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THE FOREIGN POLICY OF EMPEROR MENELIK II:
ITS POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC SIGNIFICANCE
(1869-1910).

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The Foreign Policy of Emperor Menelik II:
Its Political and Diplomatic Significance
(1869-1910)

By

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B.A. June, 1960, University College of Addis Ababa

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Dissertation directed by

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and International Relations

To
father
mother and
Adey

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INTRODUCTION

I. Scope and method

In order to effectively deal with the subject matter the content has been divided into an overall introductory section and three other closely inter-related parts. While the introductory part attempts to deal with the modalities of the research (theme of dissertation, method and approach of analysis, sources of research, etc.) parts one, two and three are concerned with the substance, analysis, evaluation and appreciation of the problems involved. Part four contains appendices of relevant treaties, maps, documents and a concise bibliography.

The research has enormously benefited from documents and archives maintained by the main actors who were, in one way or another, partly responsible for shaping Menelik's foreign policy.¹ Necessarilly, therefore, many deductions have been made from

1

The researcher is grateful for all persons, archives, libraries and institutions who put these documents at his disposal.

historical and diplomatic data gathered from these documents and archives. The data obtained from such sources, while generally useful and factual, could nevertheless be contradictory and often misleading. As a result, a conscious attempt is made to systematically sort out, arrange and scrutinize the data thus obtained so as to analyze them not only in light of their own proper merit and importance, but also by putting them in contrast with other information gathered from other sources.

Hence, a deliberate effort has been made in this regard to avoid some of the dangers and pitfalls inherent in such a unique usage of historical and diplomatic documents. A.J.P. Taylor may have been right when he wrote, that "our sources are primarily the records which foreign offices keep of their dealings with each other; and the writer who bases himself solely on archives is likely to claim scholarly virtue."²

But I tend to take issue with this view and instead choose the other "scholarly virtue" of mixing and balancing it with other pertinent and relevant sources.

Generally speaking, the research has relied and put emphasis on the study of motivations which prompted foreign

2

A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, Oxford, 1954, p.569.

policy decision-making. Without abandoning the benefits which could be derived from the historian, it has also tried to profit from the definitions and concepts developed by the decision-making analysis.

In a broader perspective, it could be maintained that there are only two ways of scientifically studying international politics: one, through the description and measurement of interaction, and two, through a thorough analysis of the decision-making process or the formulation or execution of foreign policy.³ It is on both these approaches that the research relies. However, it must be made clear from the outset that the research has recognized and taken into account the weaknesses inherent in these approaches.⁴

As a result, the paper has put emphasis on the utilization of the systematic approach to foreign policy analysis. Central

3

Richard D. Snyder, H.W. Bruck & Burton Sapin, (eds.), Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics, N.Y., The Free Press, 1962, pp.60-74; See also, Snyder et al, "The Decision-making Approach to the Study of International Politics," in James N. Rosenau's: International Politics and Foreign Policy, New York, The Free Press, 1969, p. 206.

4

Some of the drawbacks inherent in the decision-making analysis are adequately discussed in Roy E. Jones, Analysing Foreign Policy, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1970, pp.36-44; James N. Rosenau, The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy, The Free Press, New York, 1971, p.261, pp.269-273.

to this is the concept that the "primary analytical objective" of the approach is the "recreation of the 'world' of the decision-makers as they view it,"⁵ and to make a thorough evaluation of that 'world' and its international political concepts. As a systematic approach to foreign policy analysis fundamentally concerns itself with problems, issues, conflicts and crises,⁶ the paper is essentially engaged with the study of a 'problem-centered' and 'problem-oriented' foreign policy. It therefore makes an effort to scrutinize the roles of the actors, for "the manner in which 'they' define situations becomes another way of saying how the state oriented to action and why."⁷ In trying to analyze and cope with the problems thus posed, it is attempted to relate them, as much as possible, to some of the traditional 'objects' of foreign policy such as the 'politics of survival' (independence and self-preservation),

5

Snyder et al., Foreign Policy Decision-Making, p.65.

6

David Braybrooke & Charles E. Lindblom, "Types of Decision-Making," in A Strategy of Decision: Policy Evaluation As a Social Process, N.Y., The Free Press, 1963, pp.61-79; Joseph Frankel, The Making of Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Decision-Making, London, Oxford University Press, 1968, p.17.

7

Snyder et al., Foreign Policy Decision-Making, p.65.

'national security' (sovereignty), 'national power' (stability), territorial and economic integrity (change and permanence),⁸ modernization and the like, - and examine the whole 'ensemble' in a critical and concerted manner.

By breaking down the substance of the research into its relevant component parts, it is envisaged to strictly emphasize and focus attention on the 'whys', 'whats', and 'wheres' of the foreign and diplomatic interactions of Menelik with European powers. Hence, on the one hand it had involved the delving, in a concise but precise manner, into the history of the power struggle between Emperor Yohannes and Menelik, the latter's rise to power, and the nature and overall application of European Colonial diplomacy to Menelik's Ethiopia, the significance of the Berlin Conference's scheme of partition and the European rivalry it engendered in the area, mainly among Great Britain, France and Italy, for the creation of their respective spheres of influence and the maintainance of their national interest. On the other hand, an effort is made to analyze the complex and dynamic diplomatic, as well as political, reactions Menelik undertook as a counter-measure to the European pressure; and whenever

8

Charles Yost, The Conduct and Misconduct of Foreign Affairs, N.Y., Random House, 1972, pp.21-23; Henry A. Kissinger, "Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy," in James N. Rosenau's: International Politics and Foreign Policy, pp.261-275; Joseph Frankel, The Making of Foreign Policy, p.55.

applicable an attempt has been made to dissect and look into the implications and significance of such a policy not only to Ethiopia but also - in as much as its relevance is assured - to the Horn of Africa, the European powers and Africa beyond the Horn.

To perform this analytically and - whenever feasible - to bring out the right perceptions, dominant political factors or milestones, such as the famous (in the annals of colonial history) Treaty of Wichalle of 1889 and its subsequent culmination in the Battle of Adwa in 1896 are presented as major case studies. Such an approach, it is hoped, besides its usefulness to help closely study these political determinants in their respective contexts, also accords one the possibility of determining what kind of stimuli these factors were, and what kind of foreign policy decisions they have brought about.

Three things must be said at the outset. First, history students will be disappointed if they were expecting a pure and simple narrative of political events as they unfolded in that tense period during the great scramble for Africa. Of necessity, only a sketch of the political history of the period is offered, chapters one to three of part one giving an overview of the entire period. Second, it is not the objective of this research to embark upon a definitive study of the foreign policy of Menelik.

The problems involved require a study much more detailed and loftier in magnitude than is intended at present.

It is not, therefore, the intention of this paper to go into a detailed study of all of Menelik's political as well as diplomatic dealings with his counterparts. This task is rightly assigned and left to the diplomatic historian. What is attempted here is an analysis of Menelik's major foreign policy decisions in their broader perspective so as to be able to cast light as to why those kinds of decisions were made or taken by Menelik.

Third, wherever necessary and applicable the paper would deal with theories and concepts, especially the decision-making process, as they apply to the foreign policy of Menelik.

The scope of this thesis, as indicated in the second paragraph of the introduction, is to analyze, evaluate and appreciate the problems involved in Menelik's foreign policy. To put it schematically, while in part one a simplified version of his diplomatic contacts are given, in parts two and three the salient features of these contacts and their resultant foreign policy are brought to the fore and ~~elucidated~~ elucidated in a phase by phase and stage by stage approach. In a concluding chapter of part three, some of the most important decisions of Menelik's foreign policy are discussed critically and put to evaluation.

What were Menelik's foreign policy objectives? First, let us try to define what the word "objective" signifies in the

context used in this research. It is in the fulfillment of values through political actions that decision makers are normally able to attain their objectives. These values, however, can never be, in most instances, fully satisfied. Objectives, therefore, are not realized at all times and levels. This is partly explained by the pessimistic attitudes of some decision makers which is derived from an effort to be over-cautious and seeking the other alternative of always finding oneself on the safer side. Others, optimistic in tendency, and urged by a determined fatalism, dare to take risks in order to attain their goals and objectives. Such a happy coincidence where values are relatively successfully secured is appropriately termed by Joseph Frankel as "the pitching of the level of aspirations."⁹

The objectives of foreign policy are varied. However, dating back to earlier times, these objectives in foreign policy have rallied around the magic and catch word of 'national interest'. This national interest, from as far back as the Sixteenth Century up to the present, is defined variably as being represented by¹⁰ "the will of the prince", "dynastic interests", "'raison d'etat'",

9

Joseph Frankel, The Making of Foreign Policy, p.136.

10

Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince.

"national honour", "the general will", interest defined in terms of "power", etc.¹¹ Further still, there are other minor variables putting emphasis on war and peace, a policy of industrial and economic welfare or aggrandizement, and a foreign policy basing the national interest on abstract notions of nationalism and religious and cultural objectives.

Perhaps, in recent times, one of the theories most discussed and put to exhaustive scholarly criticism and scrutiny is the one postulated by Hans Morgenthau who advances "a realist theory of international politics" based on the concept of national interest.¹² He defines "interest" in terms of power.¹² According to Morgenthau "objectives of a foreign policy must be defined in terms of national interest."¹³ Rightly so, he emphasizes that "interest determining political action in a particular period of history depends upon the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated."¹⁴

11

James N. Rosenau, The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy, p.240.

12

Hans Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1954, p.9.

13

Ibid., p.528.

14

Ibid., p.8.

As of late, in contradistinction to the propagators of the concept of "power" in international politics, the decision-making approach to international politics provided a different view of looking at the question of national interest.¹⁵

This approach puts emphasis on the actions of a nation's policy makers and formulators and dramatizes their role as the articulators of the aspirations and the national interest of the state. In other words, the national interest is reflected in the decisions of the authorities who make policy, or, in the words of Furniss and Snyder, "the national interest is what the nation, i.e., the decision-maker decides it is."¹⁶ This is the conception of national interest which I shall employ.

Given this sketchy definition of what a political objective represents, let us briefly touch upon those of Menelik. The foreign policy objectives of Menelik as representing the national interest could be divided into two general classifications. First, a short term objective consisted of using the friendship of the European powers to aid in his political rivalry with Emperor Yohannes and his tireless effort at consolidating his

15

Snyder et al., Foreign Policy Decision-Making.

16

Edgar S. Furniss & Richard C. Snyder, An Introduction to American Foreign Policy, New York, Rinehart, 1955, p.17.

power and grip over his Empire. Second, perhaps the most important, is a long term objective of (a) maintaining Ethiopia's independence, sovereignty and integrity against innumerable odds, (b) reclaiming Ethiopia's "ancient frontiers" by actively competing and rivaling European colonizing efforts in and around the Nile Valley and the Red Sea area, (c) tactfully outmaneuvering the European political thrust and rivalry in that part of Africa through what could appropriately be termed a Menelikian feat of diplomacy, (d) the forging of a national unity and (e) the fulfillment of the urgency of modernization.

It would be seen that at a time when European Colonialism was vigorously clinging to a foreign policy of imperialism and expansionism, and the urge for the acquisition of territories by treaty within the African Continent was the 'diktat' of the epoch, the foreign policy objectives of Menelik were directed at forcefully opposing and withstanding this very same force of colonization and dismemberment. Therefore, the central thesis and the focus of this paper will aim at showing the diplomacy and foreign policy of Menelik as consisting, mainly, and especially after he was assured the leadership over Ethiopia, of maintaining - at all costs - the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. All related issues and problems analyzed in the paper lead to this conclusion.

II. Sources of research

In my research I have relied, as much as possible, on original documents, official papers and other primary sources. It is to be realized that not all these official documents and primary sources are complete and accurate by themselves. Some of them contain scanty information and others have an abundance of it. Whenever and wherever there is a clash of interests involved, as between two or three or more given nations or powers, these powers often get biased against each other and this is easily detected in their reportings. These documents, however, since they complement each other, allow the researcher the relative "luxury" of a comparative analysis and perception so that he may arrive at his own independent conclusions. This is what is being consciously attempted to incorporate in the research, namely, to make the conclusions arrived at the result of an objective analytical judgement. In this regard, I have persistently, and as far as possible, closely examined most of the relevant primary documents listed in section I A of the bibliography.

To supplement these documents and papers, and to fill in the existing gaps wherever they may occur, I have extensively delved into other semi-official documents and authoritative books authored by the very people who were intimately involved in the making of the political and diplomatic history of Emperor

Menelik. Even though these documents and books are not, by their very nature, as detailed and as complete as the official government documents and papers, they do contain and reveal a wealth of information which is to be found only in them and nowhere else.

Thus, semi-official documents like "Storia Diplomatica dell' Ethiopia Durante il Regno di Menilek II" by Carlo Rossetti, "Maps of Africa by Treaty" by Hertslet, "Crispi e Menelich nel diario Inedito del Conte Augusto Salimbeni" by Carlo Zaghi, "The Letters of Queen Victoria" by George Buckle, "Chronique du Regne de Menelik II" by Guebre-Selassie, the memoirs of Francesco Crispi, General Baratieri, Rennell Rodd and Gabriel Hanotaux, and books by Count Gleichen ("With the Mission to Menelik"), Charles Michel ("Vers Fashoda"), Hughes Le Roux ("Menelik et Nous"), Robert Skinner ("Abyssinia of Today"), August Wylde ("Modern Abyssinia") and others who have officially or otherwise recorded the day to day political and diplomatic functions of Menelik's government while they were actually in official or private diplomatic and scientific missions give us a first-hand knowledge of the way the decision-making machinery and process operated around Menelik and his court. The list of these and other semi-official documents and books is found in section I B of the bibliography.

Other essential secondary sources of importance on Menelik are available in a sizeable number. Those which I was able to

consult have been exceedingly useful. Most of these books were published in Europe, particularly in Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Russia. The books, in many instances, being products of their time, a certain amount of imagination and a discerning attitude is of importance in their usage lest they be taken for granted. While the French books are by and large biased towards Ethiopia, most of the Italian ones - among those which I was able to consult and refer to - are biased against Ethiopia. The British sources try to be both cynical and objective without, however, abandoning - again in most cases - their 'sweet and sour' approach to the whole situation. The above statements, of course, are generalities. What is intended here is not to pass a 'prima facie' value judgement on the research material, but to show the inclination of these secondary but essential sources of information on which I have tried to dwell at length.

It is strengthening to realize, however, that a new generation of students and researchers in Africa, Asia, Europe and America is emerging trying to re-examine the political history of Africa from a fresh and new perspective by putting emphasis on objectivity and credibility. It is true that "European Colonialists in the past have been prone to make the most extraordinary claims concerning the accomplishments of white empire-builders. Men such as Cecil Rhodes were often depicted almost as demi-gods whose enterprises

caused the deserts to bloom and transformed barbarism into
civilization." ¹⁷ But now, having searched and looked around for
these deserts supposed to have been in bloom and the civilization
which replaced barbarism, we are bound, unfortunately, to be
disappointed because in the main they are not there, and even
where they exist, they completely fail to satisfy the African
ethos to an appreciable measure. Thus, the need to re-examine
and assess the whole panorama with a different perspective.

For the sake of convenience, the secondary sources are
divided into two parts. Part one includes what I have termed
relevant secondary sources, and part two comprises of general
secondary sources. Both are listed in section II of the
bibliography.

No less in importance than the secondary sources but
perhaps much more general and less systematic are the travel
books published in a sizeable number on Menelik and his Empire.
These books furnish what neither the documents nor the memoirs
and letters contain, namely, the general impressions and
particulars on both the internal and external forces working for
and against Menelik and as viewed - relatively speaking -
by independent and disinterested outsiders. In my case, I have
found them to be most stimulating and enriching in that they have
given me wide room and space to feed my wondering speculation.

17

W.Glenn Campbell, in a forward to L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan's:
Colonialism in Africa, p.VIII.

And whenever some relevant patchwork was needed to be done or a gap to be filled, I have found them extremely useful.

Other historical and specialized reference works dealing with Menelik and the history of Ethiopia in general are extensively available. In this field, I have particularly benefited, among others, from the works of Afework, Budge, Cecchi, Conti-Rossini, Massaja, Monroe, Morie, Rassam, Sabelli, Sapeto, Tekle-Tsadik Mekuria and Wylde. Both the travel and historical reference works are listed in section II of the bibliography. In section IV I have also attempted to give a concise list of relevant articles which have substantially benefited the research.

I must confess that while in the delightful adventure of studying the many intricate and complex intrigues left for posterity by the European archives, it was a pleasant surprise for me to follow one revelation after another unfolding itself before my eyes like a Sophoclean tragedy charged with intense actions. However, it is regrettable that the total absence of Ethiopian commentary on the European documents deprives the researcher of one more valuable tool of analysis and a possible differing point of view on the problems and issues involved. It is unfortunate that most of the Ethiopian Archives, burnt or lost during the 1936 Ethiopian-Italian war, have left a gap

18

which is hard to fill.

As indicated in the preceding pages dealing with research sources and the bibliography, a few books and articles have been written on the life and achievements of Emperor Menelik with admirable clarity and authority. Unfortunately, relatively very little or nothing has been written on the best of his genius - namely - his undertakings and performances in the field of foreign affairs.

Even though the attempted dissertation would by no means pose as a substitute for such an absence in scholarship, it would nevertheless try to cast some light on (i) the man, (ii) his foreign policy and its essence and, (iii) his legacy to Ethiopian political thought.

It is possible that some of my conclusions might not be in agreement with the conclusions arrived at by other political analysts of this period. As emphasized in some of the preceding paragraphs, my predictions, conclusions or, for that matter, my judgements are results of an effort based on an approach of a systematic analysis of facts selected and sorted out from as many divergent and varied data and sources as possible. I will be delighted if the conclusions I have been able to offer were to provoke, in very little ways, an interest and a healthy reaction in the study of early Ethiopian diplomatic and political thought.

18

For an explanation into the Sudan Mahdist Archives, see, among others, G.N. Sanderson, "Contributions from African Sources to the History of European Competition in the Upper Valley of the Nile," Journal of African History III, 1 (1962), pp.69-90.

CHAPTER 1

MENELIK AND HIS RISE TO POWER

After the defeat of Emperor Theodros at the hands of Lord Napier in 1869, Disraeli, then Prime Minister of Britain, in an almost stoic delight commented:

...We have asserted the purity of our purpose. In an age accused, and perhaps not unjustly, of selfishness, and a too great regard for material interests, it is something, in so striking and significant a manner, for a great nation to have vindicated the higher principles of humanity. It is a privilege to belong to a country which has done such deeds. 1

Two score and seven years later, Italians, led by General Baratieri, were defeated decisively at the Battle of Adwa by

1

A.W.Ward & G.P. Gooch, The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, 1783-1919, Greenwood Press, 1971, Vol.III, p.19.

Emperor Menelik. The latter later wrote Khalifa el-Mahdi of the Sudan, his neighbour to the north:

Now I inform you of very good and welcome news, that on the 23rd day of the Month of Yakatit I fought and defeated my enemies the Italians, who had broken friendship, passed the frontier, and come against us.... The Power of God was with me, and by His will I have made my country, Ethiopia, protected and victorious. I wish...to live in peace with the Powers who are far away from our Country; but as for the enemy who comes against us unrighteously, I will send him back by the might of God...for God is with those who love peace. 2

Britain did not have colonial ambitions as regards Ethiopia
 3
 during the time of Theodros. Neither was she against peace in the area. What made the contrast between the letters of Disraeli and Menelik obvious is that Disraeli's was a reaction to national anger and humiliation - "to vindicate the honour of our sovereign", as Disraeli put it - and not a sentiment aroused as a result of a threat to his nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Both statements were reflections of their times. While Disraeli was speaking of the dignity of a great Empire over which the sun never set, Menelik was heralding, and by so doing protesting in

2

F.O. 403/275, Menelik to Khalifa-el-Mahdi, 16 April, 1896. (G.N. Sanderson puts the date as 25 April. Journal of African History, I, 1962, p.84.

3

Ward & Gooch, The Cambridge History, p.19.

in full force, the advent of colonialism in Africa. The British Premier's 'amour propre' was no doubt pricked by the actions of what the British often labelled a "mad" Emperor,⁴ because the latter had imprisoned - and would not release - some British citizens detained in his court. This was an affront to imperious Britain.

A consistent trend with most Ethiopian monarchs was the concept of retaliating against broken promises and broken friendship. Theodros, in his own way, had felt he had been slighted because his offer to open relations with Britain had been either ignored or turned down. In a letter he addressed to Queen Victoria in October 1862, Theodros says "Mr. Plowden, and my late Grand Chamberlain, the Englishman Bell, used to tell me that there is a great Christian Queen, who loves all Christians."⁵ It was his wish, he said, that the Queen "may arrange for the safe passage of ... [his] ambassadors everywhere on the road"⁶ because the Turks were giving him trouble both inside and outside "the land of my

4

Allan Moorehead, perhaps the best expressionist writer on exotic Ethiopia, paints the picture of Theodros thus: "It has always been accepted that the Emperor Theodore was a mad dog let loose, a sort of black reincarnation of Ivan the Terrible and the Russian tyrants, and so in many ways even by the savage standards of Ethiopia itself." (Allan Moorehead, The Blue Nile, New York, Harper & Row, 1972, p.241.)

5

F.O. 95/721, Theodros to Victoria, 29, October, 1862. See also, 'Correspondence', 1846-1868, p.224.

6

Ibid.

ancestors." His request was stern. He emphasized that he wished
 "to have an answer to this letter" so that he may conduct his
 Embassy to England.

Theodros was an Emperor who counted much on his dignity and a person who never took insults lightly. He was a very proud man conscious of his religious and cultural heritage, and one who could , in times of reflective moods, be generous and all-loving. Theodros was also a man of strong passions and emotions who, spurred by a moment's anger, could very well slip into an uncontrollable flare of rage. Even when Moorehead says "Theodore was a mad dog let loose" he goes on to admit that "he" could have become Othello, and he could never have been Iago."

Theodros had intended to establish relations with the "Great European Powers" and to "treat with them on equal terms." This was why he also addressed a letter to Emperor Napoleon at about the

7
 Ibid.

8
 Leonard Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa: A Study in Economic Imperialism, The Labour Research Department, London, (n.d.), p.141.

9
 Moorehead, The Blue Nile, p.241.

10
 'Correspondence', 1846-1868, Plowden to Clarendon, 25 June, 1885, p.148.

same time he sent one to Queen Victoria.¹¹

However, not only was his letter to Queen Victoria left
¹² unanswered, but Cameron, the British Consul stationed at the
 port of Massawa and who at the moment was residing at the court
 of Theodros, was recalled, at the end of November, to rejoin
¹³ his post. Theodros felt so insulted and humiliated that he put
 Cameron and his staff in chains. Cameron secretly sent out
 word that "no release" was possible "until civil answer to King's
¹⁴ letter arrives."

Foreign Secretary Lord Russell's lot was not an easy one.
 Having had to explain the action of Theodros to his sovereign,
 he took the short cut to making his task easier by making a
 decent lie. He said: "The King of Abyssinia wished to be invited
 to come to this country, and to be complied with, he imprisoned
¹⁵ the Consul and the missionaries."

11

E.A. Wallis Budge, A History of Ethiopia, Vol.II, London,
 Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1928, p.502. (Budge should be handled with care
 as he commits several historical and factual errors.)

12

Ibid., p.503.

13

'Correspondence', 1846-1868, Haussmann to Petherick, 4 January,
 1864, p.255.

14

Ibid., Cameron to Speedy, 14 February, 1863, p.262; Hormuzd
 Rassam, Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore, London, 1869,

It was too late when the Queen rushed a friendly letter to Theodros through Hormuzd Rassam, then newly appointed special Envoy to Theodros, requesting him to release the prisoners.¹⁶

Even though the Queen's Envoy was initially well-received and well-treated the scar the whole incident left on Theodros' pride was not forgotten so soon.

As time went on , the Emperor developed some kind of a contempt and even phobia for Europeans and this was being visibly demonstrated in his reactions to their mannerisms. An instance from Rassam's narration of an incident with a Frenchman throws some light on the agonies of the aggrieved Emperor:

...A man came to me riding on a donkey and said that he was a servant of the Emperor of the French and that he had come to my country for the sole purpose of establishing friendship between me and his sovereign. I said: 'I do not object to making friends with great Christian kings; you are welcome.' The next day he said he wished to see me on business, and I assented; but to my astonishment he came to me with a bundle of rags. I asked him what those were. He replied that the French had a large town in their country where they make silks, and that the

Vol. I. p.299; Henry Stern, The Captive Missionary, London, 1869, p.20.

15

G.H. Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria, 1862-1878, London, 1926, p.249.

16

Rassam, Narrative of the British Mission, Vol. I, p.243 ff. (It took a little less than two years for Rassam to reach the court of Theodros.)

merchants of that place had commissioned him to bring them to me for the sake of barter. I said to myself, 'What have I done that these people insult me thus by treating me like a shoemaker?' I bore the insult then and said nothing.

On a different ~~occa~~ occasion, Theodros recounted to Rassam, the same person sent word to him that he wanted to see him. As Theodros was at the time preparing for a war expedition he informed the messenger that he could not see him. Dressed as he were in his military uniform, the Frenchman insisted that Theodros must see him because "he could not disgrace them by taking them off before he had an interview." With anger and disdain, Theodros retorted: "Who is
17
his father? Seize him." Theodros confided in Rassam by saying, "how can I trust any European now after the ill behaviour of those
18
whom I have trusted like brothers?"

For various other reasons Rassam was also detained and imprisoned.
19
Budge writes that the failure on the part of someone in authority to

17

In Amharic, the word 'manew abatu' (shortened form is 'min abatu') connotes contempt for the person referred to. It carries with it a social significance in which the addressed is being asked by the addressee what nobility or renowned family ("who is his father?") he comes from and why he feels equal and important.

18

Rassam, Narrative of the British Mission, Vol.II, p.68.

19

Ibid., p.31;82.

respond to the letter of Theodros was a "regrettable incident", and that this irresponsibility was the only reason for the costly British expedition - under Napier - to Ethiopia.²⁰

The operation which Disraeli termed as the "purity of our purpose" and "the higher principles of humanity" involved 32,000 British-Indian fighting men, 55,000 animals and cost the British Treasury 9,000,000 Pounds.²¹ On Easter Monday the Fortress of Theodros at Mekdella fell when the gallant Emperor, choosing self-pride to surrender, died by his own hand.²²²³

20

Budge, A History of Ethiopia, Vol. II, p.515; Paul Combes, L'Abyssinie en 1896, 1896, p.45.

21

Moorehead, The Blue Nile, p.267. Moorehead also adds: "From Calcutta and Bombay, from Liverpool and London, sailing ships and paddle-steamers, vessels that were a combination of steam and sail, converged upon the Red Sea at the appointed time. Half a million pounds were spent in hiring these ships from private firms."

22

Budge, A History of Ethiopia, Vol. II, p. 505.

23

Clemms R. Markham, A History of the Abyssinian Expedition, London, 1869, p.204. Luigi Fusella, Yatse Theodros Tarik, Rome, 1959, p.42; Budge, The History of Ethiopia, p.515; Luca Dei Sabelli, Storia di Abissinia, Vol.3, Edizioni Roma, 1938, p.224.

Theodros was the first Ethiopian Emperor to have aggressively attempted to experiment in the setting up of a modern machinery for Ethiopian foreign policy by actively defying European and Oriental protectionist and isolationist tendencies and by breaking through deep-seated cultural, religious and historical barriers within his own country. Monarchs before him such as Yekuno-Amlak (1268-1283), Yaqbea-Tsion (1283-1292), Yishak (1414-1429), Zere-Yakob (1434-1468), Iskindir II (1478-1495), Dawit V (1508-1540), Gelawdiwos II (1540-1559), Sousenyos I (1606-1632), Sahle-Selassie (1813-1847) and others have tried, most of them unsuccessfully, to lift the obstacles that hindered relations with other nations. It must however be pointed out that the attempts of most of the Kings was limited. In most cases their desired links centred around Christianity and the dominant urge to try to rally Christian Kings against Islamic

24

Authoritative works have, without giving due credit to the attempts and approaches of Ethiopian Emperors to open Ethiopia to the outside world at considerable difficulty, tended to overemphasize the difficulty the outside world had been met with to open up Ethiopia. This is an issue upon which a thorough research should be conducted.

