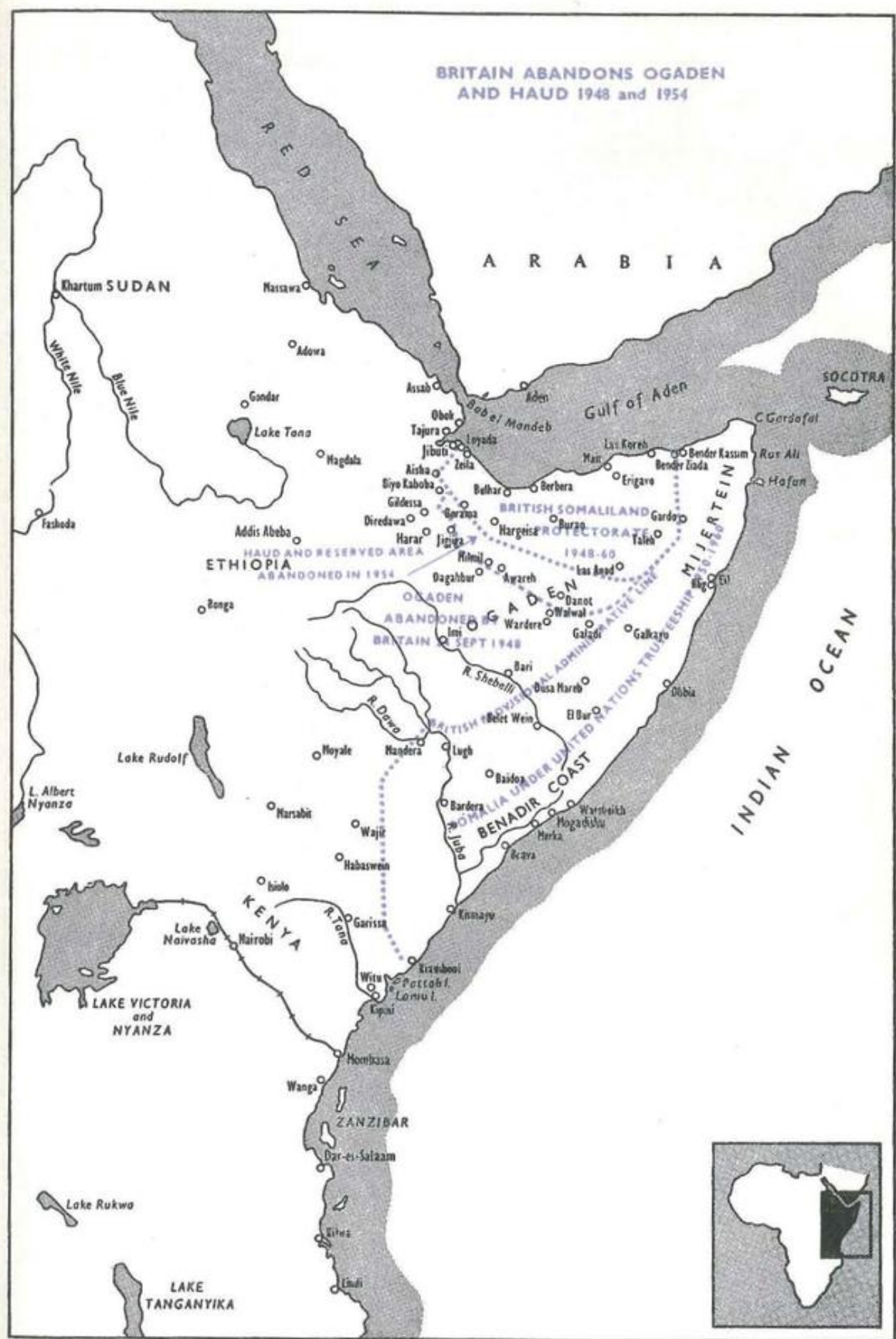
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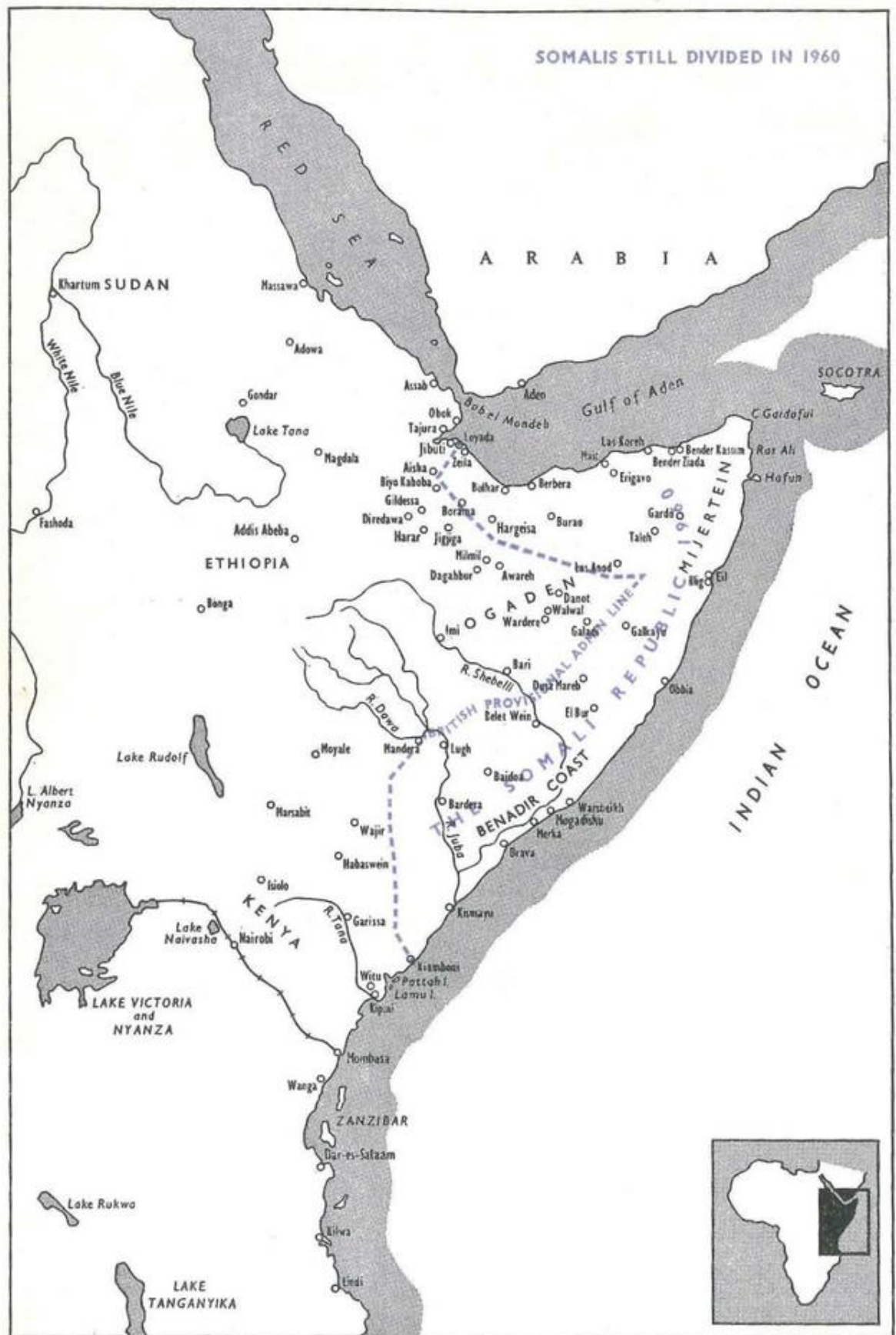
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# SOMALIS STILL DIVIDED IN 1960