25

L.J. Morie, *Histoire de l'Ethiopie*, Vol.II, Paris, Augustin Challamel, 1904, pp.202-203; 217-220; 225; 230 ff; 249; 288ff. See also, Budge, *History of Ethiopia*, Vol. II, pp.237-501; Dei Sabelli, *Storia di Abissinia*, Vol.III, pp.48 ff, 66 ff, 171-221; H. Castonnet des Fosses, *L'Abyssinie et les Italiens*, Paris, Ancien Maison Charles Douniol, 1897, pp.303-348.

forces which threatened Ethiopian independence and integrity and which also kept Ethiopia isolated for long. Also, another important factor was that most of the Ethiopian Kings needed an unhampered contact with the city of Jerusalem. Contrary to what is often alleged, it could be said that Ethiopia was not, as if by design, closed to the outside world other than the fact that it chose to strongly withstand the advances of politically motivated foreign nationals who wanted to adversely benefit from their contacts. An other factor which contributed to the relatively "closed" period in Ethiopian political history could rightly be attributed to threats of conquests from countries which professed the Islamic religion. Surely, the odds against Ethiopia to reach other nations were in fact very many and indeed restrictive.

The numerous cliches about Ethiopia's "isolationism" might perhaps serve to underscore or dramatize the relatively recent history of Ethiopia's modern foreign relations. Nevertheless, the often quoted statements by such authorities as Gibbon "that the the Ethiopians slept nearly a thousand years, forgetful of the world by whom they were forgotten" are understatements to

which researchers of modern African history and political science have yet to address themselves to.

At the death of Theodros, there were three potential centres of national power. The late Emperor's concept of unifying the differnet Kingdoms which were under the titular governorship of poerful Kings and Rases was shattered by the Napier expedition, and its aftermath had strengthened the hands of the three most powerful contenders to the Ethiopian leadership. These were Gobeze of Gonder, Amhara, Wag and Lasta, Yohannese of Tigre and Menelik of Shoa.

When Sir Robert Napier was making his way up from the Red Sea through the perilous plateaux of Ethiopia, the two former leaders were of considerable help to his expedition by providing

statement may somehow apply to the period coverign the 9th and and 12th centuries which historians label as the "dark ages". The usage of such terminologies for periods (a) before the 19th century, (b) following the 13th century, however, must be viewed with some restraint. See also, Sergew Hable Selassie, Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270, Addis Ababa, Haile Selassie University, 1972, p.209. C. Harris, (A British Envoy at the Court of Sahle Selassie [1813-1847]) also says that Ethiopia then was a "sealed book to European history." See, C. Harris, The Highland of Ethiopia, London, 1844, Vol.III, p.87. For a thorough analysis of the problem of "images" regarding Ethiopia, see Donald N. Levine, Greater Ethiopia, the Evaluation of a Multiethnic Society, p.1-14.

27

The rank 'Ras' denoted, literally, "head". In terms of hierarchical leadership, it comes next to the Emperor (King of Kings) and King.

28

The word "leadership" is preferred to "throne" or "crown"

food provisions, safe conduct into the interior and transportation facilities. Especially Gobeze was so helpful to the Napier expedition that he was considered "one of the first and best friends of the British captives in Mekdella." Napier thought so highly of him that he even volunteered to transfer the fallen fortress of Mekdella to him.

Yohannes was the son of Goldja, a Ras from the province of Tigre and one of the supporters of Ras Negussie. The latter was an active pretender to the leadership of Ethiopia during the reign of Theodros. When at the height of his power Theodros defeated Negussie and brought the province of Tigre under his rule, Goldja, the father of Yohannes, was killed and Yohannes came to serve in the court of Theodrose.

However, at the waning of the power of Theodros and just before Napier's expedition, Yohannes had escaped from the confines of the court of Theodros to declare and establish his leadership over Tigre. Later on, because of his decisive role during the British expedition against Theodros "Sir Robert gave him a battery of mountain guns and mortars, and smooth bore muskets

because it is not the intention of this research to enter into the controversies of legitimacy.

29

Budge, A History of Ethiopia, Vol. II, p.520.

30

Ibid., p.520.

for one regiment. It was intended that this supply of arms should enable him to hold his own against the possible attacks of Gobeze."³¹

In many aspects the destinies of Yohannes and Menelik were intimately tied to each other. Both had the insatiable ambition of assuming the leadership of Ethiopia, and each had the conviction that he was the true contender to the leadership. Each also had, on the one hand, the misfortune of losing his father under Theodros,³² and on the other, the good luck of escaping the court of Theodros to proclaim and establish himself where once his father ruled as leader of Tigre and Shoa respectively.

Menelik, born Sahle Mariam, was the son of Haile Melekot, King of Shoa. Menelik's own court Chronicler, Guebre Selassie,

31

Ibid., p.521. For fire arms and ammunition gained by Yohannes from Napier, see Richard Pankhurst, "Fire-Arms in Ethiopian History," Ethiopia Observer, Vol.1, 7,2 (1962), pp.146 ff. For help rendered to the British Expedition see also, August Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, London, Methuen & Co., 1901, pp.19-20.

32

Menelik's father actually died a natural death at a time when he was militarily pressured by Theodros and his advancing forces were demanding his submission. According to Massaja, Menelik believed "he [Theodros] killed my father". Fra Guglielmo Massaja, I Miei Tretacinque Anni di Missione nell'Alta Etiopia, Trivoli, Stabilimento Tipografico Mantero, 1928, IX, p.28.

puts his date of birth as Nehassie, 1836 - thirty one years and two months after the commencement of the reign of his grand father, King Sahle Selassie of Shoa - which corresponds to 17 August, 1844. His father, King Haile Melekot, had succeeded to the Shoan throne in 1846 upon the death of his own father, King Sahle Selassie.

However, King Haile Melekot had barely reigned ten years when at the close of 1856 Theodros, the new "revolutionary" monarch who had vowed to unify the Ethiopia which was ruled by rival princes and Rases, marched to Shoa, brought it under his rule and took with him the young Menelik. It was only almost after a decade was spent at the court of Theodros that Menelik and his supporters, on the night of June 30, 1865, escaped under the cover of darkness and "guided by a few glimmering stars" made

33

Guebre Selassie, Chronique du Regne de Menelik II Roi des Rois d'Ethiopie, Maisonneuve Freres, 1930, Vol. I, p.73.

34

Antonio Cecchi, Da Zeila Alle Frontiere del Caffa, Roma, 1886, p.255 & ff.; Guebre Selassie, Chronique du Regne de Menelik, Vol.I, p.85 & ff.; Charlemagne Theophile Lefebvre, Voyage en Abyssinie Execute Pendant les Annees 1839, 1840, 1941, 1842, 1843, Paris, A Petit, Quartin-Dillon et Vignaud, 1841-51, Vol.III, p.87 & ff.

35

Guebre Selassie, Chronique du Regne de Menelik, Vol.I, p.99; Afework, Dagnawi Ate Menelik, p.17.

36

Stern, Captive Missionary, p.218 ff.

their way to the Shoan highlands. Menelik proclaimed himself
 37
 King in August, and upon successfully regaining the Shoan
 throne lost by his father, the rivalry commenced in earnest
 among the remaining three contenders to the Ethiopian leadership.
 Theodros had killed himself at Mekdella in 1869 after his
 confrontation with the Napier Expedition. At about the same
 time Menelik had also proclaimed himself Emperor.

In 1872 Yohannes had, thanks to the superior firearms
 left to him by the returning Napier Expedition and the strength
 of his army, defeated Gobeze and taken the crown at aksum
 38
 after he too proclaimed himself Emperor. The ensuing rivalry
 for paramountcy between these two leaders is complex and in
 many respects dramatic.

Though it is not the intention and the scope of this
 paper to go into the history of this rivalry, it is essential
 that one aspect of it, namely, that which involved the European
 39
 powers, should be dealt with briefly as it is crucial to the

37
 Cecchi, Da Zeila Alle Frontiere del Caffa, I, pp.261 ff;
 Docteur Merab, Impressions d'Ethiopie, Paris, 1922, Vol. II, p.31.

38
 Massaja, I Miei Tretacinque Anni di Missione nell'Alta Etiopia,
 IX, p.11 ff.; August B. Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, p.20.

39
 A critical study of its political implications would be
 attempted in chapter 2.

understanding of some aspects of Menelik's foreign policy.

The rivalry between Yohannes and Menelik was not, as many would like us to believe, motivated by pure individual ambition for power.⁴⁰ Loftier than this were the deep seated historical instincts which exacerbated the differences between the Tigrean and Shoan Houses. Both claimed the custodianship to legitimacy, and no doubt with this in mind, they put their whole energy and resources to work in the nobler belief of "conquering" and then unifying the Empire from the Galla lands in central and southern Ethiopia to Tigre and Eritrea in the North.⁴¹

In this task, initially at least and as concerns their fire power, Yohannes was the best equipped of the two. Already in 1868, even though few in number, Lord Napier had strengthened the arsenals of Yohannes by some 900 carbines. Hozier explains that at the time of the expedition Yohannes maintained at his camp site alone some 4000 men who, with the exception of a very few, carried arms.⁴² According to General Alexandre Luzeux,

40

Augustus B. Wylde, '83 to '87 in the Soudan, New York, Negro University Press, Vol.I, pp.329-331; Dei Sabelli, Storia di Abissinia, Vol.III, pp.251-253.

41

Telkle-Tsadik Mekuria, Ye Ethiopia Tarik: Ke Atse Tewodros iske Kadamawi Haile Selassie, St. George Printing Press, (5th. edition), 1968, pp.50-52.

42

H.M. Hozier, The British Expedition to Abyssinia, 1869, p.241.

the French military historian and strategist, Yohannes, taunted and confronted by the advancing Egyptian forces from the north, was accustomed to keeping on alert a large army at any one given moment. In 1875, for example, Luzeux says Yohannes had met the Egyptians with an army 50,000 strong, and in a year's time that number had quadrupled.⁴³ According to Blanc, by the end of 1867 Menelik had approximately 2,000 to 3,000 muskets which, by all standards, were insignificant even for the maintainance of his newly established Kingdom of Shoa.⁴⁴

Wylde records that during the two campaigns at Gundet and Gura in November 1875 and March 1876 respectively, 15,000 to 20,000 well armed Egyptians were defeated by the overwhelming army of 60,000 brought to the battlefield by Yohannes. In the two campaigns Egypt lost over 20,000 men, "besides all their arms, cannon, military train, commissariat, treasure chests, and in fact everything they brought with them into the country."⁴⁵

43

General Alexandre Francois Luzeux, Etudes Critiques Sur la Guerre Entre l'Italie et l'Abyssinie, Paris, Henri Charles-Lavauzelle, (n.d.), p.20; Afework, Dagnawi Ate Menelik, pp.25-26. For the history of fire-arms of this particular period, see Pankhurst, "Fire-Arms in Ethiopian History", Ethiopia Observer, Vol.6,2, 1962, pp.135-180.

44

H.Blanc, A Narrative of Captivity in Abyssinia, London, 1868, p.298.

45

Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, p.28; Edward Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, London, Edward Arnold, 1898, p.196.

At about the same time Menelik was so desperately in need of arms that he was often pleading with Britain, Italy, France and the Khedive Ismail of Egypt for the supply of arms. The Khedive, as did Italy a decade later, attempted to exploit Menelik's position of weakness. Upon receiving Menelik's request for arms, the Khedive instructed Munzinger, his agent at Massawa, to advise Ras Biru - Menelik's arms negotiator - to prevail upon his sovereign so that he will "attack the King of Kings without delay. If Menelik has need of rifles other than those which were sent", the Khedive made sure, "you will give him what he needs".⁴⁶ It was only a decade later that Menelik acquired his share of arms and increased the number of his army to an extent comparable to, and according to some estimates, much greater than that of Yohannes.

Perhaps the most important factor which played a crucial role in the rivalry between Yohannes and Menelik was the appearance of Italy in the Red Sea area in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1870, Italy had established itself at the port of Asseb,⁴⁷ and in some years time it had advanced so

46

Pankhurst, "Fire-Arms in Ethiopian History", Ethiopia Observer, pp.149-150.

47

Sir Edward Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, London, 1909,

deep into Ethiopian territory that it had to inevitably come to a head-on clash with the armies of Ras Alula, one of the ablest military rulers of his time and "the best native general and strategist that Africa has perhaps produced in modern times".⁴⁸

⁴⁹
It was at the Battle of Dogali, on January 26, 1887, that Ras Alula annihilated an Italian force almost to the last man thereby giving birth to the very first unbridgeable differences between Yohannes and Italy.

On the eve of this "massacre" the whole of Italy was so aggrieved and the political climate so poisoned that the Cabinet of Depritis, in power since May 29, 1881, fell as a

(3rd edition), Vol.II, p.446; C.de La Jonquiere, Les Italiens en en Erythree, Paris, 1897, p.19; Andre J.A. Pellenc, Les Italiens en Afrique, 1880-1896, Paris, Librairie Militaire de L. Baudoin, 1897, p.2.

48

Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, p.20.

49

The Italian press and generally European writers prefer to call the 'battle' "the massacre of Dogali" because 407 invading Italian soldiers and 23 officers were killed in action while only 1 officer and 81 soldiers, left for dead, escaped the battle grounds. For figures see, Pellenc, Les Italiens en Afrique, p.15; Georges Bourgin, "Francesco Crispi", in Les Politiques d'Expansion Imperialiste, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1949, p.131; Vittorio Giglio, Le Guerre Coloniali d'Italia, Milano, 1942, p.67.

50
 result. On July 31, Francesco Crispi, a staunch Colonialist, formed his government with a vow that he would sooner or later avenge Italian pride - a far cry from the Battle of Adwa yet to come fifteen years later. Only some days after Dogali, on February 2, Crispi said that there where the tricolour was, there also was Italy; and from that moment on Italy must endeavour with full force so that it must be respected even
 51
 by the "savages". And on June 3 he predicted the doomsday of Ethiopia:

Quel est notre but? Un seul: affirmer le nom de l'Italie dans les regions africaines, et demontrer aussi aux barbares que nous sommes forts et puissants. Ces Barbares ne comprennent que la force du canon: eh! bien, ce canon tonnera avec la victoire de nos armes. N'oubliez pas que l'Italie est une grande nation: le massacre de Dogali, le massacre de l'expedition Bianchi et Porro ne peuvent demeurer invingés.⁵²

Thus, using the age-old adage of "divide et impera" Italy, under Crispi, actively commenced to drive a wedge between the two rival leaders of Tigre and Shoa. Hardly had Italy secured

50
 Bourgin, Politiques d'Expansion, p.1321

51
 Ibid.

52
 Ibid.

the ports of Asseb and Massawa than it sought, for obvious political reasons, the friendship of both Yohannes and Menelik. The accomplishment of this task was entrusted to Giovanni Branchi, the Civil Commissioner at Asseb at the moment and Pietro Antonelli, who, since 1879, had been travelling in Ethiopia.

The two Italian negotiators offered more or less identical treaties of friendship and commerce to the two Ethiopian leaders. The most important aspect of these treaties, to Italy at least, was that by article 14 of the drafts submitted to Yohannes and Menelik she was to assume the responsibility for the conducting of the foreign relations of Ethiopia. Italy was now to serve as Ethiopia's legal and diplomatic link with the outside world, especially Europe.

53

Ministero Degli Affari Esteri (M.A.E.), Etiopia: Mar Rosso, Vol.I, Tomo I, Istituto Poligrafico Dello Stato, MCMLVIII, pp. 263-266. (Hereafter referred to as M.A.E: Etiopia: Mar Rosso.)

54

Ibid., pp.287-290.

55

Archivio Storico dell'ex Ministero dell'Africa Italiana, Roma, 36/2-13 and 36/2-12, as quoted by Sven Rubenson, Wichalle XVII: The Attempt to Establish a Protectorate Over Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, 1964, p.43. See also, M.A.E: Etiopia: Mar Rosso, I, p.282, footnote 31.

Of the two leaders, Yohannes was by far the least interested in
 and the least receptive to the treaty offered by Italy. Menelik,⁵⁶
 however, concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce on May
 21, 1883 after a short period of negotiations with Antonelli in
 which it was stipulated, among other things, that the Kings of
 Shoa and Italy would exchange diplomatic and consular agents
 and that they would try to ameliorate their commercial relations⁵⁴
 to the extent possible. Article 13 of the treaty (Art. 14 of the
 draft) specified the role of the Italian agents as intermediaries⁵⁸
 between Menelik and "whatever government" he wants to deal with.

The reluctance of Yohannes at the time to enter into any
 agreements with the Italian Government could rightly be attributed
 as a political inaction which, while in the first place blocking
 the last and only chance and venue for negotiated peace with the
 Italians also, on the other, strengthened the position and
 political muscle of Menelik. This, in fact, was one of the
 major failures of the foreign policy of Yohannes. Between the

56

M.A.E: Etiopia: Mar Rosso, pp.287-290.

57

Carlo Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica Dell'Etiopia Durante il
 Regno di Menelik II, Torino, S.T.E.N., 1910, pp.7-11; M.A.E :Etiopia:
 Mar Rosso, I, p.271.

58

Ibid., pp.9-10.

signing of the treaty of Friendship and Commerce in 1883 and the death of Yohannes in 1889 the political and military events which transpired in Ethiopia had tended to weaken and isolate Yohannes, whereas, on the other hand, Menelik evolved out of them much stronger and relatively unaffected by them. There is no doubt that Yohannes had the upper hand in many of his clashes with the Italians, and such victories as the Battles of Saati and Dogali stand as witnesses to his ability and ingenuity both as a soldier and a politician. In the long run, however, his intransigence to open the door for negotiations, coupled with the Italian urge to advance toward Massawa, Asmara and the Ethiopian highlands, pitched the one against the other in a struggle which was to go on right to the end of his reign.

Menelik, as King of Shoa and a future contender to the throne, was concerned with the Italian drive inland. At the time of the occupation of Massawa, he protested to Antonelli, the Italian negotiator in Shoa, and showed his displeasure at the Italian incursion by indicating that it was a hostile act which might possibly lead to war. On April 10, 1885, he wrote a letter to King Humbert imparting his views that the steps

taken by Italy were wholly unwelcome and that they definitely
 constituted an unfriendly act.⁶⁰

At the height of these hostilities the disastrous Battle of Dogali had erupted on January 25,1887, thereby raising Italian temper to the maximum. The Italian press and war critics termed the outcome of the battle as a wholesale "massacre". The need for revenge and further confrontation was therefore at the forefront of Italian military ambition. It was at this juncture that Menelik offered his good offices to mediate between Yohannes and Italy⁶¹ and to which Crispi wryly replied on November 27,1887 that it was now "impossible" and too late to change the course of the tide - a sure sign that Italy was not at all interested in Menelik's mediation.⁶² In the same vein, Menelik also addressed a letter on December 18,1887 to President Jules Grevy of France requesting his help to avert bloodshed between two Christian

⁶⁰ Ibid., Menelik to Humbert, Miyazia 3,1877 (April 10,1885),p.194.

⁶¹ Ibid., Antonelli to Crispi, October 9,1887, p.275; Menelik to Humbert, Tikimt 15,1880 (October 25,1887), p.278.

⁶² Ibid., Crispi to Antonelli, November 27,1887, p.276.

nations. He wrote to him: "Why is it that Christial blood will
 be spilt for nothing? And is it not that we are your brothers?"⁶³

Italy, however, was in dire need of the neutrality of
 Menelik lest he march up north with his army and join hands with
 Yohannes. Therefore, from March 1887 on the instructions given
 to Antonelli by his government were decisive⁶⁴ in that not only
 did they urge him to seek the neutrality of Menelik but they
 also directed him to get Menelik's "effective cooperation against
 Yohannes". Ernest Work says that at this time "Antonelli's
 chief mission seems to have been to detach Menelik from Yohannes",⁶⁵
 and in every respect such a possibility offered itself in
 Ethiopia. A March 11,1887 note in ciphers to Antonelli raises
 the following fundamental questions:

1. Is Menelik disposed to give, in an opportune
 moment, effective cooperation against Yohannes?
2. What would eventually be the importance of
 such a cooperation?

63

Archives Diplomatiques, Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres,
 Menelik to Jules Grevy, Tahesas 12,1880 (December 18,1887). [A
 literal translation from the Amharic.]

64

Pellenc, Italiens en Afrique, p.27.

65

Ernest Work, Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy, (published
 by the author), Ohio, New Concord, 1935, p.68.

3. Failing effective cooperation, will Menelik take such an attitude as to occupy part of the forces of Yohannes in the South [Shoa] or will he be absolutely neutral in the conflict. 66

The negotiations between Menelik and Antonelli, in this respect, culminated in the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance of October 20, 1887 in which the former, in Article 2 of the same treaty expressed his promise to "help" Italy. The same article said that Menelik "promette di aiutare il Governo di Sua Maesta
67
il re d'Italia in tutte le circostanze", while Italy, among
68
other things, promised to give Menelik 5,000 Remington rifles. The phrase "in tutte le circostanze" (in all circumstances) is deceptive. Even though the treaty stipulated help from Menelik against Yohannes, the former did not volunteer to advance any further beyond maintaining his neutrality. In as much as Italy wanted to exploit the differences which existed between Yohannes and Menelik for her own selfish motives, so also did Menelik - a shrewd and talented politician - use to his own advantage

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Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, Robilant to Antonelli, March 11, 1887, pp.260-262. For further readings on this, see Ibid., Antonelli to Crispi, September 19, 1887, p.274 ff.; Crispi to Menelik, February 2, 1888, p.313. See also Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.29-30.

67

"Promises to help the Government of His Majesty the King of Italy in all circumstances". [Emphasis is mine].

68

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.23-24.

69

the very weaknesses inherent in Italy's political adventures. The political and diplomatic implications of his strategy will be further discussed in the following chapter, with an emphasis on the various steps or decisions taken by Menelik to use Italy in his power struggle with Yohannes.

At last, it seems, the Italian policy of driving a wedge between Yohannes and Menelik had succeeded, for by 1888 not only did Yohannes feel that he had been betrayed by Menelik, but the latter was also completely suspect in the Tigrean court, thereby leaving no room for an appreciable dialogue between them. It was believed that Menelik had connived with Italy in the occupation of Massawa. Relations between Yohannes and menelik were going from bad to worse. Yohannes, in the meantime had asked Menelik to take back his army to Shoa, from where it had earlier been brought to strengthen the hand of Yohannes in case the latter decided to fight the Italians who were now bent on advancing into Ethiopia. That Yohannes was decidedly set to march south and annihilate the Shoan force, of this there is no doubt.

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This aspect of Menelik's foreign policy will be discussed in chapter 2.

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Rossetti, *Storia Diplomatica Dell'Etiofia*, Menelik to Humbert, July 6, 1888, pp.50-51; Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, Antonelli to Crispi, pp.336 ff.

It was only a matter of time before he did so. To avert a surprise attack and a decisive victory by Yohannes, Menelik took the other course of strengthening, more than before, his relations with Italy. Antonelli was sent to Rome with an urgent mission from Menelik requesting more arms and ammunition to defend himself against Yohannes. In his letter of June 6, 1888 to King Humbert Menelik emphasized the dangers he faced from Yohannes:

I have now learned that Emperor Yohannes threatens my Country, saying it was King Menelik who advised the Italian Government to make war over Massawa. For the salvation of my Country, I have decided to defend myself, and it is necessary to have your help.⁷¹

Menelik, an alert and fast political manipulator, had also, during this time, made his peace with his other rival, King Tekle Haymanot of the Kingdom of Gojjam. He had entered into some sort of an understanding with him which stipulated that they would stand by each other in order to neutralize the power of Yohannes,

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Rossetti, *Storia Diplomatica Dell'Etiopia*, Menelik to Humbert, July 6, 1888, pp.50-51: ["Presentement accade che l'Imperatore Giovanni minaccia il mio paese, dicendo che fu il Re Menelik quegli che consiglio il Governo italiano di fare al guerra dalla parte di Massaua. Io, per la salvezza del mio paese, sono deciso a difendermi; mi e necessario pero l'aiuto della M.V." [A literal translation].

thereby averting an attack on both or any one of them by him. Antonelli, in his letter of August 8, 1888 to Crispi, affirms that he had been notified by King Tekle Haymanot that such an understanding existed between the two Kings. ⁷² Some two months later - on October 23 - in a letter which he addressed to the Italian Foreign Minister, Menelik affirmed that both the King of Gojjam and himself were united in this effort. After ⁷³ indicating that he was considering sending Dejazmatch Mekonnen - one of his ablest generals and a close political adviser - on a mission to Italy, he said:

L'Empereur Johannes, avec le Ras Aloula, le Ras Mikael et toute l'armée du Tigre est dans le Godjam et le saccage. Si, après avoir abandonné ce pays, ils viennent dans le Choa, je défendrai mes frontières. Le Choa et le Godjam sont unis et bien d'accord.⁷⁴

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Doc. Dipl., 1889-90, Antonelli to Crispi, August 8, 1888, p. 338 ff.

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'Dejazmatch' or short form 'Dejach' is a military rank coming in hierarchy after Emperor, King and Ras.

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Pellenc, Les Italiens en Afrique, p. 29. ["Emperor Yohannes together with Ras Alula, Ras Mikael and the whole army of Tigre is in Gojjam and pillaging it. If, having abandoned this country (Kingdom), they come to Shoa, I will defend my frontiers. Shoa and Gojjam are united and in agreement".] (A literal translation.)

It was at about this opportune moment that the Treaty of Wichalle (with its protectorate article) was hatched in Rome. Crispi very well knew that Menelik was desperate and that now he could relatively easily impose on Menelik a treaty of Italy's choice and design. At the outset, Menelik was assured that the arms and ammunition he requested will be provided for. Nevertheless, on his part, Menelik had also to guarantee that he will abide by his treaty obligations once entered into. This guarantee was to be nothing less than the most vicious and cruel demand of giving up members of his royal family as political ⁷⁵ hostages. The gains to be amassed by Italy were several. It was stipulated by Italy that Menelik, by being tempted to align himself with Italy, will bring about the revenge of the Italian dead at the battles of Saati and Dogali, will tie up Yohannes in a war in the south thereby freeing Italy's hand in the north and, finally, will be pressured to make concessions over Massawa.⁷⁶

By the end of the year, the proposal was already drafted in Rome in treaty form. However, at this crucial point a very significant and important event took place in the course of

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A.S. MAI. 36/5-47, Crispi to Antonelli, August 6, 1888.

76

Ibid., Antonelli to Crispi, August 30, 1888.

Ethiopian history. The struggle for supremacy between Yohannes and Menelik had suddenly and abruptly come to an end when the former, although the victor, was killed on the battlefield at Metemma on March 10, 1889 in the war with the Dervishes. Approximately fifteen days later, on March 26, 1889, Menelik proclaimed himself 'Neguse Negest' (King of Kings) of all Ethiopia. In less than two months, Menelik signed the Treaty of Wichalle (May 2, 1889) with Italy. By a sheer reversal of treaty stipulations, Italy hurriedly assigned to itself the role of king maker and was more than prepared to demand from Menelik not only a repayment in terms of political and territorial concessions for the arms it recently delivered for his neutrality, but it was also, to the great astonishment of Menelik, trying to establish a protectorate over Ethiopia through the cynically worded Article 17 of the treaty.

A newer phase in Ethiopian-Italian relations was opened. Menelik had already compensated Italy by playing neutral. A different posture by him could have been a decisive factor in the hostilities between Emperor Yohannes and Italy. Now that he was the Emperor of Ethiopia a change of foreign policy was necessitated as he also was determined to check Italian expansion into the Ethiopian heartland. In line with his policy of maintaining the independence, sovereignty and territorial

of Ethiopia, Menelik came to the inevitable clash which was sooner or later to take place with Italy. The worsened situation culminated in the subsequent Battle of Adwa of March 6, 1896, in which Menelik decisively defeated the forces of General Oresti Baratieri. Once Menelik had sustained Ethiopia's independence and sovereignty through the instrumentality of a devastating and victorious war, yet another phase in Ethiopian-Italian relations was launched. This was the forging of an era of relative peace based on mutual respect and equality, and a period marked by negotiations and court diplomacy.

At the close of the 1880s Yohannes was perhaps an unfortunate leader following his star as a matter of destiny making his way doggedly against all odds. From the north, Italy had staged against him a war that was to weaken the strength of his army. No less was the effort of the Egyptians and the Mahdists, from the same direction, to destroy his Kingdom built on faith and stubborn perseverance. In the

77

For a complete review of the Battle of Adwa, see G.F. Berkley, The Campaign of Adwa and the Rise of Menelik, London, Constable & Co. Ltd., pp.272-383.

78

This phase in the Ethiopian-Italian relations will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

79

Wylde, Abyssinia, pp.27-29; Pellenc, Italiens en Afrique, pp..6-8.

south, Menelik was waging a silent but effective war against him by strengthening himself through the acquisition of territories, the development of the economy of his already centralized Kingdom and the modernization of his army and fire-power. Especially, his policy as regards the importation of arms was one of the most important aspects of his foreign policy which undoubtedly was responsible for his eventual success in the Ethiopian scene. This particular policy, so fundamental to the understanding of Menelik's political and diplomatic undertakings, will be discussed and analyzed at a subsequent stage. Of this particular epoch Gleichen writes:

Whilst European attention was concentrated on the operations in Tigre and the northern part of the Country, the individual genius of Menelik was hard at work consolidating his southern Kingdom, increasing his forces and preparing for the 'coup-de-main' which, at the death of John [Yohannes] at the hands of the Dervishes in the battle of Galabat (March 1889), seated him finally on the throne of Abyssinia.⁸⁰

Of the two leaders, no doubt, Menelik was the shrewdest and ablest. Although blown out of proportion, Markham calls Yohannes "weakminded" and regarding his legitimacy to the throne, he equates him to a monarch "whom accident has pitchforked into supreme

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Edward Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, London, pp.2-3.

81
 power". Yohannes may have not been an astute diplomat and politician of the calibre of Menelik, but nevertheless, he was never the Richard II of Ethiopia as most writers would have us believe about him. He fought and defended, gallantly and courageously, the integrity of Ethiopia, and negotiated effectively with other foreign powers to preserve the independence and sovereignty of Ethiopia.

Menelik, on the other hand, was such an accomplished statesman that Esmenard calls him the "napoleon ethiopien",⁸² and even De Monfreid, the late member of the French Academy who for long was haunted by his own self-created image of the Ethiopian ethos,⁸³ speaks of him as the "Louis XI africain". According to Wellby "he is far in advance of any previous Abyssinian monarch. ... He differs essentially from his predecessor King John, and has

81
 Clements R. Markham, A History of the Abyssinian Expedition, London, 1867.

82
 Jean d'Esmenard, A Travers l'Empire de Menelik, Paris, Plon, 1928, p.82.

83
 Henry de Monfreid, Menelik Tel qu'il Fut, Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1954, p.8. The 1965 Petit Larousse says of Louis XI: "Il figure parmi les grands rois fondateurs de l'unité nationale".p.1504.

84

thoroughly won the love of his countrymen".

It is, however, a remarkable coincidence in history that two such politically and conceptually incongruent and highly ambitious leaders were willing to meet half way at certain stages in their respective reigns, in order to decide, not only their own fate as leaders but also the future course of Ethiopian history. Even though their rivalry was damagingly divisive, by no means was it irreparable. While both confronted each other at several crucial instances they nevertheless averted at least twice, through sober and good counsel, what could have been devastating wars.

First, in 1878, at about the height of the power of Yohannes, the Agreement of Liche was reached in which, among other considerations, it was decided that the two leaders were to come to the aid of each other whenever the need arose, and that Menelik should abandon his "King of Kings" title. By the same token, in recognition of the overlordship of Yohannes over him Menelik was to pay tribute to the former while the latter was confirmed as the "King of Shoa" with the province of Wello added to his Kingdom.

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Captain M.S.Wellby, 'Twixt Sirdar and Menelik, New York, Negro University Press, 1969, p.88.

85

Guebre Selassie, Chronique du Regne de Menelik II, Vol.I, p.145 ff.; Afework, Dagmawi Ate Menelik, pp.28-29.

Second, in 1882, a war of conquest waged between Menelik and Tekle Haymanot, the ruler of the Kingdom of Gojjam, aroused the wrath of Yohannes, and as a sign of his displeasure regarding their behaviour he took back from Menelik - the victor of the two - the province of Wello that was given to him at Liche in 1878.⁸⁶

This action, no doubt, reduced Menelik's stature nationally. However, to make good what he lost by this royal deed, Menelik was offered an alliance through a political marriage, thereby establishing a temporary peace between the two Royal Houses. The only legitimate son of Yohannes, Ras Araya Selassie, was given the hand of young Zewditu, a daughter of Menelik. In accordance with the agreement defining this royal marriage, Ras Araya was to be the successor of Yohannes at his death, and the offsprings from the marriage would be in direct line to the throne.⁸⁷
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Tekle-Tsadik Mekuria, Ye Ethiopia Tarik, p.51; Afework, Dagmawi Ate Menelik, pp.37-39.

87

L.J.Morie, Histoire de l'Ethiopie, Vol.II, p.391; Wylde, Abyssinia, p.29.

88

Such a tradition of using the institution of marriage as a political weapon for conciliation had been widely and effectively used in Ethiopia for a long period of time.

Even though by the end of the 1880s Menelik had concluded two treaties of friendship with Italy he had not attempted, simply to have the personal upper hand over Yohannes, to benefit from them in a way which could have weakened and damaged the national unity. More than anything else the treaty of October 1887 could
89
have given Menelik this pretext. Instead, Menelik offered his good offices to mediate between Yohannes and Italy. Even as far back as 1875, when Yohannes was constantly at war with the Egyptians, "Menelik refused to take advantage of the difficulties of his sovereign and to attack him from behind in alliance with the Egyptian infidels, even though a joint operation with them would certainly have enhanced the power and prestige of the
90
Shoan Kingdom". Marcus maintains that, on the contrary, Menelik made use of the Egyptians to weaken the power of Yohannes. He states that "judging from his later behaviour towards the Italians, Menelik was quite capable of intrguing thus with the Egyptians, especially in the early 1870s, when he had still not recognized Yohannes as his suzerain. In the short run, he had everything to gain
91
from an Egyptian victory over his foe". Whatever the advantages that were to be gained by Menelik from an Egyptian victory over Yohannes, there is no documented evidence which supports the point of view maintained by Marcus.

In his bid for power, as in his policy of foreign relations, Menelik's strategy of gradualism - the most constructive element of his approaches - was the driving force behind all his domestic and international successes. The concept of power, as will be briefly examined in the next chapter, is basically amorphous and restricting to define. If one conceptualizes power in terms of an ability to move others or to have the capacity to be able to dictate one's terms to others, then one is speaking of power based on sheer force. Power is also conceived, in its different shades, as a disposition to be able to influence and persuade. Essentially, however, power and influence differ from each other. While the former relies on the ability to dictate terms, the latter depends, in more than one way, on the capacity to attain one's goal through winning someone else's confidence. Nevertheless, both - that is - power and influence are the means 'par excellence' of foreign policy. Menelik made use of the latter approach, and by so doing he was proved to be the winner in the long run.

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Czeslaw Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia: An Essay in Futility, London, Chatto & Windus, p.52. For a different view, see Wylde, 1883 to 1887 in the Sudan: With an Account of Sir William Hewett's Mission to King John of Abyssinia, London, pp.329-331.

91

Harold Marcus, The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia 1844-1913, p.39.

92

Arnold Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration, Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1967, pp.103-104.

CHAPTER 2

*

MENELIK AND ITALY: A PERSPECTIVE

The necessity of power as an essential component element of a state and its exigencies is nowhere better explained than in the behaviours of a despotic and feudal society or system where such power and the accruing leverage it generates produces a readily felt return in the values of that very same system. In such societies or systems, the exercise of power, as understood in its narrower sense, is crude and often times brutal. Power, in such absolute terms is irrational and does not stop short of a declaration of complete submissiveness by those to whom it is applied, so that, as Machiavelli puts it the Prince then will have "no other aim, nor other thought, nor take anything else for his proper art, but war, and the orders

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The earlier relations between Menelik and Italy are essentially the results of the exacerbating elements of the history of the rivalry between Menelik and Yohannes, and their respective ascendancy to power. The rest of these relations will be studied in the following chapters.

and discipline thereof; for that is the sole art which belongs to him that commandds...."¹

According to Reinhold Niebuhr, the justifications brought forward for the use of such naked power as an art of discipline in government, are dictated by the desire of the men of power to hide their greed and vanity, and what is more, "by the inclination of society itself to veil the brutal facts of human life from itself".² However, a quick explanation is in order, at this point, to make a dent in the line of thought already suggested.

In this research paper 'power' is not conceived of and analyzed in the Nietzschean context of attaining power for power's sake. It is rather a study of the dynamics of power and its effective manipulation by the actors involved in order to change the constituted political order. Perhaps, if ever a choice were possible, Hobbes' approach to power would have been much more appropriate and seemingly fitting to the analysis of the political order which we are to examine. According to Hobbes, "the Greatest of humane Powers, is that which is compounded of the Powers of most men, united by consent, in one person, Naturally, or Civil, that has the use of all their Powers

¹ Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapter XIV.

² Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960, p.8.

depending on his will; such as is the Power of a commonwealth".³

What is more, Hobbes' treatise could very well have been applicable to our present discussion of the concept of power - as understood and practised by Yohannes and Menelik - had it not been qualified by the following: "Or depending on the wills of each particular; such as is the Power of a Faction, or of divers factions leagued".⁴ The conceptual analysis of power as furnished by Raymond Aron could also have very well sufficed to explain the world of the statesman of the epoch of Yohannes and Menelik. Aron, in his characteristic way, maintains that power is "the capacity to do, make or destroy". He reduces this concept to its fundamental and says that "political power is not an absolute; it is a human relationship". To him, "an individual's power is his capacity to act" and his strength to "influence the actions or feelings of other individuals".⁵

However, Aron's concept of power as presented in the present context never goes beyond that of defining it in its very rudimentary

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Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, Baltimore, Md., Penguin Books, 1968, p.150.

4

Ibid

5

Raymond Aron, Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations, New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1967, p.47

sense. For example, even though Menelik counted on the discipline of persuasion to "influence the actions or feelings of other individuals" to a considerable extent, he also made use of "political power" in its absolute form whenever needed. Most appropriately, therefore, Menelik used power beyond the level of "human relationship" and in the Hobbesian sense, namely, "powers of most men, united by consent, in one person, Naturally... [and] depending on his will". Here, the word 'consent' is not used in the often implied popular concept of the willingness of a people or a nation to voluntarily mandate or delegate power to a person in a 'civitas'. It is rather 'consent' as understood in Rousseau's approach to government in his "Le Contrat Social", or as Hobbes himself defines it in his "Leviathan":

The only way to erect such a Common Power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of Forraigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort...is, to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or Assembly of men, to beare their Person ; and every one to owne, and acknowledge himself to be Author of whatsoever he that so beareth their Person, shall Act, or cause to be Acted, in those things which concerne the Common Peace and Safetie; and therein to submit their Wills, and their judgment. This is more than Consent, or Concord; it is a reall Unitie of them all, in one and the same Person....⁶

If we were to accept this premise, then we will have to be dependent on the assertion that Menelik used power on behalf of the

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Hobbes, Leviathan, p.227.

people whose independence, unity and sovereignty he sought to achieve. It should be emphasized here, however, that no such political or social machinery existed at the time to probe or explore the will of the people on their wishes and desires as the governed. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that no contract existed between the governor and the governed. It was more of a relationship of the type prevailing in an aggregate society - where such a relationship is made to function on the strength of its moral, traditional and religious tenacity - than of a formal agreement obtainable under an advanced political, economic and social order. The existing political, economic and social pattern being feudalistic the constituted power too was naturally absolutist. In the 1800s, as many of the European monarchs were still disciples of the theory of Divine Right, so also was Menelik a strict adherent to the same theory and a beneficiary from the age-old historical institution of legitimacy by heredity. He was a Louis XIV as a paternalistic leader in political and social administration and a Napoleon I as a pioneer and an innovator of new and reformist ideas.

The inevitable question arises: How did Menelik develop his base of power, and what was the driving force behind this power? The first part of this question is partially answered in the first section of this paper. Reduced to its common denominator, Menelik was determined to restore to himself the throne lost by his father

and thus re-establish the Shoan dynasty of Emperor Sahle-⁷ Selassie. This he did. But again, to answer the second question, what was the driving force behind the power?

As we shall see in succeeding chapters this fundamental point is the main pillar on which his foreign policy rested and which is invariably linked to four broader national interests, namely, (1) independence, (2) sovereignty, (3) territorial integrity and unity, (4) modernization, in that order. Of these, perhaps the first two were the most important and immediate preoccupations of Menelik, while the latter two were brought about as a result of his tactfulness in the eventual implementation of the others.

Historically speaking, Ethiopia was an independent and sovereign entity for the last few thousand years without interruption. In this context, therefore, it would naturally seem a rather pedantic exercise if one were to indulge into a discussion of the history of the sovereignty of Ethiopia. Even though sovereignty was not as yet seriously challenged from outside, there had been a series of wars of conquests with neighbouring states. The main point to emphasize at this

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As indicated in footnote 28 of chapter 1, p.28, legitimacy is not brought into strict scrutiny in this paper.

junction is the type of sovereignty we are primarily concerned with. The Eskimo, for instance, 'has' sovereignty over his land as 'has' the Alaskan over Alaska as represented by the state of Alaska, even though constitutionally limited when perceived within the context of the federal structure. So also is the Principality of Andorra sovereign, it could be argued, even though this sovereignty was and is being jointly exercised, since 1607, by the King (or Head of State) of France and the Spanish Archbishop of Urgel. The two cited cases are sovereignties within sovereignties involving independence of action, however limited.

The type of sovereignty we will be concerned with involves a political situation wherein a foreign power attempts to usurp, in bad faith, the sovereignty of a state through deliberate and dubious manipulations and distortion of the spirit of a negotiated agreement entered into in good faith by the other. By Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle, Italy claimed that it represented Ethiopia to the rest of the world and therefore controlled Ethiopian foreign affairs. Not only did it claim this prerogative for itself, but it also used the agreements of the General Act of Berlin of February 26, 1885 as an instrument to establish a protectorate over Ethiopia. Such a situation is best defined by Oppenheim:

A state in its normal appearance does possess independence all round, and therefore full sovereignty. Yet there are States in existence which certainly do not possess full sovereignty, and are therefore named not-full sovereign States. All states which are under the suzerainty or under the protectorate of another State, or are member-States of a so-called Federal State, belong to this group. All of them possess supreme authority and independence with regard to a part of the tasks of a State, whereas with regard to another part they are under the authority of another State. Hence it is that the question is disputed whether such not-full sovereign States can be International Persons and subjects of the Law of Nations at all.⁸

Ever since the death of Yohannes the foreign policy of Menelik was consistently directed at the preservation of the status of Ethiopia, among other things, as an "international person", for Italy, under the guise of a treaty of friendship and commercial cooperation, had brought about an international political incident which - had it not been for the ingenuity of Menelik - could very well have legally or otherwise reduced Ethiopian sovereignty to a mere formality. It is this policy of self-preservation that this paper will be examining very closely. The issue in question is one of "right" versus "challenge", for in the words of Lauterpacht:

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L. Oppenheim, International Law, (Edited by H. Lauterpacht), Vol. I, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1953, p. 115.

The right of the sovereign State when acting, or pretending to act, in self-preservation has been variously described either as a fundamental right of State or, inasmuch as it implies the uncontrolled claim of State to attack the sovereign rights of another State, as a grave challenge to the authority of international law.⁹

This contest of "right" over "challenge" began when Italy first appeared in the Red Sea ports of Ethiopia in 1869. It should be noted that Italy, at about this time, was experiencing political turbulence and economic difficulties. For the following few years "poor and backward Italy" was rife with sectionalism and a political unrest which characterized, at its best, the Fourth Republic of France in the 1950s. For example, from 1878 to 1900, in approximately twenty two years, twenty one cabinets fell¹¹ and "social and religious differences threatened the

9

Hersch Lauterpacht, The Development of International Law by the International Court, New York, Praeger, 1958, p.316.

10

James Linus Glanville, Italy's Relations with England, 1896-1905, Baltimore, Md., The Johns Hopkins Press, 1934, p.21; See also, Francesco Nitti, The Wealth of Italy, Rome, 1907.

11

Sonnino Sidney, "Quid Agendum", Nuova Antologia, Series IV, LXXIX, 1900, p.343.

12
existence of the regime in power".

Italian interest in the Red Sea area was non-existent until 1859, when Monseigneur Guglielmo Massaja, a Catholic missionary, who since 1846 had travelled and worked in Ethiopia as an evangelist, made the suggestion that Ras Negussie, the Tigrean Chief of the area adjoining the Red Sea, was not at all hostile to the idea of ceding a piece of territory. The newly advanced pretext, it was rightly predicted, would enable Italy to establish a "Colinie penitentiare". The excitement that this generated induced Cristiforo Negri, the founder of the 'Societa Geografica Italiana', to present, in 1861, a report on the resources and potentials of the Red Sea. His affirmations were later on confirmed by such travellers as P.Stella, Antinori, Piaggia, Gessi, Casati, Matteucci and

12

W.L.Langer, European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1950, pp.232-233.

13

Vitorio Giglio, Le Guerre Coloniali d'Italia, Milano, 1942, pp.17-18. See also Mario Pigli, L'Etiopia Nell Politica Europa, Padova, CEDAM, 1936-XIV, pp.1-5.

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An assumed bureau of research and exploration it had played a decisive role by serving the Italian Foreign Office as an information gathering centre.

14
and Antonelli.

Due to the importance of the Suez Canal just completed, all European nations with an interest in India and the Far East were either pressuring or negotiating with tribal Chiefs in order to acquire ports and coaling stations all along this route. So, in 1869, with the consent of the Italian Government, a certain Mr. Giuseppe Sapeto, a Lazarist missionary, bought - on behalf of the Rubattino Company - the port of Asseb from the Sultans of Berehan and Raheita.¹⁵

Subsequently, to give what looked like a commercial transaction a "legal" colonial status the Rubattino Company transferred its title deed and possessions to the Italian Government. On March 10, 1882, the Company sold its rights to these possessions for 416,000 Lire. By a law of July 5 of the same year, the port of Asseb and the limitrophe areas became an Italian Colony under the name of "Presidio di Assab".¹⁶ The very first stage for the gradual penetration of Ethiopia was

14
Bourgin, "Francesco Crispi", in Les Politiques d'Expansion, p.128.

15
Pellenc, Les Italiens en Afrique, p.2; Giglio, Le Guerre Coloniali d'Italia, pp.21-24; See also Hertslet, Zaghi, Rossetti etc.

16
Bourgin, "Francesco Crispi", in Les Politiques d'Expansion, pp.128-129.

thus set in motion and the long, drawn out military as well as diplomatic confrontation between Ethiopia and Italy was started in earnest.

This happened at a crucial, and at least for Italy, an opportune moment when the interests of Egypt, England, Ethiopia and Turkey were at a clash. At the outset, Italy was very eager to exploit the situation which so conveniently offered itself.

It is to be remembered that at the time of the Congress of Berlin in 1878 Italy had come out a loser in the scramble that was so effectively organized and planned by Bismarck. Italy, for instance, was openly vying for the possession of Tunis, "a natural geographical extension" across the Mediterranean. However, by the ever-shifting politics of international alignments of the Bismarckian era, Germany, France and England found themselves in one camp so as to thwart Italian ambition of securing a foothold in this part of Africa. Instead, through some bizzare combinations,
17
Tunis was appropriated to France. When, at the time, a British-owned railway in Tunis was offered for international

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For an analysis of the situation see Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, pp.10-12; 295 ff.; Salwyn Schapiro, Modern and Contemporary European History, p.649.

bidding, it was the very same Rubattino Company which bought the port of Asseb in Ethiopia in 1869 that also represented Italy and bargained with France so that it might not acquire it.¹⁸

So, as if to make good the losses it suffered at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Italy took possession of the Ethiopian Red Sea Coast in 1882 by "buying it off" from the Italian company, which, as we have mentioned earlier, had bought it itself from the Sultans of Berehan and Raheita, respectively, at the beginning of 1870.

The Red Sea coast and its ports of Adulis, Asseb and Massawa were, from time immemorial, the main outlets for Ethiopian trade and commerce. They were also the vulnerable underbellies of the Empire which were from time to time brought under subjugation either by outside powers or local fiefs and Sultans. Neither Yohannes nor Menelik had complete control over the Red Sea region even though both were determined in asserting Ethiopian sovereignty and identity. Menelik, for instance, extended his dominance and control not only over the trade routes to the coast but "he even claimed

¹⁸ Wolf, Empire and Commerce, pp.96-100.

control over the salt lake at Aussa only a few hours journey from the coast and levied taxes on any of the Afar tribes who took salt from the lake". Marcus also maintains that "Mahammad Anfari clearly considered himself Menelik's tributary and, would not sign any agreement until the King had committed himself to a treaty with Italy."

A further combination of political as well as military circumstances also brought Italy into the possession of the other Red Sea port of Massawa. Massawa, since 1872, was under Egyptian rule, as had been the Sudan for some time now. England, which was formerly an ally of Egypt and which by 1882 had occupied it, had somehow found itself too entangled in the rivalry which had ensued between the Egyptians and the Mahdists. In 1883, as a calculated step to avoid both political as well as strategic setbacks, the Gladstone Government wanted to evacuate its forces from the

19

R.H.Kofi Darkwah, Shewa, Menilek and the Ethiopian Empire:1813-1889, p.105; See also Borelli, Ethiopie Meridionale, pp.42;176.

20

Harold G. Marcus, The Life and Times of Menelik II, p.63. See also Circular Letter of Menelik of April 10,1891 to the powers in Appendices.

21

Just after the death of Emperor Theodros Ethiopia, not yet united and still consisting of Tigre, Gonder, Gojjam and

Sudan. The safest route for withdrawal was through Ethiopian territory and the port of Massawa.

To facilitate this, Sir William Hewett was sent with a mission to Emperor Yohannes. By a treaty signed at Adwa on June 3, 1884, Yohannes was to help the withdrawal from the Sudan, through Ethiopian territory, of the Anglo-Egyptian troops. According to this treaty, while Yohannes agreed to allow "free transit for all goods through Massowah to and from Abyssinia" (Article I) and the "withdrawal of troops of [the] Khedive" (Article III), it was also concluded that "the country called Bogos shall be restored to His Majesty
22
...which now belong[s] to His Highness the Khedive."
(Article II.)

Far from suggesting by this treaty that Ethiopia should have access to the Red Sea, England had in fact her fears of Ethiopian and French intentions in the area. England, at the moment, was meticulously advancing her own grand design
23
for the Nile Valley, and the East African coast on the Red Sea was only one of the many problems she was obliged to

22

Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, p.422.

23

This aspect of British and Ethiopian policies will be discussed in chapter six.

tackle cautiously if the design was to be successful or workable. As Langer puts it:

The first step of the British Government was to encourage the Italians to establish themselves on the Red Sea Coast at Massowa. The purpose of this move was probably two-fold. Abyssinia had, since time immemorial, claimed the territory along the Blue Nile as far as Khartum and the main Stream of the river. The Italians would divert them and prevent mere claims being translated into realities. And there were the French, who had a particular interest in causing the British difficulty in Egypt.²⁴

Even though most English writers admit that Massawa was passed over to Italy under British instigation, the official British position was to deny this. Sir Rennel Rodd, as the leader of the first official British mission to the court of Menelik in 1897, denied this contention to Menelik energetically, even at the risk of evoking the anger of the monarch who, with all firmness and sincerity, believed that the British had in fact deceived Emperor Yohannes on the question of Massawa.

24

Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, pp.108-109. The French had also secured the port of Obock on the Red Sea in 1862 which was followed by the British occupation of Zeila in 1884. In 1883, for instance, Britain had prevented French use of Aden during the French-China war thereby creating an embarrassment to France. In 1887, the French established a better port on the Red Sea - Djibouti. See also Des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, p.179.

25

Work, Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.58.

Reporting on the outcome of his mission to Lord Salisbury, the Foreign Secretary, Rodd said:

Without going so far as to believe the rumour popularly circulated that England had supplied to Italy the funds with which to carry on her campaigns in Africa,²⁶ Menelik certainly held that we had broken the spirit of the Hewett Treaty in making no attempt to retain for Abyssinia the free use of the port of Massowah guaranteed under that agreement, when the Italians were allowed to establish themselves there.²⁷

That Britain had acted on the case of Massawa for the sake of political expediency there are, as will be noted in subsequent chapters, ample evidences. ²⁸ Wylde, one of the most candid critics of the British political tactics - he had visited the country on behalf of the 'Manchester Guardian' at about the same time the British mission was in Ethiopia - puts it this way:

26

In the case of Ethiopia the campaign culminated in the Battle of Adwa in 1896.

27

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' September 1897, Rodd to Salisbury, June 22, 1897, p.61. The Rodd mission papers are also to be found in F.O.403/255. See also, for above statement and Rodd's point of view on the issue, James Rennel Rodd, Social Diplomatic Memories, 1884-1901, London, 1923, Ser.2; Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.4.

28

Work, Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.58.

Look at our behaviour to King Johannes from any point of view and it will not show one ray of honesty, and to my mind it is one of our worst bits of business out of the many we have been guilty of in Africa, and no wonder our position diplomatically is such a bad one with the rulers of the country at present. England made use of King Johannes as long as he was of any service, and then threw him over to the tender mercies of Italy, who went to Massowah under our auspices with the intention of making territory that belonged to our ally, and allowed them to destroy and break all the promises England had solemnly made to King Johannes after he had faithfully carried out his part of the agreement. The fact is not known to the British public and I wish it was not true for our credit's sake; but unfortunately it is, and it reads like one of the vilest bits of treachery that has been perpetuated in Africa or in India in the 18th. Century.²⁹

Yohannes, writing to President Julius Grevy of France, said he was addressing him the letter in question in order to impart the injustice that was being committed on him by the British Government and to share with him his present grief. He had entered into a treaty agreement with Britain, he said, in good faith, but Britain, he pointed out, "having broken this treaty it immediately dispatched Italy to my Country Ethiopia advising Italy to replace Turkey. After occupying Massawa Italy levied

29

Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, p.39. See also p.45.

30

taxes on the Habesha [Ethiopian] merchant."

There is no doubt that the political choice of the British Government was, at the moment, a valid one if its undertakings in the area were to be successful and if its national interest was to be fulfilled and maintained. ^{*} Even though the many official denials in this regard are unnecessarily puritanical the many diploamtic notes exchanged between London and Rome on the subject reveal the evidence to the contrary. Lord Cromer, an accomplished British diplomat, who from his post in Cairo defended his country's interest in Egypt and the Red Sea area for a long time, summarizes the British view concisely, even though this becomes a little veiled as regards its sincerity:

Her Majesty's Government were desirous of showing their friendly feeling toward Italy in all ways. The Egyptian Government were unable to continue their hold on all the African coast littoral of the Red Sea. I was glad I continued to observe that M. Mancini fully recognized that we had no right and made no pretentions to give away that which did not belong to us. If the Italian Government should desire to occupy some of the ports in question, it was a

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Archives Diploamtiques, Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, Paris, Yohannes to Jules Grevy, Ashenghe, ~~Hidar~~ 29, 1880. [A very literal translation from the Amharic original.]

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This does not mean that legitimacy is thus being accorded to

matter between Italy and Turkey, but I was able to inform him that Her Majesty's Government, for their part, had no objection to raise against the Italian occupation of Zulla, Beilul, or Massowah. 31

Encouraged by British connivance and strongly urged by colonialist aspirations on the home front, Italy set out for a gradual penetration into the Ethiopian highlands from Massawa, thereby encroaching upon Ethiopia's zealously guarded and long cherished policy of independence and sovereignty. This very same act, as already observed in chapter one, was to bring Italy into a bitter armed struggle with Emperor Yohannes and later on with Menelik both on the diplomatic and military front. In fact, as would be discussed at a subsequent stage, one could safely assert that, to a great extent, the future foreign policy of Menelik emanated from and evolved around the Italian presence in the area. This is, partly, because of the following five inter-related points:

1. Italy's encroachment upon Ethiopian territory and sovereignty was regarded by both Yohannes and Menelik as a hostile act and one to seriously contend with.
2. The policy of "divide et impera" adopted by Italy in order to play

British Colonial and Imperial designs. Here, validity of action is viewed only as pertaining to a given national interest and as interpreted by the decision-makers of that particular nation.

one against the other was regarded by both with suspicion.

3. Menelik adopted a policy of exploiting the natural weaknesses inherent in such a policy.
4. Italy's attempt to establish a protectorate over Ethiopia brought about, for the first time, a strong and positive foreign policy of resistance through protracted diplomatic negotiations.
5. Menelik's repudiation of the attempted protectorate and his effective links with other European powers opened for Ethiopia a new era of diplomatic activities.

In February 1885 Italy occupied Massawa, thereby depriving Ethiopia of her outlet to the sea and sealing her off from the rest of the world. It is to be remembered that as Italy was uncertain as to the political longevity of Yohannes and Menelik in the Ethiopian national scene it had sent missions, in 1883, to both of them to conclude treaties of friendship and commerce. While Menelik did sign a treaty with Antonelli in 1883, Yohannes,

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Addressing the Italian Parliament in May 1888 Crispi, in power since the Battle of Dogali, said: "Nous sommes a Massaoua comme la France est a Obock, l'Angletere a Aden et Berbera." Bourgin, "Francesco Crispi," in Les Politiques d'Expansion, p.134.