Map X1





the 'disposal' of former Italian Somaliland ensued. Ethiopia, by then realising that her claim to some medieval sovereignty over Somalis was not convincing, concentrated on opposing the return of Italy to her former Colony on the grounds that Somaliland, under Italian Colonial rule, was the base from which Italy had launched her attack on Ethiopia in 1935. Ethiopia had won considerable sympathy from some members of the United Nations on the basis of moral indebtedness. '... a goodly number of the delegations [at the Assembly's plenary session, Nov. 1949] shared the British Delegate's regret concerning "the inability to find a formulae admitting our moral indebtedness to Ethiopia"'.<sup>41</sup>

The Pakistan delegate, Sir Zafrullah Khan, argued that 'ex-Italian Somaliland was only a segment of the Somalilands, which should all be united to form an independent political entity. This implied the annexation by some future Somali state of the Ethiopian Ogaden, as well as the British Somaliland Protectorate and the small French Somaliland Colony'.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the United Nations agreed to place Italian Somaliland under a United Nations Trusteeship, for ten years, to be administered by Italy. Thereafter she would be granted independence. Emperor Haile Selassie, voicing earlier sentiments<sup>43</sup> by his representative at the United Nations, sent a telegram<sup>44</sup> to the Secretary General on September 20, 1950.