33

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica Dell'Etiopia, pp.7-11. See also pp. 37-40 of this chapter.

after having been the recipient of the order of the 'Gran Cordone della Corona d'Italia' from the hands of Bianchi - the negotiator sent to his court - hesitated, for reasons³⁴ not yet fully explained, to sign such a treaty.

This could be brought forward as an indicator as to how the minds of Yohannes and Menelik worked and how their individual diplomatic styles differed considerably from one another. Even though victim of biased and unfounded allegations of cruelty, political ineptness and of an inclination to extreme religious fanaticism³⁵ Yohannes, nevertheless, was by all standards an able, wise and perceptive ruler who not only represented Ethiopia to the outside world as a civilized, united and Christian country, but also preserved the country's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity³⁶ from hostile encroachments. His enemies were at one and the

34

Doc. Dipl., No.XV, pp.136 ff.

35

Budge, History of Ethiopia, Vol.II, p.521; 522-523; Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, pp.44-45.

36

Luca Dei Sabelli, Storia di Abbissinia, Vol.III, Edizioni Roma, 1938, p.254; L.J.Morie, Histoire de l'Ethiopie, Vol.II,p.388.

same time the Turks, the Egyptians, the Mahdists, the British and the Italians. He dealt with them effectively and in a manner becoming to the nation. Wylde, an ardent admirer of Yohannes, defends him against his detractors thus:

I think it a great pity that many people will tell 'yarns' that have no foundation; the more they travel the more they are added to, and untruths yet spread about, sometimes, but always, to the detriment of individuals that are accused of things they have never done; and I am sorry to say that there are officers of Her Majesty's services that have newspaper war services that are not strictly founded on facts, and what is the worst part of it, these supposed deeds are not contradicted.³⁷

Of the two leaders, there is no doubt, Menelik was the most capable and enlightened. Given their respective approaches, he was a relatively more liberal politician than Yohannes. Yohannes was so unflinchingly conservative and overly suspicious of European intentions and designs that as a decision-maker he preferred always to be on the safer side avoiding, in all respects, the dangers and probabilities of risk. On the other

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Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, p.45.

38

This is not an overstatement. Most Ethiopian monarchs were suspicious of foreign intentions. Perhaps, this partly explains the relatively uninterrupted history and civilization of the country. This aspect of Ethiopian political history, however, has been greatly exaggerated by historians as constituting the isolationist tendency which had kept the country far removed from the rest of the world.

hand, Menelik had the experimenting and daring spirit in him. He was, it is true, very cautious. But he was also very persistent and determined in achieving his goals. He was always ready to listen to new ideas and accept the suggestions of 'bona fide' counsel with an open mind. And with a certain touch of fatalism inherent in his character, he advisedly adventured in taking risks.

What Frankel has called the "pitching of the level of aspirations" differs with the mental and psychological make-up of the decision-makers whether individuals or groups, and also is dependent on the composition of the "national character."³⁹ According to his analysis some individuals and groups are optimistic, determined and in many respects ready to take risks if by so doing they were to maximize their level of aspirations. Some others, he contends, are pessimistic,⁴⁰ cautious, and determined to play it safe. He says, too, that the level of aspirations "fluctuates also with the success or failure in action."

39

Frankel, The Making of Foreign Policy, p.136.

40

Ibid. For a fuller explanation and discussion of "risk" in international relations, see Stanley Hoffmann, The State of War, New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1968, especially the chapter: "Roulette in the Cellar: Notes on Risk in International Relations," pp.134-159.

If we were to scrutinize and evaluate Menelik he will fit, on balance, the world of the statesman and that of the decision-maker so remarkably defined by Henry Kissinger:

The statesman manipulates reality; his first goal is survival; he feels responsible not only for the best but also for the worst conceivable outcome. His view of human nature is wary; he is conscious of many great hopes which have failed, of many good intentions that could not be realized, of selfishness and ambition and violence. He is, therefore, inclined to erect hedges against the possibility that even the most brilliant idea might prove abortive and that the most eloquent formulation might hide ulterior motives. He will try to avoid certain experiments, not because he would object to the results if they succeeded, but because he would feel himself responsible for the consequences if they failed. He is suspicious of those who personalize foreign policy, for history teaches him the fragility of structures dependent on individuals. To the statesman, gradualism is the essence of stability; he represents an era of average performance, or gradual change and slow construction.⁴¹

Even though Yohannes was the successful victor with the Egyptians, the Mahdists and the Italians he was never flexible with them in his diplomatic dealings. Menelik, in many respects, calculating, shrewd and almost Bismarckian in his approaches to given political problems, handled arising situations in a

41

Henry A. Kissinger, "Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy," in James N. Rosenau, International Politics and Foreign Policy, New York, The Free Press, 1969, p.274.

manner that would appropriately "pitch" his aspirations in due course and in the foreseeable future.

Menelik's decisions were reflective of his character and personal makeup. Simple in manner, he was pensive and deliberating. Castonnet des Fosses portrays Menelik in his right dimensions: "Tous ceux qui sont approches de Menelick ont reconnu en lui une ame haute, egale, affectueuse....Sa sobriete est proverbiale et sa simplicite excessive. C'est un fondateur d'empire dans toute l'acception du mot, l'un des hommes les plus remarquables que l'Afrique ait jamais produit, et il restera l'une des grandes figures du dix-neuvieme siecle."⁴²

Almost all European and other missions which came to his court did not leave his country unimpressed by his political and diplomatic versatility and his insight into the meaning of things. Members of the first British mission to his court led by Sir Rennel Rodd were so impressed by his suave and polished manner of handling state affairs that they were unanimous in their acclaim of him as "a most enlightened ruler."⁴³ Gleichen, for example, speaks of Menelik's manners as

42

H.Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, pp.299-302.

43

Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.151.

being "pleasant and dignified" and "at the same time simple, ...giving one the impression of a man who wishes to get at the root of a matter at once, without wasting time in compliments and beating about the bush, so often characteristic of Oriental potentates." ⁴⁴ Rodd himself has captured this very same tableau of the man:

Of his intelligence there can be no question. He has always been attracted by Europeans...and has succeeded by attentively studying their views and methods in forming a tolerably clear idea of Western thought; consequently he is very sensitive to European opinion, and morbidly anxious not to be included in the category of mere barbarian Potentates....He gives the impression of a simple and kindly man.⁴⁵

Comparing the respective dealings of the two Ethiopian leaders of the time with Italy, for instance, one could not help but conclude that Yohannes was suffering from a sort of political myopia which, in the long run, contributed to his weakened stature while, on the other hand, Menelik played his cards selectively and advantageously and acted as a fore-sighted statesman.

Whatever the method of the decision-making process adapted

44

Ibid., pp.152-153.

45

F.O.403/255, Rodd to Salisbury, July 7,1897.

by Yohannes and Menelik the step undertaken by the former in 1883 not to engage in treaty negotiations with Italy was, it could be said, a diplomatic blunder which might have contributed to hardening the position of both sides in the course of time. Menelik, unlike Yohannes, considered the possibility that was offered and tried to benefit from it to his utmost, at least politically. At this point, however, the following should be pointed out. The options open to Yohannes at the time were obvious: he had very little to choose from. Italy did not offer him anything which he already did not have. Menelik, on the other hand, then being the lesser of the two be it in power or political stature, needed the friendship and help that he was to muster from Italy in his bid to rival and therefore effectively undermine the position of Yohannes. The point to be made here is that Yohannes too could very well have resorted to the same approach used by Menelik in order to politically benefit from the obvious weaknesses of the Italian offer which Menelik so successfully exploited. One could only predict that it was precisely because of the failure of Yohannes to foresee such possibilities that the resultant cumulative inaction brought him into an ever-increasing hostility with Italy.

Since the return of Bianchi in June 1883 to the coast empty handed without a treaty from the court of Yohannes

46

Italy had been working hard to bring about his downfall.

On February 10, 1885, the time of the occupation of Massawa, Humbert, the King of Italy, addressed a letter to Yohannes in which he extolled the Italian occupation as being beneficial both to Ethiopia and Italy. He declared that Italy would guarantee all the benefits that Britain and Egypt have accorded to Ethiopia by the treaty of June 3, 1884, and manifested the desire of maintaining friendly relations and good neighbourliness. 47

Both Yohannes and Menelik were indignant about the situation that was brought about so abruptly that their reactions were instantaneous and strong. Yohannes wrote to Menelik:

The Italian deception and bad faith will never cease. They are not serious people, but intriguers. They have come to seek aggrandizement but with the aid of God they shall depart humiliated, discontented and with honour lost before all the whole world. If we remain united we can conquer, not only the 'fiacchi' Italians but also other strong nations.⁴⁸

46

Doc. Dipl., N^o.XV, p.169. For Bianchi's mission to the court of Yohannes see, M.A.E:Ethiopia:Mar Rosso, VOL.I, pp.287-298.

47

Ibid. See also Pellenc, Les Italiens en Afrique, p.10; Ernest Work (Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy), gives a different rendition, perhaps mistakenly, and writes: "...declaring it would assure all the benefits that the English occupation of Egypt had secured for that country." p.61.

48

Doc. Dipl., 1889-90, XV, p.169. For the initial reaction of

Menelik warned Antonelli that Italy's action was tantamount to a declaration of war. In order to demonstrate his concern and the urgency of the matter he also wrote a letter to King Humbert requesting for an explanation about Italy's actions.

Things worsened to such an extent that Italy's repeated incursions deep into Ethiopian territory were being stubbornly and gallantly resisted by Yohannes. The role played, in this regard, by Ras Alula - one of the best generals of Yohannes - is a remarkable feat of genius with a fitting place not only in Ethiopian but also African military annals. Perhaps, the cruelest and the most decisive battle fought, next to the Battle of Adwa, between the Ethiopian and Italian forces was the Battle of Dogali (January 25, 1887), where Ras Alula

Yohannes at learning the occupation of Massawa, see A.S. MAI, 9/1-2; M.A.E: Etiopia: Mar Rosso, Vol.I, Tomo III, pp.161-162.

49

Ibid., Menelik to Humbert, Miyazia 3, 1877 (April 10, 1885), p.194.

50

For his decisive role in defending the northern frontiers of Ethiopia and for his strategies in checking Italian advances from the time of the Battle of Dogali to the Battle of Adwa see, Berkeley, The Campaign of Adwa; Wylde, Modern Abyssinia; Vittorio Giglio, Le Guerre Coloniali d'Italia.

completely destroyed an advancing Italian army of three infantry companies, two columns of irregulars and one artillery detachment headed by Lt. Colonel de Cristoforis Tommaso.⁵¹

At the height of this Ethiopian-Italian hostility Menelik, not only by virtue of his Treaty of Friendship and Commerce of May 31, 1883 with Italy, but also as a concerned King in the whole matter, offered his good offices for mediation. Crispi replied that it was "impossible to interrupt" operations which were underway and that Yohannes was better advised if he were to come to peaceful terms with Italy.⁵² In his effort to seek a peaceful solution to the explosive situation, Menelik also addressed a letter to the President of France, Jules Grevy, in December 1887. In the letter he said:

In order to stop the hostility which has arisen between Italian officials and the officials of 'Janhoy' [the Emperor], and thereby to mediate [between the two], I have sent a letter to the Italian Government. Why should we not mediate between them after you the French Government have counselled in concert with your brother Kings and have investigated [on the actions of] the offender? Even if our countries are further apart, all of us are children of Christ. Why is it that

51

Pellenc, Les Italiens en Afrique, p.15. See also p.35 ff. of this paper for details. For an interesting Italian view see Giglio, Le Guerre Coloniali d'Italia, pp.64-68.

52

Doc. Dipl., 1889-90, XV, Crispi to Antonelli, November 27, 1887, p.276.

Christian blood will be spilt for nothing?
And is it not that we are your brothers?53

Menelik's efforts to bring along peace between Yohannes and the Italian Government was not an easy one. Italy, humiliated by the military disaster at Dogali, and determined to advance deep into Ethiopia, was bent on using force against Yohannes to achieve this end. No less determined was Yohannes to defend his northern frontiers from Italian encroachments. Aware of the strong position taken by Yohannes in this regard, Italy seized the opportunity to gain Menelik's neutrality by means of a treaty. The treaty was intended to be nothing less than an effective instrument to prevent Menelik from rendering military assistance to Yohannes in case he decided to open hostilities with Italy.

The treaty, a short one with five articles, was very significant in that unlike all the other treaties proposed to or signed by Menelik, this one pledged that Italy had no intentions to annex any territory from Ethiopia. The most important aspects of this treaty are to be found in articles 2,3, and 4. In Article 2, Menelik promised to "aid" ['aiutare'] the Government of His Majesty the King of Italy in "all circumstances" ["tutte le circostanze"]. This, in short, was

the article of neutrality. By Articles 3 and 4 Italy declared that "it will not annex" ['non fara annessioni'] Ethiopian territory , and that it will provide Menelik with 5000 Remington rifles, respectively.

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Article 2, as worded in the treaty, gave Italy every pretext to ask aid or help from Menelik in view of the fact that he had promised to provide Italy with such an aid or help at "all circumstances." However, the point to be emphasized here is that Menelik did not go to war with Yohannes as suggested by Italy, but only kept his distance from the hostile and rival monarch. As Sven Rubenson says: "Minilik's promise to help the Italians in fact amounted to no more than a promise that he would not shoot at them with the rifles he received as a gift.... It was the Italians who wanted Minilik's support against Yohannes, while Minilik would go no further

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from the Amharic original.) Some two weeks earlier Yohannes also had addressed a letter to President Grevy accusing the British Government for the hostilities between him and the Italians; Ibid., Yohannes to Grevy, Hidar 29,1880.

54

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica Dell'Etiopia, pp.23-24.

55

The pertinent suggestions were: (a) was Menelik disposed, at an opportune moment, to render effective cooperation against Yohannes? (b) What would that cooperation be? (c) If such an effective cooperation was not offered, will he be willing to engage a substantial number of forces of Yohannes in the South?

than neutrality, and this only gainst compensation."⁵⁶

For some time now, relations between the two leaders were definitely deteriorating to such an extent that Menelik was a suspect at the court of Yohannes. The treaty that was concluded between Menelik and Italy on October 20, 1887 had definitely convinced Yohannes that Menelik had in fact connived with Rome in the past for the acquisition of Massawa by the Italian Government. The last rupture between Yohannes and Menelik took place at about this time when the former invited the latter to hasten back from Gonder to his Kingdom of Shoa forgetting all about the helping mission he had been called for. Yohannes had earlier ordered Menelik to march north with his army to render help against the Dervishes and the Italians in case he decided to declare war on them.⁵⁷

This was a crucial period in the political ascendancy of Menelik. Several things of importance had happened to bring

See Doc. Dipl., 1889-90, XV, Robilant to Antonelli, March 11, 1887, pp.260-262; Antonelli to Crispi, September 19, 1887, p.274 ff.; Crispi to Menelik, February 2, 1888, p.313.

56
Rubenson, Wichalle XVII, pp.47-48.

57
Work, Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.78.

him to the forefront in Ethiopian national politics:

1. As a result of his treaty agreement with Italy (October 20, 1887) and his own efforts in securing arms and ammunition from Europe, his power and position was relatively strengthened.
2. His quality as a leader had been demonstrated and accepted nationally in several occasions, particularly where his military expeditionary forces were involved.
3. His important conquests of the Galla lands and Harar (once under short Egyptian suzerainty) enlarged and expanded his domains, wealth and political power.
4. Yohannes, weakened by hostile forces from different directions, was at about the lowest ebb of his power.
5. In her bid to come to peace terms in the north, Italy was ready to enter into negotiations with him so as to strengthen his position in the acquisition of the title of "King of Kings."

All the elements of power had presented themselves before Menelik. Nevertheless, even though he was undecided as to how to handle the situation which offered itself so conveniently, he was sure of one thing. He knew that an attack by Yohannes was imminent. Therefore, he decided to defend himself against any encroachment by Yohannes on his Kingdom and newly acquired territorial bonanza. In his letter of October 23, 1888 to the Italian Foreign Minister, Menelik emphasized that if Yohannes comes to Shoa "I will defend my frontiers." Italy saw that

this was the right time to dictate her own terms in any arrangement when Menelik desperately needed to strengthen his position and fire power against Yohannes. At about this time, in a draft proposal hastily prepared in Rome Menelik was to be a recipient of several thousand rifles and ammunition provided he was willing to enter into treaty obligation to fulfill certain Italian demands.⁵⁹

However, the solution to the existing dilemma was given by Yohannes himself when on March 10, 1889 he successfully demolished the ever-hostile Mahdist army at Metema and himself died in the battlefield. Without losing time Menelik proclaimed himself "Neguse Negest" (King of Kings) on March 26, 1889 - only fifteen days after the death of Yohannes - and rapidly engaged himself in consolidating his power and leadership over the whole Empire. In less than two months he signed the Treaty of Wichalle with Italy by which the latter recognized Menelik as the King of Kings of Ethiopia and the two countries pledged to live in peace and cooperation (article 1). However, it was this very same treaty, especially

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See chapter one, pp. 47-48.

60

The political and diplomatic significance of this treaty and its importance in the foreign policy of Menelik will be fully analyzed in chapter 4, part two.

the interpretation of the famous Article 17 (by which Italy intended to impose a protectorate over Ethiopia) which led to hostilities between the two countries. The course of action of Italy was evident from the very beginning. It was certainly looking forward to acquire - as have the rest of the European countries - a colony in Africa.

That Italian aspirations were all directed at establishing a colony over Ethiopia is evidenced by the articles of protectorate incorporated in three out of four treaties either proposed to or signed by Menelik. The one which did not contain such a protectorate clause or article, the treaty of October 20, 1887, in fact promised Menelik that Italy would not annex Ethiopian territory, simply because Italy needed to acquire the neutrality of Menelik in its bid to undermine Yohannes in the north. This treaty, therefore, will not be discussed below inasmuch as it does not portray Italy's colonial designs in a direct manner. Indirectly, however, this treaty, too, is nothing less than a strategy of penetrating the country from the north by neutralizing the rival forces which might or might not have come to strengthen the position of Yohannes. The salient aspects of the protectorate articles of the three respective treaties would be briefly discussed

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See pp. 87-88.

below.

According to Carlo Giglio none of these treaties were intended to establish a protectorate over Ethiopia. He affirms that "the formula adopted in the draft Italian text of Article 17 (September 1888) did not have the judicial force to establish a protectorate." He contends that "the word 'consente' (agrees) was introduced into that draft in place of 'sara in facolta' (shall be able) used in the texts of the earlier draft of 1879 and of the Treaty of 1883, certainly not with the aim of putting Menelik under a definite and specific juridical obligation, but in order to reinforce the earlier formula."⁶¹

1. The Massaja treaty proposal (March 1, 1879)

62

We have noted at an earlier stage that Monseigneur Massaja was one of the very first to have suggested in 1859 the acquisition of Ethiopian territory by Italy from tribal chiefs on the Red Sea coast. Some twenty years later Massaja had already established himself as a missionary among the

61

Carl Giglio, "Article 17 of the Treaty of Uccialli," (Trans. Richard Caulk), Journal of African History, VI, 2, 1965, p. 228.

62

See chapter 2, p. 65 ff.

63
 Gallas and acquired a status at the Shoan court as an intermediary between Menelik and the King of Italy. The second Martini mission to which Antonelli was attached as a private explorer⁶⁴ arrived in Shoa at the end of November 1879. Martini was sent to Ethiopia with a letter from King Humbert to Menelik⁶⁵ and another one from Depretis, the Italian Foreign Minister, to Massaja. Depretis' letter gave Massaja the mandate to arrange a treaty of friendship and commerce between Italy and Shoa.⁶⁶ Depretis, while recommending the bestowal of the decoration of the grand cordon of the 'Corona d'Italia' to Menelik, also suggested, for services rendered in Ethiopia, the grand officer of the order of 'S.S.Maurizio e Lazzaro' to

63

See Massaja, I Miei Tretacinque Anni di Missione nell'Alta Etiopia, Trivoli, 1928. Arturo Lancellotti, Pionieri Italiani in Africa, pp.57-72; Combes, L'Abyssinie en 1896, p.49.

64

M.A.E: Etiopia: Mar Rosso, Vol.I, Tomo I, p.145.

65

Ibid., Vol.I, Tomo II, Humbert to Menelik, March 9, 1879. Captain Sebastiano Martini Bernardi was already in Shoa in October 1877 with a letter and gifts of arms and other valuable items from Victor Emanuel II. For details see M.A.E: Etiopia: Mar Rosso, Vol.I, Tomo I, pp.139-140.

66

Ibid., p.145. See also Vol.I, Tomo II, Depretis to Massaja, March 4, 1879, p.24; Vol. II, p.129; A.S. MAI, 36/1-8.

67

Massaja.

Tekle-Tsadik Mekuria, the Ethiopian historian, recounts of a very curious and embarrassing political incident surrounding the conferment of the decoration. He says, that in order to give weight to the occasion, Count Orazio Antinori, the leader of an Italian expedition in Ethiopia since 1877, had conferred the decoration upon Massaja at the court of Menelik itself, where earlier the ceremony was preceded by the presentation of King Humbert's letter and gifts to Menelik. Massaja, who was not forewarned or briefed before hand that such a conferment would take place at the court, was naturally left embarrassed and definitely caught by surprise in having thus been publicly rewarded in front of Menelik as a political agent of his Government while in actuality he presented himself to the King, for sometime now, as a missionary who was devoted to the Gospel of God and not to secular interests. He therefore declined to accept the decoration.

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67

M.A.E: Etiopia: Mar Rosso, Vol.I, Tomo I, p.145; Vol.II, p.129.

68

Tekle-Tsadik Mekuria, *Ye Ethiopia Tarik*, pp.67-69. As the Italian mission led by Martini arrived only at the end of 1879 - by which time Massaja had been banished from Ethiopia - the decoration must have been sent earlier or there is an error in Tekle-Tsadik's presentation of the facts.

The letter of Depretis of March 1, 1879 to Massaja, with a draft treaty annexed to it, is perhaps one of the earliest documents from Italy to Menelik suggesting the establishment of direct relations. Even though Martini had not arrived in time in Ethiopia to hand over this proposed treaty to Massaja for negotiations - the latter having been banned by then - its contents are interesting in that they reveal the many aspirations of colonialist Italy which, as we shall soon see, were brought out again in the famous Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle. Perhaps the most important element in Massaja's draft treaty was Article 4, in which it was stipulated that King Menelik would be given the option of using the good offices of an Italian consular bureau in Aden or Zeila - if one were to be established - to communicate with the rest of the European countries. As this very same approach was the one used by Italy in two subsequent treaties to fulfill its desires of protectorate over Ethiopia, it is appropriate to quote here the article in full.

It shall be within the authority [or option] of H.M. the King of Shewa to use his address for all letters and communications which he wishes to dispatch to Europe, the consulate of H.M. the king of Italy at Aden or any other Italian Consular offices which might be established at Zeyla and other places on

70

the coast nearby.

The intentions implied in Article 4 are self-evident. By using Menelik's wishes to make use of the good offices of Italian Consular bureaus as a facade, the Itlaina Government was bent on controlling and manipulating Ethiopian foreign affairs.

Count Antinori was another pioneer in this very same field of political reconnaissance who sometime earlier had established himself in Ethiopia under the cover of leader of a scientific and exploratory expedition to Shoa. When the 'Societa Geographica Italiana,' which was later on to prove itself as an efficient and useful political arm of the Italian Foreign Office in Shoa, decided to despatch an expedition to Ethiopia in 1876, it sent Antinori as its head. Antinori was accorded a becoming reception by Menelik and in January 1877 gave the society a seat at a place called Let-Marefia, some ⁷¹ distance away from his capital of Ankober.

By all accounts Antinori would have played an important role in Ethiopian-Italian relations had he not died at Let-

70

Ibid., p.62, (as translated by Rubenson), Wichalle XVII, p.41.

71

M.A.E: Etiopia: Mar Rosso, Vol.I, Tomo I, p.143. For details on Let-Marefia see Ibid., footnote 31, p.162.

Marefia in 1883. Italy had already established herself at the Red Sea coast of Asseb by 1882 and the situation had called for a renewal of diplomatic missions on a much more official basis if "Italia irredent" was to be successful in her grand designs in Ethiopia. Therefore, Antinori was to begin another treaty negotiation with Menelik as head of another Italian mission. At his death, however, the mission was passed over to Antonelli who, on August 27, 1882, had left Naples for Ethiopia to join Antinori as member of the same mission.

2. Treaty of friendship and commerce (May 21, 1883)

Antonelli was not new to Shoa, for between 1879 and 1881 he had acquainted himself with the people and the country as a "privato viaggiatore" accompanying the 1879 Martini mission. With his appointment to negotiate the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce of 1883 between Ethiopia and Italy, Antonelli's diplomatic career was inextricably tied, for the

72

Ibid., pp.266-268.

73

Ibid., p.147.

coming few years, with Ethiopia. Other than the 1883 treaty, he had two more treaties to sign with Menelik. Of these two, the last one, that of May 2, 1889, or otherwise called the Treaty of Wichalle, culminated in disaster.

Before reaching the court of Emperor Menelik at Ankober Antonelli had lingered for some time in Awsa, a region adjoining the Red Sea. There, he negotiated and obtained an agreement with the Sultan and made his way to the south to reach Ankober on April 29, eight months after he left Naples. It was while in Awsa that he learned of the death of Antinori and received his credentials authorizing him to conduct negotiations with Menelik on behalf of the Italian Government.

In less than three weeks Menelik and Antinorli signed a treaty on May 21, 1883. The relevance of the treaty to Menelik and as concerns its importance in his bid for power has been briefly discussed at an earlier stage. so, there is no need for additional emphasis here. However, it is essential

74

Ibid., pp.266-268. For the agreement of March 15, 1883 between Antonelli and Mohamed Hanfari, the Sultan of Awsa, see Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, p.127; Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, Vol.I, pp.447-448.

75

For a background into this treaty see pp.37-40;76-77.

at this point to focus on the particular article, as it is an indicator of the protectorate ambitions of Italy as regards Ethiopia.

By Article 13 of the treaty Italy was intending to conduct the foreign relations of Menelik by taking the prerogative of being the official transmitter of his state affairs to other states with whom he had already established contact and good relations. The pertinent part of the article confirms Menelik's control over Ethiopian foreign relations by affirming that he may make use of the services of Italian officials whenever wanted:

Sara in facolta di S.M. il Re dello Scioa di valersi delle autorita consolari italiane o del commissario regio in Assab per tutte le lettere o comunicazioni che volesse far pervenire in Europa ai Governi presso i quali le autorita suddette siano accreditate.⁷⁶

Italy offered herself as a 'diplomatic courier' not so much out of sympathy or affection to Menelik or because she was a willing partner in his endeavours for the advancement of his foreign relations, but simply because this offered the

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Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, p.128 ff. As worded in the Amharic version the article asserts that the King of Shoa wishes to communicate an affair he wants to Europe he can do so through the intermediary of Italian Consular Agents as they are under his authority. "በግንደራ ምክርቤት ለሕዝብ ግንባታ" (See Rubenson,

possibility of being able to control and thus obstruct Menelik's diplomatic links with the rest of the European powers. The role Italy assumed by Article 13 offered Italian agents the possibility to act as the intermediaries between Menelik and "whatever government" he wanted to get in contact with.

There is, however, a striking and peculiar thing about this particular article. While subsequent treaties conducted between Ethiopia and Italy attempted to minimize the role of the Ethiopian Emperor by tactfully delegating his power to the Italian Government, this one in fact gave the Ethiopian Emperor, in no uncertain terms, authority over Italian consular and political agents. Nevertheless, one should not attempt to stretch this too far, as it does not at all change the motive behind the Italian move. While a recognition by Italy of Menelik's authority over its agents was not bound to make any substantial difference in Italian sovereignty or foreign affairs, the fact of securing for itself the role of 'eminence grise' in Ethiopian affairs was very important if Italy's grand designs in Ethiopia were to be workable.

Wichalle XVII, p.45.) The Italian version, as noted above is somewhat different, the "as they are under his authority" phrase being omitted. ("It shall be in the power of His Majesty the King of Shoa to avail himself of the Italian Consular authority or of the Royal Commissioner in Assab for all letters or communications which he may wish to have forwarded to the Governments in Europe where such authorities are accredited.") Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty, Vol.L, p.449.

3. The Treaty of Wichalle (May 2, 1889)

The period between 1883 and the signing of the Treaty of Wichalle in 1889 is particularly noted for its turbulence and heightened hostility between Emperor Yohannes and Italy. As indicated earlier, Italy had already occupied Massawa and was advancing in full force into the Ethiopian Highlands even at the risk of disastrously suffering from stubborn resistance by Yohannes. Such setbacks for Italy took place at the Battles of Saati and Dogali, thereby aggravating the situation to a point of no return.

To Menelik, the situation presented itself as a political threat and dilemma both to his kingdom and his personal future. In a sense, he was walking a tightrope stretched between the devil and the deep sea. He knew that a confrontation with the growingly hostile Yohannes was only a matter of time. He also knew that Italy was no friend of Ethiopia and that it was actually trying to buy time in a future confrontation with him. At a certain crucial point, therefore, he had to make his choice.

Menelik was aggrieved by the Italian occupation of Massawa and protested vigorously to the Italian Government on
 77
 its action. Later on, when the confrontation between Yohannes

and Italy culminated in the Battle of Dogali, and as a result of which Italy threatened an all out war with Yohannes, Menelik tried his hand at mediation between the two. Even though Italy brushed aside Menelik's offer to mediate between them it approached him on a different but yet tactical level. It was haunted by the fear that Yohannes might use Menelik's Shoan army in a war that the former might be wanting to wage with it. It therefore sought and acquired Menelik's neutrality through the treaty of October 1887, on the understanding that (1) Italy shall not occupy any Ethiopian territory (Article 3), (2) it will supply Menelik with 5000 Remington rifles (Article 4).⁷⁸ The above two points offered Menelik the ground for his choice on the issue at hand.

By Article 3 Menelik extracted the promise from Italy that it would not violate the integrity of Ethiopia, and by Article 4 he added some extra guns to his arsenal for any future eventuality with his two well-armed and superior enemies.⁷⁹

78

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.23-24.

79

It is to be remembered that during this period Menelik's fire-power, vis-a-vis Yohannes, was negligible. Menelik, in fact, was so militarily and thus politically pressured by the overwhelming strength of Yohannes that he was desperately pleading to purchase arms from Egypt and Europe.

Subsequent political developments antagonized the two leaders to such an extent that a virtual break in their relations set in. Rather than choosing to be the idle sitting duck amidst swampy waters, Menelik actively sought the help and sympathy of Italy. He needed ammunition and some 10,000 rifles from Italy if he were to thwart an attack by Yohannes. It is evident that as a military strategist Menelik might also have calculated that an alignment with Italy at this particular time would pay in the long run in that Italy, by engaging Yohannes in the north for its own purposes, would also make Menelik's lot much easier with Yohannes.

Italy lost no time in seizing the occasion which offered itself so conveniently. This also was Italy's wish, namely, that if Yohannes was actively engaged in the south it would have a free hand in the north. However, Italy very well knew Menelik's desperation, and it was ready to exploit the situation to the fullest and to extract the best possible terms from any deal to be entered into. It was under such circumstances that Crispi's Government formulated in Rome the Treaty of

80

A.S.MAI., 36/5-47, Menelik to Humbert, July 6, 1888; Rossetti, Soria Diplomatica, pp.50-51. ["Ora io domando alla M.V. un pronto soccorso di armi e che il numero dei fucili non sia inferiore ai diecimila."]

Wichalle. The consequences which led to the negotiations, conclusion and ultimate outcome of the Treaty of Wichalle will be a subject of discussion and analysis in a chapter by itself.

The most important article of the treaty, the article of protectorate, and about which a few analytical researches⁸¹ have already been done, is Article 17. This article is very crucial to the understanding of Ethiopian-Italian relations, for its interpretation is the most important and major political factor on which a whole lot of other happenings are dependent and intimately attached to. Linguistically speaking, of the twenty articles in the treaty Article 17 is the simplest and most direct to comprehend as written in Amharic. It was a deliberate misinterpretation of its spirit by Italy which ultimately led to the misunderstanding that ensued and forced the two nations into war. The Amharic version of the article as put in the treaty reads differently⁸² from that of the Italian one.

81

For a thorough and stimulating analysis of the circumstances surrounding Article 17 see Sven Rubenson, Wichale - XVII: The Attempt to Establish a Protectorate Over Ethiopia. Among others consult also Carlo Conti Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia d'Ucciali alla Battaglia di Adua; Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, pp.91-316; 368-422; Rubenson, "The Protectorate Paragraph of the Wichale Treaty," Journal of African History, V,2,1964; Carlo Giglio,

As in the articles of protectorate of the treaties of 1879 and 1883, Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle is also nothing less than a pretext by which Italy offered its good offices to be the diplomatic courier of Ethiopia so as to be able to control and represent Ethiopian foreign policy abroad. This time, however, Italy's task was made much easier, for, unlike the time of the two previous treaties,⁸³ now the General Act of Berlin of 1885 had sanctioned that "the power which assumes a Protectorate there [the coast of the African Continent], shall accompany the respective act with notification thereof" in order to make its possession⁸⁴ good.

The catch words in the Amharic and Italian versions of the article are "ዕቅድ ግድ" ['Yichalachewal'] and

"Article 17 of the Treaty of Uccialli," Journal of African History, VI,2,1965,pp.221-231; Rubenson, "Professor Giglio, Antonelli and Article XVII of the Treaty of Wichale," Journal of African History, VII,3,1966,pp.544-546; Work, Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy, pp.77-96; 98-137.

82

A literal translation of the article from the Amharic reads: "For all things which the Emperor of Ethiopia needs from European Emperors he can [may] do so with the help [aid] of the Italian Government." The Amharic version of the treaty is to be found in Carlo Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich Nel Diario Inedito del Conte Augusto Salimbeni, ILTE,1956, facing pages 152 and 153.

83

Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, 3rd. edition, Vol.II,p.468 ff.

84

Ibid

85
 "consente" respectively. The Amharic verb "ቻሎ" ['Chale']
 literally translated means "can" or "may." Italy, however,
 by deliberately misinterpreting the Amharic verb "can" or
 "may" to mean "consent" bestowed upon itself the legal
 implication that it was now the articulator of Ethiopian
 foreign policy, For Menelik, it argued, had now consented
 to such an arrangement by Article 17 of the treaty. By
 pretending that it was indeed exercising a 'de jure'
 protectorate over Ethiopia, Italy, in accordance with the
 stipulations of the Act of Berlin, notified the European
 powers of the same in order to obtain a 'de facto' recognition. 86
 In fact most of the European powers signatory to the Act of
 Berlin recognized Italy's protectorate claims. 87
 Menelik, later
 on, denounced the treaty and subsequent conflicts on the issue
 at hand led to the Battle of Adwa.

85

See Work, Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.120.

86

Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, bis, p.21, letters of Crispi to
 Italian Representatives in Berlin, Brussels, Constantinople,
 Copenhagen, The Hague, London, Madrid, Paris, St. Petersburg,
 Stockholm, Vienna, Washington D.C., October 11, 1889. See also
 Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.60-61.

87

Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, p.26 ff.

Relevant stages in Ethiopian-Italian relations: an analysis

Broadly speaking, during the period analyzed in the previous pages, the political-diplomatic relations which existed between Emperor Menelik and Italy, can be divided into four distinct parts:

1. The period of 'entente cordiale' (1887-1889):

This is the earliest period in the relations between Menelik and Italy. It is a period marked by mutual exigencies in which each needed the help of the other. Italy wanted to use Menelik against Yohannes and conversely Menelik effectively exploited his relations with Italy to use it in his bid for power against Yohannes. The period is noted for: (a) The Treaty of Friendship and Commerce of May 21, 1883,⁸⁸ (b) the Treaty of Wichalle of May 2, 1889.⁸⁹

2. The period of diplomatic rupture (December 1890-February 1891):

This period, even though short, is to be recognized

88

See pp.37-41; 76-77;98-101.

89

For an analysis of the treaty see chapter 4.

for its political and diplomatic vigour and intensity. Menelik, having fully understood the Italian intention implicit in Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle and also having recognized its dangers and implications as regards Ethiopian independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, had made his understanding of the same article clear to Italy, thereby leaving no room for further contention or any Italian speculation. Italy, in order to repair her image and the damage done to Menelik, had sent back Antonelli, in December 1890, to open further negotiations with Menelik. Menelik, firm and absolutely unyielding in his negotiations with Antonelli, could not come to any agreement short of his own understanding. Antonelli, on the other hand, was also firm in his own way for, having earlier affirmed in the treaty stipulations the attainment of a protectorate over Ethiopia to Crispi as a 'fait accompli,' did not find it politically feasible and statesmanlike if he were to go over his words again. The resultant deadlock erupted in the breaking of diplomatic negotiations which were being undertaken at the court of Menelik. After a stormy meeting on February 11, Antonelli left Ethiopia the next day, taking with him Salimbeni, the Italian Resident. For all practical purposes, even though official contacts were not terminated, a break in diplomatic relations definitely resulted.

3. The period of hostilities (1891-1896):

Antonelli's departure was followed by a period which, after long deliberations, negotiations and correspondences, culminated in the failure to come to an agreement and the subsequent denunciation of the treaty of Wichalle and the Battle of Adwa in March 1896. Menelik decisively defeated Italy and a new era commenced.

4. The period of peace and friendship (1896-1910):

Menelik had staunchly defended Ethiopia and had now become a power to reckon with not only by Italy, but also the rest of the European powers. By a Treaty of Peace⁹⁰ signed at Addis Ababa on October 26, 1896 the state of war between Ethiopia and Italy was "definitively" terminated, and (a) Article 2 of the same treaty "definitively" cancelled the Treaty of Wichalle of May 2, 1889 and (b) by Article 3 Italy recognized "without reservation the absolute independence of⁹¹ the Ethiopian Empire as a sovereign and independent State."

90

Also referred to as the Addis Ababa Treaty.

91

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.181-183; British and Foreign Papers, Vol.88, p.481.

This, in short, was the culminating point in the relations
92
between Ethiopia and Italy.

Through the instrumentality of war Menelik had, at last, affirmed the independence and sovereignty of his country. Subsequent to the Treaty of Peace relations between the two countries greatly improved and led towards a relatively healthy and prosperous era.

In the above four periods, a substantial part of Menelik's foreign policy objectives depended on a conscious deliberation and formulation of decisions and strategies. These decisions and strategies will be considered shortly. Generally, however, these decisions were mainly concerned with: (a) the question
93
of colonial expansion and national unity, (b) the European rivalry and the spheres of influence it tried to demarcate in Ethiopia, (c) the strengthening of diplomatic relations with friendly countries, and (d) a policy of modern-

92

The year 1910 is not conclusive in Ethiopian-Italian relations. It is the span limit of this paper. Ethiopian-Italian relations, after some years, have in fact declined culminating in the 'Wal Wal Incident' and the subsequent Ethiopian-Italian war of 1936-41.

93

The phrase "colonial expansion" is used here advisedly instead of "territorial expansion." See chapter 8 for details.

ization based on reform and progress and substantially depending on the goodwill and trust he confided in the European powers.

The preceding two chapters were, of necessity, an elucidation of the political and diplomatic history of the reign of Menelik, especially his relations with Italy from the time of his rivalry with Emperor Yohannes and his rise to power to the culmination of these very same relations in the Battle of Adwa and the subsequent Treaty of peace. However, with perhaps the exception of the following chapter which deals strictly with the political and diplomatic relations which existed between Menelik and mostly the rest of the European countries, the remaining chapters in parts one and two will be devoted to the analysis of the salient features of the foreign policy of Menelik outlined in the above paragraph.

Having briefly touched upon the political as well as diplomatic history of Menelik's relations with Italy an analysis of its important aspects now seems in order. What has been attempted in the preceding two chapters was an elucidation of the role of Menelik in Ethiopian politics up to the death of Yohannes. Since the pertinent aspects of the role played by Menelik will be studied in subsequent chapters, the following few pages are not an attempt to make

an in-depth study of this role.

What were the central issues involved in Ethiopian-Italian relations during the period indicated, and which of these issues could be determined as lying within the sphere of interest of the student of political science? What decisions has Menelik arrived at and to achieve which objectives? What were the options open to him, and what were his choices to achieve these objectives? The last question should be answered first because without the presence of such choices one would not, of necessity, speak of objectives, options and decisions.

The concept of choice as developed in the study of the decision-making process assumes that the decision-maker is presented with a whole set of alternatives and preferences and that he has to pick one from among them on the assumption that by so doing he will or he might attain his objective. Initially, there must either be a problem or an issue presenting itself. According to Gross, the analyst then follows it up with the question: "What can I do?" and tries to answer the question posed by suggesting a policy. "Once a policy is suggested, the next question follows: 'What else can I do?' and usually the answer is, 'a number of things can be done.' A number of policies - not solely one - are

usually possible and feasible. They are called 'alternatives.'⁹⁴

The definition offered by Snyder, Bruck and Sapin is perhaps the most concise, yet the most relevant. "First," they say, "the actor or decision-maker is generally represented by a 'scale of preferences,' that is, the values of the decision-maker are assumed to be ordered from the most to the least highly regarded." They point out, in the meantime, that such decision-makers "may be assumed to act in terms of clear-cut preferences" and that the nature of these preferences must be, at the outset, closely questioned and analyzed by the decision-maker. What are the factors influencing them, and in addition⁹⁵ to the preferences what is the information the decision-maker has?

Reduced to its basic tenets, we recognize that decision is nothing more than a "mental choice" translated into action and which⁹⁶ action is intended to achieve an objective or a desired goal.

Because of the processes of organization involved for collecting and assessing information, the specification of problems and the⁹⁷ presentation of balanced and alternative solutions, Jones thinks

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Feliks Gross, Foreign Policy Analysis, Philosophical Library, New York, 1954, pp.136-137.

95

Richard C.Snyder, H.W,Bruck and Burton Sapin, "Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics," in Foreign Policy Decision-Making,pp.175-176.

96

Jones, Analysing Foreign Policy, p.34.

97

See chapter 8.

that such a decision-making framework "offers a clear, yet modest, way of analysing the structure of foreign policy decision-making in a given country."⁹⁸

In the case of Menelik's Ethiopia the major decisions which evolved out of the prevailing political situation were also products of a traditional system which entailed a whole lot of balancing and weighing of a series of agonizing "mental choices." These choices, naturally, were all directed towards the attainment of the objectives which Menelik laid as the main pillars of his maiden foreign policy. In this earlier part of his reign the central issues or objectives of his foreign policy were, (1) the attainment of power, and once power was attained, (2) the use of such power for the maintainance and safeguarding of the sovereignty and integrity of Ethiopia.

In his bid for power Menelik, perhaps more than any other monarch in the history of modern Ethiopia, was faced by the dilemma of having to satisfy at one and the same time two demanding and strong opponents - Yohannes and Italy. How was Menelik to attain the power he sought, faced as he was by two other powerful power contenders? Apart from domestic factors involving the integration of his nation, the consolidation of Ethiopian

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Jones, Analysing Foreign Policy, p.34.

territorial limits, the institutionalization of his army and the organization of his Empire's economic development, the other main factors which greatly contributed to his success were:

1. the acquisition of modern arms and ammunition and the creation and establishment of a viable national defense system,
2. his own ingenuity as a politician and a statesman, and his tactful style of exploitation of the approaches of Italy at the time it presented itself as a power broker.

Once his first objective, namely, power was successfully achieved, Menelik was brought into conflict with the very same country which, in some respects, facilitated his own success. While his decision to use Italy in his policy of the acquisition of his needed armament and political power was to prove useful in the long run, it was nevertheless to bring him face to face with an immediate and growing danger from Italian colonial ambitions. Italy had wished to be compensated by Menelik for her support in terms of arms and other political "concessions." The compensation was to come to Italy by way of Menelik's acquiescence in Italy's overlordship over Ethiopia. The conflict had resulted in the disagreement over Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle.

After the commencement of the conflict the decisions resorted to by Menelik were both difficult and beyond his means to accomplish. His decisions were mainly based on his persistent policy of

gradualism in the attainment of his objectives. The first of these objectives was the use of diplomacy as an instrument of bringing about conciliation and friendly relations. In the furtherance of this policy of diplomacy and in the hope of putting his thoughts across about his understanding of the Treaty of Wichalle in general and Article 17 in particular, Menelik chose to patiently sit at the conference table for long and arduous negotiations with Italy. As Italy's adamant stand to implement its own grand designs in East Africa was by no means to be abated, Menelik, after realizing the impossibility of achieving a negotiated settlement with Italy, took the other decision of denouncing the treaty.

Denunciation was not the end to his troubles. It was to provide the link to other decisions. In the face of Italy's insistence that the protectorate spirit of Article 17 should be retained at all costs, Menelik had to make, because of factors beyond his control, the other major decision of facing Italy in war. Thus his second important objective of maintaining and safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia was successfully achieved through the instrumentality of a victorious war which he won at Adwa.

In the implementation of the above two major objectives

the options open to Menelik, in many respects, were very limited. Contrary to common belief, he would not have chosen, for example, the option of not aligning himself with Italy, for this would have meant political suicide given the fact that had Yohannes been on the throne for a few more years after March 10, 1889, he would definitely have marched south and perhaps annihilated the weaker army of Menelik. On the other hand, Menelik could not have afforded to consider any other option than checkmating the advance of Italy by resorting to diplomatic negotiations. He might have chosen not to challenge Italy by force, for he was not a match for Italy. Indeed, by his own admission, he was uneasy regarding the might of Yohannes and for this reason he needed the support of Italy. Yet, when diplomacy failed to bring about a negotiated peace between his country and Italy Menelik felt that the final hour for decision was at hand. He had known very well that Italian negotiators had reached the point of desperation and that Italian military leaders were now on the countdown to unleash a war on him. What Menelik needed to stop Italian military advances into Ethiopia was a disciplined army, a substantial amount of arms and enough ammunition. The latter two he had already acquired in fairly good number while lingering at the conference table. However, it was after long and agonizing thought that Menelik chose war as a means of implementing one of the main objectives of his foreign policy, namely, the

defense of the 'patrie' and the maintainance of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of his country.

Basically, if one were to analyze Menelik as a decision-maker, it would be readily observed that one important factor for his success as a diplomat was his instinctive hold to the principle of tenacity and perseverance. In short, his decisions were mainly brought about by a strong desire to survive.

Speaking of the decisions he made during the first part of his reign one could definitely assert this point. Most of his decisions displayed a balanced mixture of tactfulness, cautiousness and a statesmanship marked by a calculating approach to risk-taking. In his earlier endeavours to wrest power out of the grip of Yohannes he used much tact and cautiousness, being extremely careful not to push Yohannes too far. Towards this end, he even attempted to use good relations with Italy to bring about peace between Yohannes and Humbert. Once power was achieved and Italy pushed its demands too far Menelik resorted to diplomatic negotiations to dissuade Italy. When this effort failed, he chose to take the risk of going to war to achieve an objective to which he was dedicated body and soul.

In concluding, a clarification will be necessary on some of the popular misconceptions regarding Menelik's position vis-a-vis his policies towards Italian expansion in Ethiopia, his role as

a politician on the national scene in the early 1800s and other related matters.

Three popular myths still persist in Ethiopia about Menelik's relations with Italy. This is partly explained by the fact that first very little has been written in Ethiopia analyzing the complex political situation as it existed then and thoroughly explaining the elements and factors at play and elaborating on the factors and problems which necessitated the steps taken by Menelik. Secondly, after the failure of what was then called the Italian "Shoan policy" following the Battle of Adwa, this very same policy was replaced by a vigorous and systematic colonialist propaganda of defamation and character assassination against Menelik, endeavouring to portray him as a weak and unimaginative monarch. The purpose of this exercise was to sow suspicion and dissension among the rival political factions then active in Ethiopia.

It is often conceded, and in fact there is a popular belief in Ethiopia, that Menelik "sold" Ethiopia for Italian guns; that he worked against national unity by negotiating with the Italian Government and that since he had not at the time

found it to be a national urgency not to drive Italy out to the sea he had abandoned Eritrea to be colonized.

That Ethiopian monarchs never lacked the sagacity of benefiting from the art of political expediency is amply demonstrated by numerous other cases in Ethiopian history where rivalries were filled with intricate intrigues, doublecrossings and betrayals, and in many instances characterized by tragedies of the highest Shakespearean order. Rivalries and ascendancies to power were oftentimes dotted with assassinations, poisoning and other vicious and villainous methods of elimination and usurpation of power. This, to a considerable extent, was the name of the game in the interplay of factors in Ethiopian power politics. However, such was not the case between Yohannes and Menelik. Both attempted to excel in their diverse maneuvers and used power effectively as a leverage to induce the other to recognize his position. Both had their own personal ambitions for power and their individual vision for the unity of the nation. Each depended and relied, to some extent, on foreign assistance in his struggle to wrest the helm of power from the other. As far back as 1896 Yohannes had tried to benefit from the British Government by siding with the Napier expedition against Theodros at a time when the grand design of national unity laid down by Theodros needed, more

than ever in Ethiopian history, the collaboration of every single leader. However, Yohannes had his own political ambition and a personal commitment to fulfill, and given the history of the rivalries of the 1800s in Ethiopia, had perhaps an altogether different understanding of Ethiopian unity itself.

It could be said that at the time of his rivalry with Yohannes Menelik's concept of his relationship with Italy was not different from that of the former who in 1869 had befriended and benefited from the British expedition which was headed to destroy Theodros. It is admitted that the parallel just drawn

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For a detailed analysis of the period see, among others, Mondon Vidailhet, Chronique de Theodros II, Rois des Rois d'Ethiopie, (1853-1868) d'apres un Manuscrit original, Paris, 1904; Walter C. Plowden, Travels in Abyssinia and the Galla Country, with an Account of a Mission to Ras Ali in 1848, London, 1868.

101

The strongest critic of Yohannes in this regard is Afework Gebre-Yesus. Of the affair of Yohannes with Napier Afework writes: "Instead of passing judgment on Emperor Menelik why is it that the people do not pass judgment on Emperor Yohannes? During the reign of Emperor Theodros, who was he, desirous of aiding the British Government who constructed the highway, made food supplies and provisions ready, provided spies and led the British up to Mekdella [that is, the fortress of Theodros]? It was Emperor Yohannes. It was because of Emperor Yohannes that the strength of Ethiopia was undermined and the determination of Theodros weakened. Emperor Yohannes did this because he was desperate for government [power], and even then, as an illegitimate leader and as a contender to a government that was not passed over to him by his father." Dagnawi Ate Menelik, [A literal translation].

is not and could not be a fitting example to explain the similarities of actions of the two monarchs. What is intended to show here is that both of them used political expediency as a weapon to weaken their rivals and by so doing they achieved their objectives. Especially Menelik "was far too astute to allow any advantage to escape him, and indeed too patriotic to allow his nation to sink into a mere protectorate of Italy."¹⁰²

Menelik was as ambitious as Yohannes, and to acquire the leadership which dangled in the uncertainties of the era he needed not only the political base in his own Kingdom of Shoa and elsewhere in the Empire but also the muscle of arms he was able to collect from other friendly sources. Menelik knew that to defeat his well-armed rival he should have the leverage of power.

Menelik's policy, however, was that if he were to bring about his own political permanence, political expediency was not to be at the cost and the subordination of the unity and territorial integrity of the nation. When Italy attempted to undermine the independence of Ethiopia first by using Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle and later on by resorting to tactical promises and assurances in the long and protracted diplomatic

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Berkeley, "The Abyssinian Question and its History," The Nineteenth Century and After, XIX-XX, Vol.LIIII, London, January-June 1903,p.95.

negotiations which ensued between 1890 and 1896, he stood firm on a policy of steel by emphatically defying Italian demands and ultimately denying such demands a place in Ethiopian politics. If Menelik's foreign policy is to be assessed on its own merits this aspect should come out as the most brilliant and daring step from among the many actions he undertook and successfully accomplished during his period of confrontation with the European powers. It was in the fulfillment of this very same policy that he went to battle and defeated Italy at Adwa.

However much Menelik desired to drive Italy out of Eritrea after the Battle of Adwa, under the circumstances, he was not able to do so for a number of reasons beyond his control. First, the fighting men Menelik deployed at Adwa were very weary and restive from months of war preparations, travelling, camping, ill-health and the discomforts of malnutrition. The soldiers in the battle field were already dying in numbers from dysentery and diarrhea. Second, as the then Ethiopian military logistics command was least concerned with providing the fighting men with food and drink provisions, Menelik's supplies were almost exhausted by the end of the battle. Third, and most important of all, Menelik was not so sure that he had enough ammunition to extend the battle any further. Finally, the short rainy season was fast approaching and its implications were evident both to

Menelik and his Rases. It was also evident to Menelik that Baratieri would now do everything possible to defend his position with all the support he could muster from Rome in order to save the prestige and honour of the monarchy. Menelik thus chose to satisfy himself with the newly gained military prowess over colonial Italy than risk it in a senseless and unrestrained bravado.

It is for future historians to rectify the errors and falsifications disseminated and consequently accepted by some popular folk saying. It is for the political scientist, however, to scrutinize the facts and try to analyze the given data in order to find out if the decisions given out by the individual decision-maker were appropriate, feasible and in the national interest. Under the circumstances Menelik could not have acted otherwise and done any better, and his decisions were the result of the thoughts of a conscientious man who, during his time, stood on 'terra firma.'

CHAPTER 4

MENELIKIAN DIPLOMACY: THE DYNAMICS OF EARLY ETHIOPIAN FOREIGN RELATIONS

As far back as recorded history nations have been known to be at war with each other. The root causes for hostilities varied and with time the means of settling differences and hostilities also changed. Principal among these means, however, were the time-tested principles of conciliation, mediation and arbitration. All of these principles depended on the acts of persuasion and compromise. Nevertheless, before relations climaxed on hostilities, nations had invariably resorted to a sustained process of improving their friendship and understanding. "This method of establishing the preconditions for permanent peace we call peace through accommodation. Its instrument is diplomacy." ¹ And diplomacy, Sir Harold Nicolson defines as "the management of international relations by means of negotiations; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by

¹ Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, p.519.

ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomat."²

Diplomacy is one of the political muscles of national power. It is a method by which the national interest is promoted in a peaceful way. It is an effective instrument, in most cases, by which a nation caters for good neighbourliness and friendship so that by so doing it would have hopefully acquired the peace it requires for its existence and the advancement of its nation's interest.

In some instances diplomacy has also its own inherent weaknesses and dangers. If on the other hand a nation's diplomacy is wrong in the assessment of the intentions of its friends or other nations with whom it is dealing, it can also end up in a situation which might lead to hostilities and even unexpected war. Ultimately, why nations want to practice diplomacy can therefore be attributed to one important factor, namely, the desire to avoid misunderstandings and hostilities which might eventually lead to war.

Diplomacy has enormously developed within the last century. So also has the nature of diplomats. The nineteenth century diplomat was the envy of other professionals in that he was the "eyes" and "ears" - in short the 'alter ego' - of the

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Harold Nicolson, Diplomacy, New York, Oxford University Press, 1964, pp.4-5.

monarch who sent him abroad, observing and hearing on his behalf. He was his dignified "spy" at the courts of his cousins. As a result, the diplomat of that foregone era was such a suspect that it is said that when the death of the Russian Ambassador at the Congress of Vienna was announced to Metternich he was reported to have murmured: "Ah, is that true? What may have been his motive." Even in dying was the diplomat a suspect.

The twentieth century diplomat is a professional cut to size because of the decline of the very nature of diplomacy and by the development, on the other hand, of the means and facilities of communications, and perhaps most importantly, by the advancement of human ingenuity in the field of the technology of computer sciences, gadgetery and nuclear armaments. International conferences, the 'hot line' and the usefulness of international peace and cooperation have also reduced, to a great extent, the role played by the individual diplomat.

The world of diplomacy as conceived and understood by Menelik was basically different from that of his own contemporaries. This is why the study of Menelik's diplomacy is suggested at this juncture.

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Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, p.527.

Menelik should not be taken for the nineteenth century diplomat from Ribena or Hatfield, sophisticated and consummate in the concepts of modern international politics or diplomacy. He was simply a monarch knowledgeable in rudimentary and mundane concepts and although eager and ready to learn about it, he was only slightly acquainted with the modern world around him. As his credential, he had a strong belief in and a religious dedication to the fundamental truths of decency and morality. He even accepted its validity as being universal. Menelik, as a product of the strictest upbringing of the Ethiopian court, was of course a thoroughly instructed and cultured person. It was only at the age of about twelve that he was taken prisoner by Theodros. As in his father's court, so also at the court of Theodros was he brought up under the most rigorous, best and strictest conditions becoming to a future leader. He was meticulously trained and instructed in court etiquette, in the arts of war and peace-making, the administration of justice and local government and groomed in the best way possible for any future eventuality.⁴

Menelik was very religious and a believer in the norms and values of the long established Christian Orthodox Church.