*'... In overriding the principles of self-determination of peoples so clearly expressed by the Somali people ... the fourth General Assembly failed in its responsibility for reaching decisions urgently required in the interests of peace and justice. ...'*

To conclude the dismal tale, Britain terminated, by a new Agreement with Ethiopia in 1954 (appendix XIX), the territorial 'concessions' of the 1944 Agreement (Haud and Reserved Area) on the mistaken<sup>45</sup> grounds that the 1897 Agreement defined Ethiopian terri-

<sup>41</sup> Rivlin, B., *The United Nations and Italian Colonies*, Case Histories No. 1 (Carnegie Endowment), p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> Pankhurst, E. S., *Ex-Italian Somaliland*, 1951, p. 320.

<sup>43</sup> 'Ato Akilou, Ethiopia, declared: "we feel profoundly the justice of our claim. Our claim is based on the principle of self-determination of peoples. If the peoples concerned wish to be united, union is not incompatible with the principle of self-determination"'. Quoted by Pankhurst, E. S., *op. cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations Document A/1374 Sept 20, 1950. The Emperor was objecting to a United Nations' decision in favour of Italy assuming responsibility for the administration of the Trust Territory of Somalia.

<sup>45</sup> See page 56.



tory in these areas. The British Secretary of State for the Colonies in a statement<sup>46</sup> to the House of Commons said in 1955 that he regretted the Treaty of 1897 'but, like much that has happened before, it is impossible to undo it.' Although the original Anglo-Somali Treaties of Protection did not cede any territory to Britain, as had apparently been recognised by the text of the 1897 Treaty and annexures with Ethiopia, the British Government now evidently arrived at a new and different interpretation of the position. It was in this way that the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1954 purported to recognise the sovereignty of Ethiopia over Somali territory to which she had no prior title.

Lord Rennell of Rodd, whose father had negotiated the 1897 Treaty with Menelik, had this to say in 1952:

*'For one brief period during the war, nearly the whole of Somaliland was under British administration. . . .*

*'If we had been interested enough – and Heaven knows there was nothing to interest us except to see justice done to the people (and if the world had been sensible enough), all the Somalis . . . might have remained under our administration – ours or the United Nations or someone else's (it would not have mattered much so long as the administration was congenial to the Somalis) until the Somalis had learnt to govern themselves. But the world was not sensible enough, and we were not interested enough, and so the only part of Africa which is radically homogeneous has again been split up into such three parts as made Caesar's Gaul the problem and the cockpit of Europe for the last two thousand years. And Somaliland will probably become a cockpit of East Africa . . .'*<sup>47</sup>

The former British Somaliland Protectorate and the United Nations Trusteeship Territory of Somalia united as the Somali Republic on July 1, 1960, and by Article VI of the Constitution the duly elected representatives of the Somali Republic pledged to 'promote, by legal and peaceful means, the union of Somali territories . . .'

Menelik did not evidently anticipate the independence of the Somali people. The foregoing pages suggest that he welcomed a narrow but impenetrable crust of Europeans along the Somali and Danakil coastline. It was M. Ilg (Menelik's Swiss Counsellor of State)

<sup>46</sup> Latham Brown, op. cit., quoting Hansard, Loc. cit., Col 1285.

<sup>47</sup> Lord Rennell of Rodd, 1952, quoted in *The British Survey*, Main Series, N.S. No. 98 by Sir Gerald Reece.



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who said<sup>48</sup> in 1896: 'as for the coast Menelik wants none as he knows perfectly well he cannot hold it.' What other reason could Menelik have had for permitting Italy to remain in Eritrea after her defeat at Adowa? For their part, the three European powers were satisfied with the footholds that they had gained on the Somali Peninsula. France wanted a coaling station to compete with Aden and wished to link Jibuti with her colonial possessions in French Equatorial Africa. Italy was motivated by the desire to colonize Eritrea, Somaliland and Abyssinia. Britain was obsessed with the necessity for securing fresh supplies of meat for her Aden fortress and for ensuring that no other European power had access to the headwaters of Nile. Today, with the exception of the French in Jibuti, the European 'crust' along one of the longest coastlines of Africa has been broken, and Euro-Abyssinian Imperialist policies of the 19th Century are no longer tenable. The responsibility for the mess that has been left behind rests with those that created it.