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See Afework Gebre-Yesus, Dagnawi Menelik; Guebre-Selassie, Chronique du Regne de Menelik II; Massaja, I Miei Tretacinque Anni di Missione nell'Alta Etiopia; Tekle-Tsadik Mekuria, Ye Ethiopia Tarik.

His understanding of friends and enemies was simple and closely tied to an earthly person in him. In a way, Menelik was a fundamentalist in the strictest sense. His interpretation of world realities, including that of the diplomatic and political order, was primarily concerned as being strictly related to the religious concept of good and bad and the universality of truth. As a principle, this interpretation relied on the Christian philosophical doctrine of uprightness, magnanimity in spirit and nobleness in mind.

The relationship of Menelik with other nations must essentially be viewed within this given context. Most of the countries who dealt with him had, of necessity, their own measure of things, and oftentimes, motivated as they were by the urge to benefit from their relationships with unaware African chiefs and leaders, they were bent on exploiting the very same Christian principles adhered to by some of these leaders. The colonialist countries naively underestimated the worth and weight of most African values, and desirous as they were to present the seriousness of the relationships sought by African leaders as mere frivolities, they portrayed their persons and the institutions they represented with disdain. Elizabeth Colson points out "that romantic emphasis upon savegery and exotic custom, and the opposite failing of interpreting local institutions in the light of

European precedent, helped to mislead the observers."⁵

Menelik made a tremendous effort to know and understand the fears and anxieties of his European counterparts. He attempted to get acquainted with their world and the way it functioned and operated. He strongly believed that in order to functionally harmonize the conceptually different views of the two worlds it was essential for him to have a grasp of the strength and weaknesses of their respective values, where they differed and appreciate the driving force behind their individual motives. To this end, he wanted to know more about individual countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. He desired to understand the working procedure of the modern world fully and in its details and he dealt with it in its own terms and language.

Gleichen writes of this penchant in Menelik thus: "Thoroughly alive to the necessity of keeping touch with European nations, if he wishes to be considered a civilized monarch," he comments, "he is, for his situation, extraordinarily well acquainted with what is going on in the world, not only from political, but from a general and even scientific point of view." He adds, "Were his subjects but one-tenth part as anxious as himself for civilization and progress, Abyssinia would indeed become a

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Elizabeth Colson, "African Society at the Time of the Scramble," in Gann & Peter Duignan (eds)., Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960, Vol.1. Cambridge, England, The University Press, 1969, p.28.

serious factor in the world's game."⁶

Nevertheless, Menelik was very careful in the handling of this delicate situation lest the foreign powers with whom he came in touch used it for their own selfish end. He knew the dangers inherent in and emanating from such an open door policy, and he was keenly aware of what was taking place in other parts of Africa, especially after the stipulations of the Treaty of Berlin had so endangered and undermined the independence and sovereignty of the continent. Gleichen, later on qualifies his comment on Menelik's policy of "the necessity of keeping in touch with European nations" in light of Menelik's own fears⁷ and suspicions about European intentions.

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Gleichen, With the Mission to menelik, p.152.

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"He has recognised that the only way of bringing his country into line with other Powers of the world is to keep in touch with them, and as far as possible to imitate their mode of progress and civilisation. His 'line,' therefore, is to make friends with European nations, and with their help, to develop his country. But, in order to carry out his purpose, he is obliged to let in Europeans, who, to push their own selfish projects, political as well as commercial, try to fasten their claws into the country, and to turn their own or their country's advantage the opening thus given to them....If Menelik could but get a genuine guarantee that his territories would not be attacked and occupied by Foreign Powers, his path would be a comparatively easy one; but that is of course impossible. Over him hangs the perpetual, and and not unreasonable, dread, that if he flings open his doors to a stranger, that stranger will in course of time become a permanence. Under the circumstances, he has to proceed very delicately, with his eyes and ears open to every advantage to be reaped by intercourse with Europeans, and at the same time with one hand on the door, ready to slam it in their

The importance and significance of this aspect of Menelik's policy will be well appreciated when considered in view of the fact that it was Menelik's Ethiopia which was the only independent and sovereign nation in Africa. As will be observed from the analyses in subsequent chapters, Menelik's contribution to thwart European designs from linking the continent from east to west and from north to south is also a remarkable element of great importance in the study of African politics.

Despite the enormous difficulties he was bound to encounter in his relations with European countries, the most important quality in his political career is the successful establishment of the machinery of personal diplomacy. In this regard, he lay the foundations for close and lasting diplomatic ties with Emperors, Kings, Queens and Presidents abroad, and dealt with them in grace and style unparalleled in the history of Ethiopia. His correspondences, to this effect, are pieces of classical literature which should be seriously studied by future researchers and political analysts. Not flattering but full of human reflections, these correspondences sought to evoke the spirit of generosity and compassion. Their ultimate objective, however,

faces if their zeal should exceed their discretion. Woe betide them if they should presume on their position: they would be gently but firmly requested to quit....Verily, Menelik is a great man." Ibid., pp.313-314.

remained to be the strengthening of the bonds of friendship between his country and theirs.

To further give evidence to these relationships, not only did he interest himself with the rest of the world but he also sent out personal emissaries and diplomatic missions abroad on goodwill missions, official visits, ceremonies, conferences and negotiations so as to be able to convey his personal good wishes and to conclude commercial and other agreements on his behalf. In all his years as head of state Menelik did not leave the confines of his country even though invitations were extended to him from Europe, the United States and other countries. Instead, he sent out his trusted lieutenants, advisers of his government and some of the well known 'Rases' and 'Dejazmatches.' At other times, whenever circumstances did not allow, he delegated trusted foreigners from friendly countries whose predisposition and love towards him personally and his country generally were very well known. A few times too he made use of representatives of friendly countries residing at his court. At all times, however, even though he was not the sole person to initiate and execute policies, he conducted his foreign affairs with a firm grip on the whole machinery of decision-making and the subsequent implementation of the resultant decisions. Menelik, no doubt, was a firm believer in personal diplomacy.

This is why, it will be remembered, that upon being informed that Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle meant that he had voluntarily surrendered to Italy the prerogative of conducting his foreign policy, Menelik vigorously reacted to such a suggestion and demanded King Humbert to "rectify the error committed" by announcing it to the European powers.

He wrote to him:

...Quand, en causant avec le Comte Antonelli, au moment de la stipulation de ce traite, je l'ai interroge bien serieusement et qu'il m'a repondu 'si cela vous convient, vous pouvez vous servir de notre intermediaire; si non, vous etes libre de vous en dispenser,' je lui dis: 'du moment que c'est a titre d'amitie, pourquoi me servirai-je d'autres gens pour mes relations?', mais je n'ai accepte, a cette epoque, aucun engagement obligatoire, et encore aujourd'hui je ne suis pas l'homme pour l'accepter, et vous egalement, vous ne me direz pas de l'accepter.

A present j'espere que, pour l'honneur de votre ami, vous voudrez bien faire rectifier l'erreur commise dans l'article 17, et faire part de cette erreur aux puissance amies, auxquelles vous aviez fait communication du dit article.⁸

Like most Ethiopian monarchs before him, but less so than Yohannes, Menelik was very wary and suspicious of foreign countries in his official and diplomatic dealings. It was not his style of working, for instance, to give an absolutely free hand to foreigners in the execution of his foreign policy. That he was several

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Doc. Dipl., 1890-91 XVII, Menelik to Humbert, Nehasse 19, 1882, (August 24, 1890); Crispi e Menelich, pp. 153-154. Rossetti, perhaps mistakenly, puts the date as Nehasse 1888. (Storia Diplomatica, pp. 78-89.)

times betrayed and his confidence violated by those whom he trusted there are ample evidences. The major one of such betrayals is the circumstances surrounding Article 17. Of the many minor incidents, of which there are a good deal, an unpublished document on Ethiopia and prepared by the Rodd mission records the following: "It may be noted that the information reached the British Mission whilst at Addis Ababa, that Queen Taitu had, some four years ago written to Queen Victoria, and sent her (through the usual Italian channel) some presents. It would not appear that these ever reached their destination."⁹

Menelik was generous in spirit and compassionate in his friendship. It was through these qualities that he communicated with and gave meaning to his friends. Many members of foreign missions who came to his court were astounded and touched by the kind of reception he lavished upon them and by the generosity of care and kindness he displayed towards them. It was not so much a matter of trying to please the individual members of a mission than a desire and sincere belief that if by so doing he had pleased one such member he had also pleased the sovereign who had sent him to his court on a mission.

9

'Precis of Information Obtained by the British Mission to Abyssinia,' March-June 1897; 'General Report on Abyssinia,' by Lieut. Colonel Wingate and Captain Count Gleichen, 1897, Confidential (proof 1).

Menelik literally provided a huge welcoming army and a becoming ceremony outside Addis Ababa whenever any such foreign mission was announced at his capital. The competition as to who received the best and traditionally colourful welcome was a matter of great concern, specially among British and French and sometimes Italian and Russian envoys. Rightly or wrongly, the 1897 French official mission to Menelik led by Leonce Lagarde was widely reported by the French press to have been received by Menelik with great pomp and ceremony on its arrival in Addis Ababa. Lagarde, for instance, was instructed by his government in April, 1897 to officially thank the Emperor for his courtesies and kindness towards the French mission.¹⁰ Michel, a member of the mission, sadly laments, however, that the French mission, while well received by Ras Mekonnen at Harar - the gateway to the east - it was not, contrary to what was commonly believed, offered a pompous welcome by Menelik. This was so, Michel writes, because Lagarde was suspected at the court of Menelik for having earlier furnished military intelligence to General Baratieri, the commanding officer of the Italian armed forces during the Battle of Adwa.¹¹

¹⁰
DDF, Instructions to Lagarde, April 1897, 1st. ser., Vol. 13, No, 184.

¹¹
Michel, Vers Fachoda, pp.18-19. For a similar view see also Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.541.

Whatever the veracity of the story, the British mission led by Sir Rennel Rodd which immediately followed that of the French expected no less a "cordial reception" than that provided for the French Envoys. However, in accordance with the official Ethiopian explanation, the British mission was not accorded such a reception because "the whole country was during these days demoralized by the Easter festivities" ¹² which follow a long and physically weakening lenten period of forty days. Rodd records that upon reaching the environs of Addis Ababa, "so far as we could ascertain, no particular preparations had anywhere been made for our reception." He goes on to say that he immediately dispatched a sort of a protest letter to the capital which step he believed was "a form of expressing ¹³ diplomatic displeasure universally recognized in the country." The letter, addressed to Monsieur Alfred Ilg, Counsellor to Emperor Menelik, contains, among other things, these lines:

Arrives ce matin a 9 heures et demie a Shola
 a la tete du caravan,nous n'avions trouve
 personne a notre rencontre...Come representant
 de la Reine je ne saurais oublier le respect
 qui est du a sa Majeste, et je prie votre
 Excellence de porter ce qui precede a la
 connaissance de l'Empereur Menelik.¹⁴

12

F.O. 403/255, Rodd to Salisbury, April 28,1897.

13

Ibid. See also Rodd, Memories, 2nd. Ser.

14

F.O. 403/255, Rodd to Salisbury, April 28,1897.

However, the fact was that the British mission was finally convinced, at the completion of the negotiations, that it had a wonderful reception and time while in Ethiopia than had the French delegation. Generally, Menelik welcomed most official delegations with full honours and in a manner becoming foreign envoys. He was convinced that whatever he did out of civility and respect would not be taken to be a sign of weakness and subservience to any power with which he was dealing. He also felt that graciousness and magnanimity towards one's guests was as much a diplomatic quality as it was a time tested Ethiopian cultural heritage on which Ethiopians pride themselves so much. Robert Peet Skinner, the first American Commissioner to Ethiopia between 1903 and 1904, was a recipient of such a royal welcome.

15

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Mission to King Menelik,' 1897, Rodd to Salisbury, Camp at Akaki, May 15, 1897, p.47-48.

16

"Before much progress had been made, a large escort of cavalry and foot soldiers could be discerned in the distance coming towards us. Dr. Pease, who had been the year before at Cairo, remarked that the gorgeous splendour of the procession which started with the sacred carpet to Mecca was as nothing compared to this. Our escorting column grew rapidly as we approached the city, so that before we reached the ravine, which seems to mark the entrance to the capital proper, we were preceded by an army of 3,000 men. They marched in most extraordinary confusion - surrounding their chiefs, suddenly performing some evolution, sometimes walking their horses and sometimes galloping.

The receptions at Menelik's palace were even more colourful, dignified and meticulous. He received every foreign mission with full honour - musical fanfare and gun salutes included. He entertained each delegation in a way becoming to the representatives of great nations from Europe and elsewhere. Even the members of the British delegation who at the time of their arrival had somewhat felt that they were being slighted, later on commented on Menelik's official receptions and dinners with favourable admiration. Gleichen, writing on one such special occasion, comments:

At 11 a.m. a large escort arrived to take us to the palace, and on arrival we found the Emperor seated on the dais, while on his right was a table laid for eight persons in European

One could readily comprehend that the disorder was aparent and not real, that at word of command these men could be controlled absolutely. No picture and no description can do justice to the beauty of the spectacle....Only the bright rifle barrels marked the difference between these Ethiopians and the army of their forebears who followed the Queen of Sheba when she went down into Judea. We were spellbound by this moving mass of colour across which floated the weird music of a band of shawm players, playing now as they played when Jericho fell. With the probable emotions of the Yankee at the Court of King Arthur, we approached the throne of the King of Kings. Robert Peet Skinner, Abyssinia of Today: An Account of the First Mission Sent by the American Government to the Court of the King of Kings (1903-1904), London, Edward Arnold, 1906, pp.75-76. Such descriptive accounts of welcoming ceremonies, palace receptions and religious functions abound in many of the books written on Menelik. The most striking aspect about these narrations regarding the above events is that almost all of them paint a colourful and somewhat exotic picture.

fashion, spotless tablecloth, and service of Sevres china, (17) bearing the Lion of Judah burned in colours. We were asked to seat ourselves at this table, and an excellent European luncheon was served... whilst Burgundy, very superior tej and powerful Araki circulated alternately. Meanwhile Menelik, seated on his dais...and surrounded by his courtiers, was being served in the usual Abyssinian fashion. A large ornamental basket containing the breads was placed on a small table in front of him, covered with a silk cloth, and beside him was placed a vase containing a bouquet of flowers.¹⁸

Both Rodd and Gleichen were surprised that at the end of this ~~sumptuous~~ dinner the group were invited by Menelik to smoke.

"His predecessor, the fanatical King John, had forbidden his people tobacco in any form, and a breach of his ukase was punished
¹⁹
by cutting off lips." Gleichen adds that "Menelik, without

17

This particular china set might perhaps be a present from Prince Henry d'Orleans of France: "Ce meme mois [April 1897] vit l'inauguration du telegraphe entre Harar et Entoto et la reception du Prince Henri d'Orleans, duc de Valois, voyageant en Abyssinie, a Addis-Ababa; le Prince offrit a l'Empereur un service de Sevres, armorie aux armes de Menelik II, qui sert aux dîners officiels offerts par le negoc aux Europeens notables, ministres, Consuls ou explorateur, auquels le chef des cuisines de l'Empereur, un Grec fort expert, sert des repas a la francaise, ou rien ne manque, ni l'argenterie ni le champagne," Morie, Histoire de l'Ethiopie, Vol.II, pp.445-446.

18

Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, pp.183-184; Rodd, Social and Diplomatic Memories, 2nd. ser., p.156.

19

Ibid

revoking his predecessor's ordinance, has suffered it to fall into abeyance; and although he never smokes himself, and does not encourage it, he is always most anxious that his European visitors should eat, drink, and smoke as they are accustomed to do in their own country."²⁰

In honouring European missions on such occasions Menelik gathered several people to dinner "by repeating the ceremony four times, upwards of two thousand individuals."²¹

20

Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, pp.184-185. Wylde contradicts both Rodd and Gleichen in this as in many other respects. "A lot of things have been published about King Yohannes' cruelty to smokers and to other people for petty crimes; these are all greatly exaggerated, and I never came across, in all my visits to Abyssinia, a single native that had been mutilated by the loss of nose suffering or lips for smoking, as was reported by the king's detractors....King Yohannes did not like the smell of tobacco, and he certainly had a right to prohibit its use to Europeans, and has repeatedly told them if they wished to smoke in his presence that they might. Some of them, I am sorry to say, had the bad taste to do so. They would not have dared to smoke or snuff in the presence of European royalty if these habits had been distastful at Court." Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, p.44.

21

Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, pp.185-186. Others who have either attended such grand style dinners or who have written about it differ on the number of invited guests. Rodd himself says "some 2000 in all, we were informed, would enjoy this hospitality." Memories, 2nd. ser. p.157; Montandon puts it at 5000, Au Pays Chimira, p.46; Vivian doubles the number and says "...10,000 Abyssinians are feasted with raw meat on grand occasions." Abyssinia, p.195; Merab raises the figure to 20,000: "Les convives se succedent par tournees de 2000 a 3000 hommes; et il y en a ainsi quatre ou cinq, plus rarement

The French, considering the reception accorded to the British mission as having been relatively minimal and by all counts less than what was offered to them, had openly arrogated themselves over the British whenever the occasion arose. That this was not the case, however, is countered by no less than Rodd, the leader of the British delegation:

Prince Henry in his letters to the 'New York Herald,' which I read in England, described the audience [Rodd's audience with Menelik] as short, correct, and cold. Others of his countrymen, however, received a different impression. In an interview with M. Jean Hess, published in the 'Figaro' some months afterwards, M. Bonvalot* said that the British Mission to Abyssinia had revealed to him the real superiority of method which had enabled Great Britain to become a great colonial nation, with other complimentary expressions which it is unnecessary to repeat.²²

Once foreign missions were in his Empire Menelik wanted to make sure that, in order to avoid all possibilities of risk and

six ou sept dans la journée. Les jours de petite affluence, il y a environ 10 ou 12,000 hommes qui sont servis," Impression d'Ethiopie, Vol. II, p.159.

*

Members of a French delegation to Menelik involved with the Fachoda mission.

22

Rodd, Memories, 2nd. ser., pp.151-152.

danger not only to his foreign guests but also to the the relationship that was beign established, all due respect and honour was to be given them in all their movements as guests²³ of the Empire, and that their safety and security was to be assured. Whenever the foreign envoys travelled he provided them with armed escorts and made official letters available, affixed with his great seal, for them to show for safe conduct and help as regards directions and food provisions. Those who disobeyed Menelik's instructions - he made it very²⁴ explicit in his letters - would be severly dealt with.

23

K.Hersbruch, (Abessinien, Leipzig,1925, p.127) says that the Emperor had given out orders to the extent that Ethiopians should, as is customarily done to the elderly and the respected in Ethiopia, descend from their mules when they meet a foreigner in the streets, as a sign of respect.

24

"I have the honour to report that Kanyasmach [Commander of the right wing in the Ethiopian army] Walda Gabriel has been brought here in chains as prisoner. As punishment for obstructing Major Austin's survey party [to fix borders] the whole of the Kanyasmach's property has been confiscated, and has been degraded. In addition, the Kanyasmach was publicly flogged in my presence this morning in the market place of Addis Ababa. Previous to his public punishment, public proclamation was made to the effect that the punishment was because this officer had disobeyed the King's orders in not receiving British Officers with the respect due to them and not helping them, and thereby had endangered the good relations existing between the King and the British Government. As an example to others the Kanyasmach is to be paraded in chains along the frontier." F.O. 1/37, Harrington to Salisbury, May 14,1900.

Menelik always thought of the leaders with whom he was dealing in endearing terms. As a token of his appreciation he sent out gifts to those whom he considered to be his friends and remembered them in their times of adversity as in their happiness. Thus, among many others, for instance, he presented to President Roosevelt "magnificent" elephant tusks and lion²⁵ cubs and a pair of "splendid" Grevy's Zebra to Queen Victoria.²⁶ He also remembered to send his congratulations and best wishes²⁷ to the Queen on the occasion of her birthday anniversary or the²⁸ celebration of her Diamond Jubilee. He equally remembered to send his condolences and made a wreath to be placed at the²⁹ tombe in the Pantheon when President Carnot of France died.

Menelik benefited from and counted on the goodwill of individual foreign diplomats and advisers in the accomplishment of his day to day activities and decisions. He held their

25

Richard Pankhurst, "Robert Skinner's Unpublished Account of the First American Diplomatic Expedition to Ethiopia," Ethiopia Observer, Vol.XIII, No.I, p.36.

26

F.O. 1/36, Harrington to Salisbury, May 18,1899.

27

F.O. 1/46, Harrington to Salisbury, May 26,1899.

28

F.O. 1/33, Menelik to Victoria, May 13,1897.

29

J.G.Vanderheyem, Une Expedition Avec le Negus Menelik, p.69.

advice and recommendations with esteem and in many instances counted on their knowledge and experience of international affairs. He sought their counsel and listened to their opinions on policies he was decided to make regarding relations with other countries. Men from whom he got advice were people like Antinori, Antonelli, Salimbeni, Lagarde, Harrington, Ciccodicola, Klobukowski, Hohler and many others, all capable diplomatic representatives of their respective countries at his court, and private counsellors like Ilg, Chefneax, Merab, Vitalien and so on. It should, at the outset, be admitted that the information and advice he obtained from these individuals was very helpful to Menelik. In the final analysis, however, he was his own decision-maker. In practical terms, Menelik did not tolerate people or advisers who made decisions for him. As regards decisions, Menelik must have said, as Charles De Gaulle a century later: "I listen to advice, but in the end I alone make the decisions."³⁰

With the exception of perhaps Ilg, whose role will be discussed in a subsequent stage, no particular foreign adviser was strong enough with Menelik to either influence, persuade or

30

Philippe Alexandre, The Duel, De Gaulle and Pompidou, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972, p.86. For a discussion of the decision-making process at the court of Menelik see chapter 8.

desuade decisions in foreign affairs. As essential as it is, this point should again be emphasized. When scrutinized within the context of the decision-making process, the role of these advisers on both the domestic and international levels was, however important, minimal if not limited. Writing on the role and influence of foreigners on Menelik as regards the location of his cities - an important national and military factor to be considered in Ethiopia - Ronald Horvath says: "One may read in the reports of travellers and political representatives of the role foreigners played in convincing Menelik of the need for stability. Much of this foreign conjecture can, however, be discussed as ethnocentrism. To be sure, Menelik listened to some foreigners, but one suspects that he largely ignored them."³¹

Many of the foreign residents in his capital, merchants, craftsmen, petty professionals and adventurers, also provided advice and expert opinion in some instances. Contrary to what is often ascribed to them and they ascribe to themselves they never had substantial weight or say on the formulation of major decisions. Richard Pankhurst comments that Ethiopia, retaining as she then did her own destiny and independence in her own hands, the role of foreigners as administrators or otherwise

31

Ronald J. Horvath, "The Wandering Capitals of Ethiopia," Journal of African History, X,2 (1969), p.215.

was nil when compared with the freehand such foreigners enjoyed in colonized Africa. "They were nonetheless required in the more humble capacity of advisers, experts, craftsmen and traders," he says, and regarded, even then "much more as employees or servants of the ruler" rather than "enjoying the prestige and influence" of their counterparts in other parts of Africa.³²

The extent to which foreigners had influence over Menelik, especially in the field of foreign policy, is found in a remarkable report by Harrington to the Foreign Office. After mentioning the predilections of his colleague, the Italian Minister Plenipotentiary at the court of Menelik - "who was suffering somewhat from swelled head" because his position was raised to the rank of Legation - the British Envoy regretted his presumptions:

I rather fancy he is beginning to believe he is all powerful with Menelik. I have no doubt, he will want a little holding till he realises what is his actual position....He will find like the rest of us that it is easy to influence Menelik when it suits the latter's book to be influenced. I have not yet seen that any of us have what I could really call influence, that is, influence that would make Menelik what he did not want to do. Influence to the detriment of others is plentiful here, but one's own advantage is decidedly infinitesimal.³³

32

Richard Pankhurst, "Menelik and the Utilisation of Foreign Skills in Ethiopia," Journal of Ethiopian Studies, Vol.V, 1,1967,p.29.

33

F.O. 1/40, Harrington to Boyle, March 27, 1902. [It should be noted that this was at about the decline of health and authority of Menelik.]

What were the main factors which brought Menelik in contact with the rest of the world and thus necessitated a foreign policy dependent, in many respects, on a diplomacy which tried to benefit from these very same factors? Broadly considered, these factors will fall under the following five main classifications.

1. Menelik's rise to power: This factor, briefly analysed in chapters one and two, had greatly contributed to bring about direct and indirect dialogue between Menelik and the powers. In his bid to wrest power and national prominence from Yohannes Menelik had effectively made use of the channel he was able to open with these powers. Menelik's main objective here was to secure for himself not only international recognition as a national leader but also to acquire arms and ammunition to solidify and stabilize the power he so gained. His diplomatic undertakings in this regard constitute the corner of his long term foreign policy.

2. The opening of the Suez Canal: More than any other factor in Ethiopian history, the coming into use of the Suez Canal in the second half of the nineteenth century has "opened up" Ethiopia to European influence and penetration. Relations between Ethiopia and the outside world prior to the reign of Theodros were relatively limited, essentially because of communication difficulties and inconveniences. The long period of time it took for letters, messengers and diplomatic missions

to reach the Ethiopian and European capitals was a great handicap. While there is no doubt it was instrumental in opening up Europe for some African countries, the Suez Canal was, on the other hand, one of the major objects of colonialist and imperialist strategies which had also put Africa, India and the Far East on the commanding palms of Europe. The Suez Canal, not only did it offer Europe the short cut to these relatively newer areas but also was crucially located in linking the different grand designs of the then colonial powers. It was nearer - and therefore practically useful - to the point at which the East-West and North-South European designs met on the African Continent.

Along the Canal the powers also wanted to acquire ports which they needed as coaling stations. Ethiopia, by the very fact that it was strategically placed at the very heart of this geographic centre, commanded, to some degree, the gateway to the Far East and also to this point of intersection. This geographic centre, in a way also controlled the entrance to the Sudan, Upper Egypt, the Nile and even some parts of Uganda and Kenya. This, as we shall see, was an important determinant
34
in the interplay of divergent interests in the area. In the

ensuing rivalry, Menelik's Ethiopia, both as a victim of international political circumstances and as an interested party in the developing situation, played a prominent and decisive role.

3. The Treaty of Wichalle: The period just a little before and after the denunciation of the Treaty of Wichalle witnessed an intensification of diplomatic and international activities by Menelik. It was necessitated by the fact that Menelik, pressured as he was by Italian expansionist ambitions, was required by equally pressing domestic factions and forces to dispel the myth disseminated by Italy that Ethiopia was now a protectorate. Apart from that period just after the Battle of Adwa in 1896 - which was marked for its richness in diplomatic interactions - the period in which the Treaty of Wichalle was conceived, negotiated and signed was definitely the stage in which Menelik established his meaningful contacts with European and other powers.

and its control over the Nile waters] in regard to the natural geography of Ethiopia as he studies the chain of events which brought Europe into African relationships. From the building of the Suez Canal, all those countries having interest in India and the Far East sought to find stations along the route thither. Elsewhere along the route all available territory had been taken up and Ethiopia offered the most desirable points to be had." Work, Ethiopia: A Pawn in European Diplomacy, pp.10-11.

35

4. European rivalry: European rivalry in the region, even though in the process before 1896, takes shape and intensity after the Battle of Adwa. The colonial powers were more than determined to achieve their grand designs, and countries lying on the crossroads or within the periphery of these designs were to become victims of the scramble. As a result, Menelik's court was to become a place of rendez-vous by those powers who sought to use his newly acquired international stature and reputation for an eventual rearrangement of the dynamics of the balance of power of the area. In view of the newly established international order in the region, Menelik was initially looked after as a neutral 'balancer.' However, he himself ended up by becoming an active contender to and determinant of power in the region. Extending for well over two decades, the latter part of this period witnessed the climax of his political and diplomatic activities. It is a period, in short, in which in time, his foreign policy had considerably mellowed and acquired definite depth and meaningfulness in advancing the national interest.

 35

A very important phase in the development of Menelikian diplomacy, this interesting and at times intricate international drama will be discussed in chapter five .

5. Modernization: Next to his main preoccupation of advancing a foreign policy based on the maintainance of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia, this is one important factor which had engaged Menelik to a considerable extent with European and other powers. His efforts to modernize Ethiopia, (ranging from the introduction of running water, electricity and the motor car to the construction of hospitals, the establishment of a system of posts, telegraph and telephone, a national currency, banks, the introduction of a railway linking the port of Djibouti on the Red Sea coast with his capital, and the institution of a relatively modern system of governmental bureaucracy), are some of the important milestones in the history of the Empire. In this regard, credit

36

This is a central and recurring factor in the study of the reign of Menelik. It is also recognized that it is an important factor in the understanding of the functioning of the relatively complex government machinery instituted by Menelik. This is a topic deserving a thorough research. However, in as much as the subject does not have a direct bearing on the present research an attempt is not made in any of the chapters to look at it in detail and in its entirety.

37

For a detailed and useful expose to the extent of which Menelik made use of foreigners to introduce modern inovations into Ethiopia see Pankhurst, "Menelik and the Utilization of Foreign Skills in Ethiopia," Journal of Ethiopian Studies, Vol. V, 1,1967,pp.29-86. The following authors also provide an insight on Menelik's keen interest and efforts directed towards modernization: Hugue le Roux, Menelik et Nous; Michel, Vers Fachoda;

is due to his farsighted open door policy by which he was willing to involve foreigners in the introduction of modern concepts into what was for long considered the "closed" Empire of Ethiopia.

Some of the salient and pertinent aspects of the relationships which were established between Menelik and the powers in question will be discussed briefly at a latter stage. Before doing so, however, it is essential to also briefly touch upon the major aspects of the European relationships as they affected the constituted international order of the time, and essentially, in as much as these relationships had a direct bearing on the powers' interests in Ethiopia. The main actors in the interaction comprise of Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia, and other minor ones such as Belgium, Austria and Turkey. A basically not so different but yet equally important set of interactions we will be considering is the one which, with the active cooperation and involvement of the above actors, was being played by Egypt, Mahdist Sudan and the then dependencies of Djibouti, British and Italian Somalilands.

As already indicated, Menelik's contacts with Europe were

Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik; Halle, To Menelik with a Motor Car; Skinner, Abyssinia; Vivian, Abyssinia; Wylde, Modern Abyssinia.

being strengthened at a time when time itself was an important factor working against Ethiopia and Ethiopian survival. Europe, for long feuding within itself, was, at the close of 1870, seeking to acquire its own power balance and make its own peace at the Berlin Congress. The Congress, much deprived as it was of elements which could evenly and equally satisfy the territorial demands of individual European countries, had to limit itself to the role of simply whetting their appetites by evoking future possibilities in the yet to be colonized countries. In the long run, this was the stage which opened newer perspectives for colonial ventures abroad, and which on the other hand, weakened the position of other nationalist leaders such as Menelik and Kalifa-el-Mahdi. By so doing, Europe had partially settled its own problems and differences. Bismarck, the one European leader who strongly advocated that the "semi-barbarous" peoples elsewhere were not worth an ounce of blood to be spilt in the continent was finally proven to be a persuasive leader when a general consensus was reached based on his proposals. Langer writes that "the preservation of peace among the great powers was the primary consideration, and this, he [Bismarck] believed, could be best attained by a policy of reciprocal compensation for all concerned." ³⁸ Disraeli had also convinced himself to join

Bismarck's bandwagon. To desuade Queen Victoria from considering other decisions on the colonial issue he had written to her from Berlin that "a policy of partition is very simple, and does not
39
require much genius to devise."

Bismarck, now an established power-broker in the European scene, had long suggested that the settlement of some of the differences existing among the European countries could be effectuated at the expense of Turkey, and that the French could
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be appeased by letting Tunis slip into their hands. So also had Salisbury indicated this to the French Foreign Minister:
41
"You cannot leave Carthage in the hands of the barbarians."
It is to be remembered that Tunis was also the 'piece de resistance' served to Italy both by Austria and Russia if Italy was to conform to Austria's possession over Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is reported that in explaining British advances to France regarding Tunis, the British Foreign Minister simply

39

Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria, II, p.608.

40

Langer, European Alliances, p.160.

41

Langer, "The European Powers and the French Occupation of Tunis," 1878-1881, American Historical Review, XXXL, October, 1925, pp.55-78.

replied that "the Mediterranean was large enough for all."⁴²
Italy, however, was not to get Tunis. To satisfy it, Tripoli
was suggested instead as a possible compromise.

It is often commented that the Berlin Congress resembled
much of a comic opera than an international conference where
the participants "have never been clear who offered what to
whom" and that "a great deal of offering of other people's
property took place." According to Count Corti, the then Italian
Foreign Minister and delegate to the Congress, "everybody was
telling everybody else to take something which belonged to
somebody else."⁴³ However, while the rest of the European powers
reached their capitals happy and reasonably content with their
shares of the spoil, the Italian delegation was the only one
which did not make a triumphant entry into an eagerly and
anxiously awaiting Rome. The die was cast. At least for Italy,
the road that it was going to trod for the following few years
was already ominously set.

In the final analysis the beneficiaries from this European
pandemonium were Britain and France in that the "open sesame"
pronounced at Berlin had already prepared for them the way to

42
Langer, European Alliances, p.160.

43
Charles Dilke, Europe in 1887, London, p.27.

other adventures in Africa and the Far East. Especially Britain's
44
gains were enormous.

Again, in a much similar vein, the strengthening of the European alliance was repeated some years later nowhere else than in Berlin in 1885. At the Berlin Conference, through what is now generally referred to as the General Act of Berlin, the
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powers arranged the partition of Africa among themselves.

Both meetings at Berlin were sure signs of European arrogance and greed ushering in a new era in which statesmen were indifferent, and in many respects insensitive, to the right of existence of nations. The stipulations of these meetings were sheer exercises

44

"The association of Disraeli and Salisbury proved to be one of the most fortunate in the history of British diplomacy, for the one supplied the vision and energy, while the other conducted the actual negotiations with the greatest good sense and the finest appreciation of the value of compromise. Russia could have hardly been more effectively checked even by war. The Turkish Empire in Europe had been preserved as a viable factor in the international situation while the huge Bulgaria of San Stefano had been pushed back over the Balkans. What gains Russia had made in Asia minor had been counterbalanced by the revived alliance of England with Turkey and by the establishment of British control, first in the Suez Canal, and in the island of Cyprus. The British route to the East was more effectively secured than could have been expected, and the British position in the Mediterranean was stronger than it had ever been since the time of Napoleon III and the construction of the Canal at Suez. In the broader sense England had once more appeared as a decisive force in continental affairs and had made clear to the powers that she still valued her European position in spite of her larger world interests."
Langer, European Alliances, p.162.

45

For treaty see Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, Vol.II,

in human vanity committed against peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America. But in the words of Langer it was a "pardonable ignorance."

To attribute [its] provisions to the blindness of ill will of the statesmen assembled at Berlin would, however, be puerile. They could hardly be expected to understand the working of the spirit of nationality in a region which was all but unknown. The very name 'Bulgaria' was practically unheard of in Europe prior to 1875, and few experienced travellers had a direct acquaintance with the conditions existing in the fastness of the mountains. Excepting for the people of the Gladstonian persuasion of England, there were not many persons who were moved by the plea of Christian suffering.⁴⁶

However, it is very hard to readily agree with Langer and affirm such a sweeping and generalized apologia. It is understandable, yet a sad commentary, that modern research is not yet ready to openly admit guilt but, on the other hand, willing to echo Europe's own 'mea culpa' on its colonial records. One thing is certainly true. It could not be said that the period in question was one of honey and milk. It was in fact a period of sad and sordid experiences in which most colonized nations

pp.468-486. For further details see also Langer, European Alliances, pp.297-309; R.B.Mowat, A History of European Diplomacy 1815-1914, pp.255-260; Lois A.C.Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo-Dream, p.242 ff; Work, Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy, pp.30-50.

languished for long in bondage, some just survived and many fought and died in fierce battle fields and stood up in victory.

This, generally speaking, was the over all situation during which Menelik was trying to establish relationships with Europe and the rest of the world. The irony of it is that he wished to do it by consistently evoking Christian principles to Christian Europe. Later on, for Menelik to have so ably extracted such help and considerable cooperation from the Europe he faced eyeball to eyeball and firmly, and ultimately to have proved himself capable of effectively manipulating European rivalries and differences to his own advantage, clearly demonstrates the political genius in him. It was at about the same time the European powers of the Berlin Congress were subjecting the "semi-barbarous" Turks and Balkans to sub-human treatments that Menelik was dealing and negotiating the Treaty of Wichalle with Italy on an equal basis. Later on, failing to make peace with a negotiated treaty he asserted himself and his country's independence at the Battle of Adwa.

As we shall attempt to show in another chapter, the ever-shifting balance of power during the late nineteenth century did not allow the European countries the relative luxury of accomplishing their political goals the way each wanted it. All of them had contradictory objectives.

For almost a decade, between the years 1885 and 1896, the pattern of alignment over Ethiopia, in particular, and Africa, in general, was unusually curious and at times verging on comedy. It was mostly based on a lustful policy of 'quid pro quo' of trying to satisfy one's political appetite by tactfully resorting to protracted manipulations of give and take. Broken down to its conceptual tenets and simplification the alignment which formed itself over Ethiopia found, through a combination of

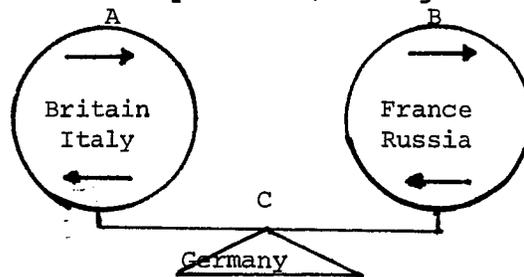


Fig.1: Arrow indicates reaction of one system to the other. several political and economic factors, Britain and Italy (A) in one camp while it grouped France and Russia (B) on the other. Apart from achieving their own respective ends, none of these countries within A and B in the figure above had so much in common which could reasonably bind them together. In fact, unbridgeable differences existed within each camp. However, these differences were often times down played until they surfaced of themselves and erupted into serious problems. The arbiter in the middle was Germany (C) which, ever since the advent of the Bismarckian European policy, was the power broker in European affairs.

Britain and Italy were united in the furtherance of a concerted colonial policy in most part of North and East Africa, and this alliance was being actively challenged and undermined by France and supported by Russia. It is to be remembered that Anglo-Italian cooperation in North and East Africa commenced at about 1885 when Britain was instrumental in ceding Egyptian holdings over Massawa to Italy.

Part of the reason why Britain was a willing partner in the occupation of Massawa by Italy is explained by the fact that Britain was then fearful of French aggression on British interests in the area and that Italy, the weaker of the two, was therefore an acceptable partner. That this was so is explained by the innumerable dispatches from Cairo to London pressing Lord Granville that French intentions in North and East Africa were not to be trusted. The British diplomatic and Consular officers in Egypt, especially Lord Cromer, held such a strong view that Granville was not allowed other options but to sanction the

47

James Linus Glanville, Italy's Relations with England, 1896-1905, p.23; Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, pp.108-109; Des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, p.179; Work, Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.58; 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik, September, 1897, Rodd to Salisbury, June 22, 1897, p.61; Rodd, Memories, ser., 2; Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.4; Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, p.39; Cromer, Modern Egypt, Vol.II, p.55; Francesco Crispi, Les Politiques d'Expansion, p.134; Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.7-11; Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, p.422. See also pp.68-72 of this paper.

48

occupation of Massawa by Italy.

In the 1890s, in order to facilitate each other's task of annexing territories in East Africa, both Britain and Italy were actively engaged in discussions and negotiations. Italian drive from the Red Sea coast to Eritrea and into the Ethiopian highlands was being undertaken with the tacit understanding of Britain, and this fact was recognized by the Anglo-Italian Protocols of March 24 and April 15, 1891. The Protocol of March 24, 1891 extended the limit of Italian sphere of influence as far south as the mouth of River Juba, approximately 0° latitude on the Indian Ocean. To the West, the same sphere was bounded by a line drawn north-south on 35° East meridian East Greenwich up to the Blue Nile. The Protocol of April 15, 1891, delimited the remaining limits of their respective boundaries thereby completing their spheres of influence from the north. This line begins from Ras Kaser on the Red Sea at 18° latitude and follows a west southerly direction to join the western boundary limit of

48

Cromer, Modern Egypt, II, p.57 ff; Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, Life of the Second Earl Granville, Vol.II, 1906, pp.437-439.

49

For details see chapters 4 and 5.

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Doc. Dipl., 1890-91 XVII, p.5; Parliamentary Papers, Vol.96, No. I, 1891; Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, 3rd. ed., Vol.III, p.948; Archives Diplomatiques, Vol.XXXVIII, p.259; Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.119-120.

51

the Protocol of March 24 on the Blue Nile. Thus, the two
 protocoles granted Italy what is now present day Eritrea,
 Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland. To further complete the
 delimitation and consolidate their spheres of influence in
 Eastern Africa, Britain and Italy concluded yet another protocol
 on May 5, 1894 reaffirming the extent of their territorial limits
 52
 in that part of Africa. As a result of British cooperation
 Italy also acquired Benadir, at about the same time, from the
 53
 Sultan of Zanzibar. In a way, this substantial gain in
 East Africa made up for the loses Italy sustained at the
 Conference table in Berlin in 1878, and it was surely a dream
 come true.

54

British-Italian cooperation, however, was not all roses
 during this period. The main differences centred around British
 suspicion of Italian intentions regarding the Eritrean-Sudanese

51
 Doc.Dipl., 1890-91 XVIII, p.6; Parliamentary Papers, Vol.96, No.I,
 1891; Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, 3rd. ed., Vol.III, p.949;
 Archives Diplomatiques, Vol.XXXVIII, p.259; Rossetti, Storia
 Diplomatica, pp.120-122.

52
 Doc.Dipl., XIII, p.280; Parliamentary Papers, Vol.96, No.17,
 May 1894; Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, 3rd. ed., Vol.III,
 p.951; Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.122-124.

53
 Rodd, Memories, ser.1, p.308.

54
 Glanville, Italy's Relations with England, p.24.

border, the question of the cessation of the strategic town of Kessela to Italy, and British hesitation, because of French pressure, to allow the port city of Zeila to be an Italian garrison in order to supply and fortify Baratieri's army from the south in its war of conquest against Ethiopia. In 1885, in an attempt to check possible Mahdist incursions into the territory it was trying to colonize, and to undermine whatever little possibility there existed for the Mahdi to strengthen the hands of Ethiopian leaders, Italy wanted to control Kessela. Even though Kessela was then consistently attacked by the Dervishes, Lord Granville did not allow Italy to relieve Kessela. Again, in 1890, when Crispi requested to make use of Kessela for his war efforts with Menelik, Lord Cromer, the British Envoy in Cairo, made the temporariness of its use very clear by emphasizing that should Italy be compelled to occupy the town it must pledge that it would eventually restore it to Egypt after such usage.

The personality of Crispi had a lot to do in widening the gap in British-Italian differences and in increasing the suspicion about Italy's intentions in Britain. Until his fall in January 1891, negotiations concerning the delimitation of British-Italian spheres of influence in East Africa were suspended.

It was his successor, Rudini, who revived the negotiations and restored confidence in both sides. Rudini did so by meeting several of Britain's demands, including the conceding of Kisimayu, in the Protocol of March 24, 1891, and by accepting Cromer's demands regarding the use of Kessela by Italy.⁵⁶

In December 1893, when Crispi made a come back to power,⁵⁷ British suspicion was revived. Crispi had immediately commenced to attack Kessela thereby arousing furor in some quarters in Britain. Even though Rudini's pledges and assurances were being repeatedly given by the Crispi Government, it did not gather momentum to allay British fears and suspicions as regards Crispi's colonial ambition over British interests.

Between 1890 and 1896, Britain and Italy had also been at odds about other significant and important matters. During the same period, for instance, Lord Salisbury had ignored and in fact given no consideration to Italian protests over French fortifications of Biserta;⁵⁸ refused to recognize Italian occupation

56

Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, Vol. III, pp. 948-950.

57

Glanville, Italy's Relations with England, p. 25.

58

Palamenghi-Crispi, The Memoirs of Francesco Crispi, (Translated by Mary Prichard Agnetti), New York & London, 1912-1914, Vol. III, Chapter 3.

of Tripoli; and wounded Italian 'amour propre' - given Italian desire towards Lake Tchad - by allowing the "light land" of the Sahara slip into French hands. The most important factor which demonstrated the artificiality and the unworkability of the British-Italian alliance is the fact that, even though both powers seemed united in their efforts in Africa, Salisbury and Crispi were not able to come to an agreement regarding the Dervishes.

The most damaging 'coup de main' to Italian pride, however, was Britain's hesitance to let Italy acquire a right over Zeila, especially at a time of its greatest need in its colonialist adventures. To make things worse, Salisbury even suggested that the Quai d'Orsay should first be consulted on the matter before allowing Italy to use Zeila as a base of operations against Menelik. Crispi, nevertheless, was a suave and calculating politician. He knew very well that France was a decisive factor in the whole affair and that he should not antagonize it openly. He had realized, for some time now, that

59

Crispi, La Prima Guerra d'Africa, pp.280-283; 310-320.

60

For British-Italian negotiations and discussions over Zeila, see GDD, Vol.9, pp.282-283; Vol.10, p.54; pp.76-81;90-91; Vol.11, pp.5-6; 44-45;153-156;176; DDF, 1st.ser., Vol.12, No.99, p.130, No.240; pp. 353-355, No.245, pp.365-366; F.O. 403/221, Lord Hamilton to the Viceroy of India, December 13,1895.

in as long as France was hostile to his approaches with London he could not possibly be successful with England and Germany. "For that reason," says Glanville, "whatever anger he felt did not show itself seriously in his conduct of foreign affairs."⁶¹ In sum, a decade of experience had shown the basic weaknesses inherent in the Anglo-Italian alliance. To Britain, Crispi's Empire was, in the words of Salisbury, a "negligible quantity," and in all probabilities, a rich and strong England had little use of "poor and backward" Italy.⁶²

On the other hand, the alliance between France and Russia over Ethiopia especially and Africa generally depended on the same 'raison d'etre' on which the delicate Anglo-Italian entente was beign . based. . . . It was developed to constitute, primarily, a counterbalancing force against the Anglo-Italian alliance in East Africa. According to Czeslaw Jesman France also "regarded Franco-Russian alliance...as the condition of her survival as a great power in the face of the growing German menace." He adds, "Russia was equally determined to maintain good relations with France."⁶³ Between 1880 and the early 1890s, therefore, Franco-Russian diplomatic activities as concerns Ethiopia, the

61
Glanville, Italy's Relations With England, p.28

62
Francesco Nitti, The Wealth of Italy, Rome, 1907.

63
Czeslaw Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.80.

Red Sea and East Africa were greatly enhanced and strengthened. The French had established themselves in Ethiopia and the Red Sea area much earlier than the Russians. France, even though suspicious of repeatedly advanced Russian religious and cultural affinities with ancient Ethiopia had nevertheless given strict instructions to its colonial officials in the Red Sea area from Alexandria to Zeila to act as friendly hosts to newly arriving Russian emissaries headed to the court of Menelik.

It was in 1889 that official Russian reconnaissance missions were being sent out to Ethiopia for the first time under the pretext of representing the Russian Orthodox Church and other scholastic institutions such as the Russian Geographical Society. This approach, it may be remembered, was also used by Italy in its initial penetration attempts into Ethiopia. Even though there were one or two other Russians who have done so under official blessing Lieutenant Vasili Fedorovich Mashkov from the Imperial Russian Guards seems to be the very first to have been sent out to Ethiopia, once in October 1889 and the other time in April 1891 under the sponsorship of the 'Societe de Geographie de Petersbourg' and with

64

See pp.96-98. See also Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.82.

65

full cognizance and support of the Russian Imperial court.

What is most revealing as regards the hostility between the Anglo-Italian and Franco-Russian camps is that according to Jesman "the official character of the [Mashkov] mission was so well known that the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria refused to receive it for fear of giving umbrage to the Egyptian, Turkish and British authorities." From Alexandria on, however, the Russian mission headed by Mashkov "travelled under French flag" being accorded full hospitality at Obock and given French military escort while crossing the French territory to Menelik's Empire.

66

A second mission led by Captain A.F.Eliseiv left Odessa in January 1895. While Italy attempted to thwart the purposes of the mission in cooperation with Britain the French were unperturbed in providing every assistance to the Russian guests.

The French were just as cooperative as they had been with Mashkov, and the S.S. Amazone once again provided transport from Port Said to Djibouti, where the Russians were received by Lagarde, the governor, as the honoured guests of France....Their caravan was equipped and provisioned for thirty days' journey largely

65

DDF, 1st. ser., Vol.8, No.267. In No.332 of same volume it is suggested by the French Charge d'Affaires in London that it was perhaps Mashkov's mission to Menelik which had contributed to accelerate the conclusion of the Anglo-Italian agreements of March-April 1891 as regards their respective spheres of influence in Ethiopia.

66

Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, pp.82-83.

free of charge, and an escort of sixty soldiers was provided to see them safely through the Danakil desert, where it was rumored that the nomads, enticed by Italian gold, would attack them.⁶⁷

The Russian mission that was sent to the court of Menelik was reciprocated in June by an Ethiopian mission to the Russian court at St. Petersburg. As if to emphasize French-Russian interest in Ethiopia, the French Ambassador in St. Petersburg was present in most ceremonies held in the mission's honour. What is even revealing is that when Vlassov, the first Russian diplomatic Envoy, was sent to the court of Menelik, the instructions he carried with him were, apart from establishing good relations with Emperor Menelik and the two Churches of Ethiopia and Russia, to do his utmost and "to oppose, in conjunction with the French, any extention of British or Italian influence

⁶⁷
Ibid., p.85.

⁶⁸
Guebre-Selassie, Chronique du Menelik, p.245.

⁶⁹
Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.86.

⁷⁰
Vlassov, at the time Consul General in Persia, headed the first diplomatic mission to Menelik and stayed at his court for two years. See F.O. 1/37, Harrington to Salisbury, February 24, 1900. See also DDF, Vol.13, No.386, p.647 (Notes 2 & 3); Vol.14, No.104, p.190.

71
in East Africa."

France, as did Russia, emphasized from the outset that both countries had a common understanding regarding Ethiopia and East Africa. Especially regarding Ethiopia, both pledged that they will collaborate to respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. They also pledged that they will try to stand united against any attempt by Britain and Italy to undermine Ethiopia's independence. To diplomatic and political strategists at the Quai d'Orsay, the existence of a strong and independent Ethiopia in the area was considered to be an important factor. It was felt that the absence of such a balancing "power" in the region might tip off the existing balance in favour of Britain and Italy. After March 1896, even though Italy was defeated by Menelik at Adwa France still feared Italian intentions in the region and held to an official posture of constantly alerting Russia to the dangers of political neutrality or inactivity.

About six months after the events of Adwa the Russian Tsar was in Paris for an official visit. Among other things, he came to an understanding with France concerning the advancement and safeguarding of their mutual interests in East Africa.

71
Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.91.

Gabriel Hanotaux's note of October 14, 1896 emphasizes this understanding.

Nous avons ete amenes ainsi a parler de l'Abyssinie et de Menelik. Il a ete entendu que nos deux diplomatie feraient en commun les plus serieux efforts pour s'attacher Menelik. Nous avons pense qu'il y avait interet a tacher de hater le plus possible la paix avec l'Italie, pour nous laisser a l'egard de Menelik toute liberte d'action. Nous avons envisage l'hypothese de l'envoi simultane d'une mission francaise et d'une mission russe aupres de Menelik.⁷²

73

In 1891, a Franco-Russian convention was signed in which it was agreed that the two countries would closely cooperate in the promotion of each other's interest in the region. It was mostly as a result of and based on the spirit of this agreement that Russia, at the occasion of the signing of the Anglo-Italian agreement of May 5, 1894 which defined their over all spheres of influence in East Africa, protested to the two powers. Russia did this mainly to please and also to render moral support to France. France, it is to be remembered, had entered into an agreement with Britain in February 1888, regarding the respective rights of the two powers in the gulf of Tadjoura and

72

DDF. 1st. ser., Vol.12, No.474, p.789; Vol.13, No.16, pp.30-31.

73

The final agreement was signed in Paris in 1893.

the Somali coast. It was stipulated in Articles 4 and 5 of the agreement that (a) the two Governments would engage not to endeavour to annex Harar, not to place it under their protectorate, and that in taking this engagement the two Governments were not renouncing the right of opposing attempts by any other power to acquire or assert any rights over Harar; and (b) it was expressly agreed that the caravan road from Zeila to Harar, by way of Gildessa, should remain open in its entire extent to the commerce of the two nations as well as to that of the natives. However, an important and strategically placed commercial centre linking the Red Sea ports of Obock and Zeila with Menelik' capital - Harar - was defined in the May 5, 1894 Anglo-Italian Agreement as lying within Italy's sphere of influence. To France this was a violation of the spirit and understanding of the agreement of 1888. In the great European scramble in this part of Africa, Harar had been an important and crucial point of departure as were Timbuktu, Alexandria and Mombasa to West, North and East Africa respectively. This was why Menelik, aware as he was of the active games played

*
See map, p.376.

73
Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.35-39.

74
Regarding French protests to Britain on the basis of the Anglo-French Agreement of 1888 see DDF. 1st.ser., Vol.II, No.150, p.225;

by his European counterparts, emphasized the political and economic importance of the city by stationing Ras Mekonnen, the able and trusted diplomat of distinction, in the eastern province of Hararghe.

75

There was one point, though, which the four powers shared in common. They all had a mission to fulfill. It was a grandiose dream of possessing either all or part of Africa through an East-West, North-South pincer-like movement, or failing this, controlling important gateways and waterways to Africa through protracted agreements and concessions. It was in their endeavours to accomplish this goal that, of necessity, they clashed among themselves and ended up to be rivals in earnest.

Even within the confines of the capital city of Menelik, the distinction between the two camps was readily recognizable to the least politically minded travellers and adventurers of the time. Vivian records: "The various European Legations divided themselves into two camps, French and Russian against English and Italians, and concern themselves with little else than political intrigue." Vivian advised the British public

76

Nos. 112, 113, pp.174-175; No.116, p.181. Britain's replies to above protests, *Ibid.*, No.121 (Annexes 1 & 2); No.341, p.533.

75

Harar, an important political and economic centre in Menelikian diplomacy, was annexed by him in 1887.

76

Vivian, Abyssinia, (Negro University Press, New York, 1969, p.182).

that so long as Menelik maintained his present friendly relations with France and Russia by resisting the beguilements with which these powers sought to lure him on the verge of an abyss, "we can afford to leave him alone."⁷⁷

The role of Germany in the European rivalry over Ethiopia was that of a moderator and a neutral arbiter. Hanotaux, commenting on this particular German role in his book 'Le Partage de l'Afrique,' notes, "L'Allemagne assista sans déplaisir aux difficultés franco-anglaise. Ce fut, pour Bismarck et ses successeur, un instrument de regne. En se portant tantot d'un cote, tanto de l'autre il faisaient pencher la balance." According to Hanotaux, the German policy was not successful because, he maintains, both France and Britain were able to extend their colonial empire despite Germany's attempt to thwart it in very many difficult ways. As Germany's main desire at the moment was the keeping of the peace of Europe at any cost, it both supported and condemned Italian war efforts and British hesitance in Ethiopia. It seemed as if Germany was attempting to trace a middle of the road policy trying both to please and warn the European powers who were committed to the achievement of their respective objectives in Africa at any cost. For instance, the German Government was most reluctant and very cautious not to push Italy into a

77

Ibid., p.248.

dangerously adventurous and disasterous war with Ethiopia. Bernard Bullow, the German Ambassador in Rome, reporting to his Chancellor on July 15, 1895 points out:

Le Baron Blanc [Italian Foreign Minister] ne doute pas, au fond, de notre bienveillance envers l'Italie. J'ai profite de toutes les occasions pour recommander, non seulement au baron Blanc, mais aussi a M. Crispi et a sa Majeste le Roi Humbert, la prudence et la moderation dans le nord-est africain comme une condition prealable de tout le reste.⁷⁸

In a letter the Chancellor addressed to Bullow on February 15, he stressed that Italian penetration into Abyssinia actually constituted "an act of aggression" and that it posed a danger to the Triple Alliance.