<sup>48</sup> *India Office Vol. 7, Letters from Aden, 1889-96.* Ferris to Cromer Confidential D/O, Dec. 1, 1896.

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\* See footnote p. 79.



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## Appendix II\*

*CIRCULAR LETTER† sent by Emperor Menelek to Heads of European States in 1891‡*

BEING desirous to make known to our friends the Powers (Sovereigns) of Europe the boundaries of Ethiopia, we have addressed also to you (your Majesty) the present letter.

These are the boundaries of Ethiopia:—

Starting from the Italian boundary of Arafalé, which is situated on the sea, the line goes westward over the plain (Meda) of Gegra towards Mahio, Halai, Digsä, and Gura up to Adibaro. From Adibaro to the junction of the Rivers Mareb and Arated.

From this point the line runs southward to the junction of the Atbara and Setit Rivers, where is situated the town known as Tomat.

From Tomat the frontier embraces the Province of Gedaref up to Karkoj on the Blue Nile. From Karkoj the line passes to the junction of the Sobat River with the White Nile. From thence the frontier follows the River Sobat, including the country of the Arboré, Gallas, and reaches Lake Samburu.

Towards the east are included within the frontier the country of the Borana Gallas and the Arussi country up to the limits of the Somalis, including also the Province of Ogaden.

To the northward the line of frontier includes the Habr Awaz, the Gadabursi, and the Esa Somalis, and reaches Ambos.

Leaving Ambos the line includes Lake Assäl, the province of our ancient vassal Mohamed Anfari, skirts the coast of the sea, and rejoins Arafale.

While tracing to-day the actual boundaries of my Empire, I shall endeavour, if God gives me life and strength, to re-establish the ancient frontiers (tributaries) of Ethiopia up to Khartoum, and as far as Lake Nyanza with all the Gallas.

Ethiopia has been for fourteen centuries a Christian island in a sea of pagans. If Powers at a distance come forward to partition Africa between them, I do not intend to be an indifferent spectator.

As the Almighty has protected Ethiopia up to this day, I have confidence He will continue to protect her, and increase her borders in the future. I am certain He will not suffer her to be divided among other Powers.

Formerly the boundary of Ethiopia was the sea. Having lacked strength sufficient, and having received no help from Christian Powers, our frontier on the sea coast fell into the power of the Mussulman.

At present we do not intend to regain our sea frontier by force, but we trust that the Christian Power, guided by our Saviour, will restore to us our sea-coast line, at any rate, certain points on the coast.

Written at Adis Abbaba, the 14th Mazir, 1883 (10th April, 1891).

(Translated direct from the Amharic.)

Adis Abbaba, 4th May, 1897.

\* See footnote p.79

† Addressed to Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia.

‡ Public Records Office (London), Foreign Office 1/32 Rodd to Salisbury, No. 15, 4th May, 1897.

## Appendix XX\*

1. Gastaldi's map of Africa, which served European cartographers as a prototype for nearly 200 years, was engraved at Venice in 1564, in 8 sheets, the mean scale being about 1-8,000,000. The first draft of the map may have been prepared by Gastaldi about 1550.

2. The east coast of Africa and the Red Sea coasts were well known to the Portuguese by this date; and Gastaldi's relatively accurate coastal outlines are undoubtedly copied from Portuguese charts, in which he could also have found the names of some kingdoms and settlements of the littoral. For the interior of North-east Africa, Gastaldi—like all other cartographers before the Jesuit surveys in Ethiopia at the end of the 16th century—had to base his representation almost entirely on textual sources.

3. These sources are known: they are the report of the Portuguese embassy to Ethiopia in 1520-26, written by Francisco Alvares and published at Lisbon in 1540, and *Asia, Década I*, by the Portuguese chronicler João de Barros, published at Lisbon in 1552. Italian translations of both these works had been printed by Gastaldi's friend G. B. Ramusio in his *Navegationi et Viaggi*: Alvares in Vol. I (1550), Barros in Vol. II (1554).

4. For Ethiopia and the countries adjoining it, almost all Gastaldi's information came from Alvares' narrative, and it consequently relates to the years 1520-26, before the invasion of Ethiopia by Grāñ. The map has the defects to be expected in one compiled from textual data which include few reliable distances or bearings: thus Gastaldi extends Ethiopian place names as far south as the latitude of Mozambique. In his location of the states lying near to the coast, for which he had other controls, Gastaldi is however relatively correct.

5. Following the coastline on Gastaldi's map, from the mouth of the Red Sea by the horn of Africa to Malindi, we find the following names of territories:

- | (On the coast)          | (Inland)             |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| (1) REGNO DE DANGALY    |                      |
| (2) REGNO DE ADEL       |                      |
|                         | (3) REGNO DE BALLI   |
| (4) REGNO DE SOALI      |                      |
| (5) ZINGI POPOLI        |                      |
| (6) REGNO DE DOARA      |                      |
| (7) REGNO DE MAGADOZO   |                      |
|                         | (8) REGNO DE ADEL    |
|                         | (9) REGNO DE FATIGAR |
| (10) REGNO DE MELI(N)DE |                      |

The modern names corresponding to these are: (1) Danakil, (2) and (8) Ifat, (3) Bāli, (4) Somali, (5) [Zingi], (6) Dawaro, (7) Mogadishu, (9) Fatagār, (10) Malindi. Apart from the transposition of Bāli and Fatagār, the countries named are correctly placed on the map in relation to one another.

6. Gastaldi uses the term REGNO indiscriminately for provinces or states subject to the Crown of Ethiopia (e.g. "Xoa", "Barnagasso") and for those independent of it (e.g. "Quiloa", "Melinde"). To determine the status and allegiance of the countries of the Somali littoral and hinterland in the period (1520-26) to which

\* See footnote p.79



Gastaldi's map relates, it is necessary to refer to the text of Alvares, to which the map serves as a graphic index. From this, supplemented by other sources, it is clear that:—

- (a) the kingdoms named by Gastaldi and listed above (para. 5) were all Moslem;
- (b) only one of them (Fatigar) was, at the time of Alvares' visit, a tributary of Ethiopia and lay within the effective boundaries of Lebna Dengel's kingdom;
- (c) the largest of these kingdoms, Adel, had been engaged in intermittent warfare against Ethiopia since the early 14th century and had invaded the country annually from about 1516. This demonstrates that Adel did not admit Ethiopian suzerainty. In this connection, "Adel" in the Ethiopian records may sometimes be used collectively to designate the Moslem states in general or a group or combination of them.

R. A. SKELTON.

*Superintendent, Map Room,  
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## SOME EARLY OPINIONS ON THE FIRST EDITION

... This impressive study lives up to its title and does indeed bring new light to bear upon the problems of the Horn of Africa. From a penetrating examination of the British diplomatic documents of the period, and of other sources, the anonymous authors have produced an exciting and remarkably balanced analysis of the partition of the Somali peninsula between Britain, Italy, France and Ethiopia, in the latter part of the last century. New ground is broken by the use of the diplomatic despatches; and the text, which thus constitutes an important new contribution to the history of North East Africa, is amply supported by excellent maps and appendices of all the relevant treaties. ...

Dr I. M. LEWIS,  
*University of Glasgow.*

... Despite its sub-title the book is not the usual propaganda tract; it is the product of a great deal of historical research and serves a second function in helping to fill an important gap in English writings on East African history. It has detailed footnotes and complete references and documentation. ... The book is remarkable for its lack of bitterness and anti-colonialist abuse. The author (or authors - they remain anonymous) have wisely allowed the facts to speak for themselves. ... As a result the book is bound to impress all who read it with the validity of Somali claims. ...

*Aden Chronicle.*

... The book is a quiet, academic, almost scholarly work, setting out in enormous detail the background of the whole history of Somalia, how the present Somali Republic came into existence and how there are still Somali peoples living outside their frontier in Ethiopia, French Somaliland and the British Colony of Kenya ... I think the case can be summed up in one line from the preface by the Prime Minister of the Somali Republic, he says ... 'The aims of annexation were dictated by selfish policies which the Colonial powers found it expedient to pursue in the 19th Century without regard for the interests of the Somali people.' ...

PATRICK KEATLEY OF *The Guardian*  
B.B.C. Broadcast

... I have read the book with the very greatest interest and attention. I must congratulate the authors on the excellent appearance of the volume and the most competent presentation of the case. ...

PROFESSOR E. ULLENDORFF  
*University of Manchester*