M. Crispi a laisse entendre qu'il esperait qu'avec le temps la Triplice et particulierement l'Allemagne se chargerait de defendre a Paris les interets italiens compromis....La Triplice est un "pacte conservatoire" et non une societe d'acquisition. La penetration des italiens dans cette partie de l'Abyssinie qui est masque sous le vieux nom de l'Erythree, constitue un acte d'agression et par consequent ne rentre pas positivement dans les cas prevus par la traite de la Triplice....Il y a un point sur lequel nous sommes d'accord avec le Cabinet de Londres: c'est que la question d'Abyssinie, telle qu'elle s'est developpee et embrouillee, constitue maintenant un danger de guerre pour l'Europe (l'Angleterre exceptee).⁷⁹

GDD, Bullow to Hohenlohe, Vol.10, p.78. See also Vol.11, p.46. In a much more stern note of February 13, 1896 of Prince de Hohenlohe, the Chancellor, we find the following remarks: "L'entretien avec l'Ambassadeur d'Italie a eu lieu aujourd'hui conformement aux notes. J'ai expose a l'Ambassadeur les consequences que pourrait avoir une penetration plus grande en Abyssinie, et les dangers qui en pourraient resulter pour la paix europeene. Une guerre maritime de l'Italie avec la Russie et la France, a cause de l'Abyssinie, ne constituerait pas pour la Triplice un 'casus foederis.'" GDD, Vol.11, p.153.

In the meantime, the ambivalence of the German Government on the situation is reflected in its political manoeuvrings by which, as early as 1895, its worries were imparted to Britain regarding its reluctance to allow General Baratieri to make use of the strategic port of Zeila on the Red Sea, especially after the crucial defeat of the Italian army by Menelik at Amba Alage⁸⁰ in December 1895. At about the same time, it was also applying pressure on France not to give arms and financial assistance to Menelik.

Menelik had inherited very little by way of good will from past Ethiopian relations with monarchs in Europe. We have noted in two previous chapters that the relation of former Ethiopian Kings with Europe was minimal . This is simply because, what is now called isolationist Ethiopia was then being effectively blocked from the rest of the world by hostile neighbours and their friends so that it might not gain substantial strength from such contacts. In order to attempt some generalizations in the following chapters, a rough contour of Menelik's past diplomatic heritages will be provided below. In doing so, the emphasis will be on the relations which existed between Ethiopia and the principal actors in Europe which, later on, were either to establish closer ties or come into confrontation with

79

Ibid., pp.154-155.

80

Ibid., pp.5-6.

81

1. Ethiopia and France: Of the official relations between Ethiopia and France nothing substantial is recorded before 1843 when King Sahle-Selassie, the King of Shoa, and grandfather of Menelik, concluded a treaty of friendship and commerce with Louis Philippe of France. However, the interest of French travellers in Ethiopia had been such that we find that unofficial contacts between the two countries existed even during the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV. Castonnet des Fosses says many a French man had visited Ethiopia during the reign of these monarchs and given France and the rest of the world ample information on the

82

country. Castonnet des Fosses lamented at the time of his writing - 1897 - that these ancient relations with Ethiopia were

83

forgotten.

Castonnet des Fosses and De Caix de Saint-Aymour even speak of an Ethiopian playboy prince, who, by frequenting the company of wives of parliamentarians and the most distinguished ladies of Paris, had contributed to publicize his native land among the

84

French. In time, the prince also turned out to be a constant

81

Ethiopian-French relations attained their climax during Menelik's reign. For a fuller discussion of these relations see chapter 5.

82

Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et le Italiens, p.303. "Plusiers des nos compatriotes ont des cette epoque, visite l'Abyssinie ou nous ont donne a son sujet de nombreux et curieux renseignements."

83

Ibid., "Aujourd'hui, toutes ces anciennes relations avec

frequenter of the French court and the ~~Chateaux~~ of Cardinal Richelieu at Rueil, where, we are told, the prince died in 1638 and was burried in the same village church. Renowned French authors and playwrights had composed epigrammes, sonnets and comedies about the exploits of the Ethiopian prince. Whether Zaga-Christos, as he was called, was an authentic Ethiopian prince or an imposter, one cannot say for sure. However, one thing is true. During this particular period there was some sort of contact between Ethiopia and France. The epitaph on Zaga-Christos' tombe read:

Ci-git le roi d'Ethiopie,
L'original ou le copie.
Le fut-il? Ne fut-il pas?
La mort a fini les debats.⁸⁵

In subsequent years, before relations between Ethiopia and France were strengthened on an official basis, travellers - especially missionaries - were instrumental in bringing about a slow but sure rapport between the two countries. More than any other sovereign before him, Louis XIV encouraged the Catholic Church to embark on such endeavours. In 1702, an Ethiopian delegation was sent to the court of Louis XIV. The delegation, however, had accomplished nothing substantial. Nonetheless, the

84

Ibid., pp.307-310; De Caix de Saint-Aymour, Histoire des Relations de la France avec l'Abyssinie Chretienne (1634-1706), pp.27-64.

85

Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, "Here lies the king of Ethiopia, / The original or the imposter. Was he or was he not? / Death has closed the debate." [A literal translation], p.309.

circumstances surrounding the meetings between the Ethiopian and French delegates at Versailles gave rise to speculations⁸⁶ that Ethiopia was now "opening " its doors to France. These speculations also inspired Petis de la Croix to produce two⁸⁷ manuscripts entitled "Geographie de l'Ethiopie."

Later on, in 1704, the Ethiopian mission to France was to be reciprocated by a French mission which was to visit the court of the Ethiopian King. However, Du Roule, the then French Vice Consul in Damietta and the leader of the French mission, did not reach the Ethiopian court as he and his party were killed at Sennar on the Upper Nile on the way to Ethiopia, Some considerable time elapsed between the Du Roule mission and the establishment of relations between the two countries.

Before the Scottish traveller James Bruce brought about newer and fresh information to Europe concerning Ethiopia, some other French religious orders such as the Capucins, the Franciscans and the Jesuits had also tried to establish themselves in Ethiopia. However, following Bruce at the end of the century, a host of

86

Ibid., p.316.

87

Castonnet des Fosses says that at the time of his writing the two manuscripts were not yet published but that they were available at the 'Biblioteque Nationale.' He indicates the preface to one of the manuscripts was dedicated to the confessor of Louis XIV while the other was to the King himself. p.317.

other travellers and adventurers converged on the Ethiopian scene for the following several decades. Among these were such notable travellers as the Englishman Viscount Valentia, Salt, Pearce, Bishop S.Gobat, Rev. Isenberg, Major Harris and Plowden, the French Combes, Rochet d'Hericourt, the brothers Antoine and Arnauld d'Abbadie, the Italians Massaja and Sapeto. Among the French travellers, perhaps the most illustrious and the one who played a crucial role in informing the French public about Ethiopian realities was Antoine d'Abbadie. Coming as he did at a time when French Catholic ventures were just gaining foothold in Ethiopia, d'Abbadie made an extensive tour of Ethiopia as a

88

Viscount George Valentia, Voyages and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt, 1802-1806, London, 1809; Henry Salt, A Voyage to Abyssinia, London, 1814; Bishop S.Gobat, Journal of Three Years' Residence in Abyssinia, London, 1834; Rev. C.W. Isenberg, Dictionary of Amharic Language, London, 1841; Grammar of the Amharic Language, London, 1842; Amharic Geography, London, (n.d.); Universal History in Amharic, London, 1841; Vocabulary of the Danakali Language, London, 1840; Major W.C. Harris, Highlands of Ethiopia, 3 Vols., London, 1844; W.C.Plowden, Travels in Abyssinia, London, 1868.

89

Paul Combes, L'Abyssinie en 1896, Paris, 1896; Rochet d'Hericourt, Voyages dans le Pays d'Adel et le Royaume de Choa, Paris, 1841; Second Voyage, Paris, 1846; Arnauld d'Abbadie, Douze Ans en Haute Ethiopie, Paris, 1868.

90

Fra Guglielmo Massaja, I Miei Tretacinque Anni di Missione nell'Alta Etiopia, 1928; Giuseppe Sapeto, Etiopia, 1890.

scientific researcher between 1838 and 1848 studying the language, culture and civilization of the country and collecting valuable documents and literature to substantiate his studies. Another illustrious and indefatigable Italian contemporary was Monseigneur Massaja who, from 1846 to the close of the 1870s, played an important role in developing and fostering early Italian interest in Ethiopia.⁹¹

In this troubled period of Ethiopian history the Kingdom of Shoa had found its own peace, as an independent entity, under the leadership of King Sahle-Selassie who was now claimant to the most direct line leading to the Solomonic dynasty. It was in 1839 that Rochet d'Hericourt, the French Vice-Consul at Massawa, was received with full honours at the court of Sahle-Selassie and conveyed to the King the civilization and greatness of France. It is alleged that as a token of his friendship and admiration Sahle-Selassie later on offered d'Hericourt the governorship of an Ethiopian province.⁹² Whether or not Sahle-Selassie in fact gave d'Herocourt the said province, it is difficult to ascertain.

In 1842, d'Hericourt returned to the Shoan court, this time with lavish gifts and presents of arms and ammunition from King

91

For a discussion of his role see pp.64-66; 93-98.

92

Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, p.271.

Louis-Philippe to sign the first treaty of friendship and commerce ever to be signed between Ethiopia and France. Among other things, the treaty stipulated that (a) as a result of religious similarities existing between the two nations, the King of Shoa, in case of war from Islamic or other hostile countries, may depend on the help of France. The treaty emphasized that it considered the enemies of Sahle-Selassie like its own (Article 1); (b) King Louis-Philippe will protect all citizens of Shoa who go to Jerusalem on pilgrimages just like French citizens (Article 2); (c) All French citizens residing in Shoa will be considered as most favoured citizens (Article 3); (d) All French citizens can do commerce in Shoa (Article 5).⁹³

The treaty, which by all counts was favourable to France, did not, however, contribute to further strengthen Ethiopian-French relations. The French policy of colonial expansion not yet fully supported by reputable politicians, d'Hericourt's diplomatic exploits in Shoa were neither given what could be considered a minimum of attention among high French circles nor accorded coverage in influential Parisian papers and journals.⁹⁴ Even though France had already settled along the Red Sea littoral

93

Archives Diplomatique, Paris, Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between King Louis-Philippe of France and King Sahle-Selassie of Shoa, Angolola, June 7, 1843.

94

Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, p.274.

by about this time, it was only some forty years later that a meaningful French interest began to develop in the proximity of Ethiopia.

In 1837, Britain had already occupied Perim on the mouth of the Gulf of Aden, and in 1838, the French Consul in Aden had also taken hold of the port of Obock with the consent of his Government. On March 11, 1862, the French Government entered into a treaty with the local authorities thereby officially including Obock within French jurisdiction.⁹⁵ Obock's actual possession as a colony was effectuated some twenty years later. Again, it was in 1866 that the French Vice-Consul at Zeila purchased a small private property⁹⁶ in the Bay of Tajura increasing French presence in the area. By 1890, France had also occupied Djibouti, south of Obock, and it was with its gradual development as a port that the usefulness of the latter declined.

This period was the commencement of hostilities between Menelik and Italy.⁹⁷ It seems that it never was a coincidence that France was also actively engaged in this part of East Africa

95

DDF, 2nd. ser., Vol.9, No.167, Note 2, p.235; Michel, Vers Fachoda, p.22.

96

'precis of Information Obtained by the British Mission to Abyssinia,' March-June 1897; 'General Report on Abyssinia,' by Lieutenant Col. Wingate & Captain Count Gleichen.

97

See p.110.

at this particular time. At an earlier stage, we have briefly touched upon the history of the development of European rivalry and alignments in the area. From the brief analysis that was previously furnished it could be generalized that increased French presence in the region by the close of the 19th. century was directly related to and brought about by the existence of the new situation.

We observe that as a result of this new situation France was determined to obstruct the realization of British-Italian designs in the Red Sea, the Nile, the Sudan and Ethiopia. One especially realizes that when, after 1890, Ethiopian-Italian relations were headed for the worst, France, in concert with Russia, was attempting to strengthen Menelik against Italy. France, therefore, was supplying Menelik the arms and ammunition he needed through the ports of Obock and Djibouti. No doubt, unhappy with French position, the British mission which visited Menelik after the war with Italy assessed the situation this way:

...It can hardly have been the intention of the other signatory Powers that Abyssinia should become possessed of so large a stock of arms as to give her a preponderating position over all the other countries of East Africa, thus enabling her to freely raid on defenceless races, and to extend her influence with great rapidity in all directions...Nevertheless the main responsibility must rest with France, who, for her own selfish ends, has applied the letter (but not the spirit) of the Brussels Act to create a positive danger and deterrent to the

civilization and colonization of East Africa, hoping thereby to thwart British policy in Egypt by surreptitiously pushing Abyssinian influence towards the Nile Valley, and at the same time exclusively reserving, as far as possible for herself, the commercial development of the power she has so successfully helped to create.⁹⁸

After the defeat of Italy in the Battle of Adwa France was to play, for some few years to come, the role of 'eminence grise' among the European Powers who came to Menelik's capital to open Chanceries now that he was a power to reckon with.⁹⁹ The French role was prominently played by Leonce Lagarde. In 1897 he had come to the court of Menelik with a mission that was to further strengthen the relations already existing between Ethiopia and France.¹⁰⁰ He concluded two agreements, one on frontiers and another - a secret one - regarding the Nile.¹⁰¹ The second

98

'Precis of Information Obtained by the British Mission to Abyssinia,' March-June 1897, 'General Report on Abyssinia,' by Lieutenant Col. Wingate & Captain Count Gleichen.

99

For an analysis of Ethiopian-French relations see chapter 5.

100

'Convention Pour Les Frontiers,' March 20, 1897, DDF, No.158.

101

'Convention Pour Le Nil Blanc,' March 20, 1897, DDF, No.159. Lagarde's role in the newly established Ethiopian-French relations will be discussed in some detail in a subsequent chapter.

agreement was designed to help in the implementation of the Marchand mission which was to complete the extension of French influence and colonial advancements from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. The mission was not successful. The British counter mission headed by Lord Kitchner which advanced south from Egypt, intercepted and effectively thwarted the convergence of the Marchand mission and the Bonchamps mission - proceeding from Ethiopia - on the Nile. France, however, was successful within Ethiopia itself in other respects. Other than the place of respect and influence it gained at the court of Menelik, it also participated in the day to day administrative efforts of Menelik in a very general manner. Hence, more than others, France provided advisers, engineers, doctors, postal and telegraphic services administrators and technicians and technocrats who contributed to Menelik's modernizing efforts. It was also France which succeeded, amidst an unbelievably intricate maze of international intrigue and rivalry, to get the Ethiopian railway concession that linked the port town of Djibouti with Menelik's capital.

Ethiopia and England: England, like France, was also one of those European nations which had established contacts with Ethiopia at an earlier stage. Bruce was the very first among British travellers who, in his attempt to locate the source of the Blue Nile, travelled far and wide into distant regions of

103
Ethiopia. His description of peoples, places, animals, birds of superb and magnificent hues, his exotic tales of raw beef that was beign eaten freshly carved out from live oxen, all focused attention on a collection of Kingdoms that was for a long time being referred to as the 'Land of Prester John.' The next eventful epoch in early Anglo-Ethiopian relations began in 1809 when Henry Salt was sent with a mission to Ethiopia. The mission, nevertheless, did not add much to the advancement of Anglo-Ethiopian relations.

Even though Rodd implies, perhaps unwittingly, that his was the very first British mission ever to have established relations with the Kingdom of Shoa - he mentions the two other British missions to the court of Theodros and Yohannes - yet, we find that already in 1841 Britain had established links with Emperor Sahle-Selassie of Shoa, the grandfather of Menelik. Sahle-Selassie,

103

James Bruce, Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile in the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772 and 1773, 3rd. ed., Edinburgh, 1813.

104

For a comprehensive list of British travellers and envoys who visited Ethiopia during and after 1800 see Budge, History of Ethiopia, Vol. 2, pp.489-492.

105

Henry Salt, A Voyage to Ethiopia, London, 1814.

106

Rodd, Memories, 2nd. ser., p.110.

to better foster good relations with the European powers, and in order to enable himself to acquire arms, ammunition and other manufactured goods, had signed a treaty of friendship and commerce on November 16, 1841¹⁰⁷ with Britain.

The climax in early Anglo-Ethiopian relations came to pass during the reign of Emperor Theodros. More than any other Ethiopian monarch before him, Theodros had wished to establish relations with the European powers, especially Britain, on a basis of mutual respect for each country's sovereignty, dignity and territorial integrity. His initiatives, however, were coldly received by the British Government. The ensuing misunderstanding led Theodros to hold hostage some British officials and missionaries who were living in Ethiopia at the time. This was initially done¹⁰⁸ to extract a better response from London. The resultant difference led to hostilities which subsequently culminated in the dispatch of the Napier expedition by Britain and the death of¹⁰⁹ Theodros at Mekdella.

107

Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, p.421. It was Major Harris who signed the treaty on behalf of the British Government. See Harris, Highlands of Ethiopia.

108

For an analysis of the position of Theodros, see Sven Rubenson, King of Kings of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, 1966. See also pp.19-25.

109

Homuzd Rassam, Narrative of the British Mission to Theodore, 2 Vols. London, 1869; Henry Stern, The Captive Missionary; Tekle-Tsadik-Mekuria, Ye Etiopia Tarik. See also chapter 1, pp.20-26; 28-32.

Anglo-Ethiopian relations were again revived during the reign of Yohannes, the successor of Theodros. As a result of the political situation which had developed in the Sudan and the Red Sea ports of Asseb and Massawa during the earlier part of 1800, Britain - itself an interested party in the region - was playing an active role in trying to determine its future in the area. Apart from the normal relations which then existed between them, Britain and Ethiopia have had two official contacts of importance. The first one culminated in what is now commonly referred to as the Hewett Treaty or otherwise officially known as the Treaty of Adwa. By this treaty Yohannes pledged to facilitate the evacuation of the Egyptian garrison besieged by the Mahdists from Eastern Sudan and the Khedive of Egypt, in return, promised to cede what was then called the region of Bogos,¹¹⁰ in the Red Sea area, to Ethiopia. This meant that the port of Massawa would once more be brought under Ethiopian sovereignty.

However, as things transpired, this was not to be the case. Britain had, despite its pledges to Yohannes, made sure that¹¹¹ Massawa would slip into Italian hands. The second official contact between Yohannes and Britain took place when Sir Gerald Portal

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Hertslet, *Map of Africa by Treaty*, Vol.II, p.422. See also Rodd, *Memories*, 2nd. ser., pp.110-111.

111

See pp.70-75.

was sent to the court of Yohannes to mediate and hopefully bring about peace between the now warring Yohannes and Italy.

At the end of the 1880s, because of Crispi's colonial policies in that part of Africa, Ethiopian-Italian relations were not that good. Menelik was hurt, in more than one way, by British actions in the area. First, because of British-Italian alignments at the time against France and Russia, and because of the fear that this French-Russian solidarity will, in the course of action, strengthen Menelik's hand, every conceivable obstacle was put on his way. British-Italian strategy was essentially bent on preventing Menelik from acquiring arms and ammunition from the European nations. Secondly, other than the problems with Yohannes concerning the promises over Massawa, Britain was also one of the very first European powers which had recognized Italian protectorate assertions over Ethiopia at the time of the failure of the Treaty of Wichalle. Gleichen wrote:

As we had up till now never entered into political relations with Menelik, - and indeed could not do so as long as he was considered to be under the protectorate of, or was at war with, our friends the Italians, - and as the idea is firmly rooted in Abyssinia that it was we who supplied the Italians with money to carry on their campaign, our prestige in the country had somewhat diminished, and may be said to have reached its lowest point by the beginning of 1897. Hence our Mission.¹¹²

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Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.4.

It was rather unfortunate for Britain that it was only after the victory of Menelik over the Italians at Adwa that it had recognized - and even at this late stage it was because of compelling and urgent self-serving reasons - that Menelik was a real power to contend with in the Horn of Africa. Now that Italy was defeated in a crippling war, Britain's lot with the Mahdists had been very shaky, and because of Menelik's newly acquired political as well as moral strength, London had much more feared further advances by Menelik to the south and south east in the direction of its newly gained territories in Eastern Africa. By 1897, therefore, Britain had deemed it timely to make overtures to Menelik. Primarily, it was because of this intention that Sir Rennel Rodd was sent to Menelik with a mission (a) to request Menelik's neutrality vis-a-vis the Mahdi in the Sudan, and (b) to delimitate the frontiers of East Africa between Ethiopia and the British territories of East Africa and Somalia. The Rodd

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F.O. 403/255, Salisbury to Rodd, February 24, 1897; 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' Treaty of May 14, 1897, pp.40-41; F.O. 403/255, Rodd to Salisbury, Addis Ababa, May 15, 1897; Rodd, Memories, 2nd. ser.: In order to make the "Sudan Operations" workable, Rodd says, it was deemed necessary "to secure, if possible, the friendly neutrality of the Abyssinians, who after their recent successes against the Italians had become a power to reckon with in a vast area coterminous with the Sudan. It was accordingly decided in the beginning of 1897 that a mission should be despatched to Menelik, King of Shoa and King of Kings of Ethiopia. I had the good fortune to be selected as Special Envoy." pp.109-110.

mission and the resultant treaty from it, interesting as well as intriguing for its style and content, will be analyzed in chapter five of part three. The mission constituted the main pillar upon which future Anglo-Ethiopian relations rested. However, it suffices to note at this juncture the main objectives achieved by both Menelik and Britain from the treaty.

First, Menelik had achieved the recognition of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of his Empire by Britain. Britain had also established diplomatic and friendly contacts which, in the long run, had enabled it to look after its interests in Ethiopia and East Africa. Secondly, both parties had reached at a defined but not yet complete understanding regarding what constituted Ethiopia and the adjoining territories claimed by Britain. Thirdly, while Britain authorized Menelik to transport arms and ammunition over British territories (in accordance with the General Act of the Brussels Conference of July 2, 1890), on the other hand it also secured, at least on paper, Menelik's pledge not to allow the flow of arms and ammunition to the Mahdists from his Empire and to declare them enemies of his country.

As of the end of the Rodd mission, Anglo-Ethiopian relations seemed to have taken a real start for the better and developing in the right direction. To follow up the task suggested and laid

down by the British mission, John Lane Harrington, an aggressively determined young officer from the India Office, at the time serving as Vice Consul in Zeila, was appointed as "Her Majesty's Agent at the Court of the Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia." The interest generated by the newly established relations was such that British officials, journalists, travellers and other private individuals were attracted to Ethiopia in considerable numbers. More than before, the British Government was ready to show considerable leniency in its approaches and exercised a spirit of accommodation in most of its dealings with Menelik. One major reason for this change in British official attitude was the defeat of Italy in the hands of Menelik and Britain's unwillingness to rely on a loser in the achievement of its colonialist policies in East Africa. As long as this change of mind lasted, Menelik was also prepared to act accordingly and use the political mood thus obtained to further strengthen the Ethiopian national interest.

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Vivian comments. "I remarked that people in England took an extreme interest in Ethiopia....He smiled amiably at my remark, and replied that it confirmed his own impression; that he was glad to see this interest manifested by the visits of so many Englishmen; that it was only by learning to know each other that we could arrive at a real understanding. I then asked if he would be graciously pleased to transmit through me a message to the English people, who always regarded him with feelings of sincere friendship. 'Tell them,' said His Majesty, 'that I have always desired their friendship and support, because I know that I may trust them....Tell your people that I shall always be pleased to see them, whenever any of them care to undertake the long journey to my capital.'" Vivian, Abyssinia, pp.200-201.

By the time Harrington had left his Ethiopian post after some ten years, substantial progress had been achieved to sway Anglo-Ethiopian relations in a different direction. By 1908, some frontier agreements were made possible (frontiers, however, were not demarcated), personal diplomacy between Menelik and the court of St. James were greatly developed, misunderstandings over Menelik's "neutrality" concerning the Mahdists and later on the problems over the issue of the construction of the Ethiopian railway from Djibouti to Addis Ababa were somewhat clarified, and what is significant, British spheres of influence regarding Ethiopia were strongly contested and the ensuing rivalry between Britain and France at Menelik's court had left Harrington neither a winner nor a loser.

True, the way Harrington had departed from Ethiopia would have given no diplomat of his tremendous ego a sense of pride or satisfaction. His accomplishments, when measured with the set of objectives he was instructed to achieve, were relatively minimal and would have not allowed him the satisfaction for self flattery. His achievements, by any standard, were not also inconsiderable. Nevertheless, in one of his own last reports from Addis Ababa regarding his long stay with Menelik, we find this general assessment of British achievements in Ethiopia:

Since the signing of the Tripartite Agreement of December 1906 the position has entirely changed, and British influence may be said to be absolutely non-existent....In the opinion

of the few Abyssinian Chiefs of influence who in any degree study the foreign relations of their country, is that Great Britain and Italy have handed Abyssinia over completely to FranceThe French Government hardly any longer conceal their view of Abyssinia as purely French preserve.¹¹⁶

Towards the end of his service in Ethiopia, Harrington was so distrusted and unpopular with Menelik that he almost severed relations with him. Harrington's deputy, himself at odds with his superior, comments that "to say that Harrington recommended this or that measure was enough to block it indefinitely."¹¹⁷

3. Ethiopia and Russia: Although fragmentary information do exist about contacts between Ethiopia and Russia, the earliest recorded history of direct relations between the two countries begin during the reign of Emperor Menelik. It is to be remembered that in the early years of the reign of Yohannes the Egyptians were, in an ever increasing way, threatening the security of his Empire, and due to his inferior military posture, mainly brought about by his inability to obtain sizeable numbers of arms and ammunition,

116

F.O. 401/11, Harrington to Grey, R.M.S. "Lusitania" at Queenstown, December 5, 1908.

117

"In dealing with the Emperor I had believed that Harrington's position was such that it would be enough to mention his name for the matter under discussion to go through at once, but I found out that the reverse was the case, and to say that Harrington recommended this or that measure was enough to block it indefinitely. Out of

he was dependant on the goodwill of Christian leaders of Europe. Russia, among the European nations, was then of particular interest to Yohannes in that , like his own Empire, it also belonged to the Christian Orthodox Church. Thus, by the beginning of 1870, when hostilities between Egypt and Ethiopia were at their climax, Yohannes had been in touch with St. Petersburg seeking help in the acquisition of arms and ammunition. "The Negus, therefore decided," Jesman writes, "to ask the Russian Emperor for help, ambiguously, for protection, but his message ...received no answer."

It is highly improbable, however, that Yohannes was seeking a protectorate status under Russia, as Jesman suggests. It would be sometime before we hear of subsequent contacts. In 1885, a certain Atchinov, a Cossack of dubious credentials, had visited

this extremely embarrassing situation arose. The Emperor sent for me and desired me to send a telegram saying he did not wish Harrington to return, not once, but several times." Hohler, Diplomatic Petrel, p.140.

118

His immediate link with Russia was the Ethiopian Monastery in Jerusalem.

119

Luzeux, Etudes Critiques Sur la Guerre Entre l'Italie et L'Abyssinie, p.20; Afework, Dagmawi Ate Menelik, pp.25-26.

120

Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.36.

Ethiopia and , apart from gaining the permission of Yohannes to
 121
 establish a Russian Orthodox monastery in Ethiopia, he was also
 entrusted by him with the procurement of essential arms for
 122
 Ethiopia from Europe. Coincidentally, it was again the same
 person who - at about the death of Yohannes in 1889 - sailed
 down the Red Sea and established Russia's first unofficial
 123
 contact with Menelik. Italy was already firmly entrenched in the
 124
 Red Sea region, and France, not yet in alliance with St. Peters-
 burg as regards its East African policies, was suspicious of
 Russian intentions in the area.

Italy, decidedly bent on undermining the position of both
 Yohannes and Menelik with the European powers, was disturbed by
 the fact that such a mission - which it believed was official -
 could have appeared in the Red Sea area at this particular moment

121

Ibid., p.10.

122

Andrien Zervos, L'Empire d'Ethiopie, Le Miroir de l'Ethiopie
 Moderne, 1906-1935, Greece, (n.d.), p.486.

123

DDF, Ist. ser., Vol. 7, Nos.320; 328.

124

Jesman writes that "the Italian commander in Africa, General
 Baldissera, heard about the arrival of Ashinov on December 10,1888.
 When the Russians put into port they were not allowed to disembark,
 and the Italian authorities at Massawa kept a close watch on them.
 The Italians were particularly afraid lest the Russians slip ashore
 a messenger to the Emperor Yohannes with a treaty all ready for him
 to sign." The Russians in Ethiopia, pp.10-11.

and was determined to challenge its motives. Rumours had been rampant that Atchinov's mission was being dispatched to the Red Sea area to offer help to Ethiopia against Italy. Not only did Italy make its displeasure known to Russia about the mission, but also protested to France in the strongest terms possible alleging that it had aided the mission to Tadjoura - a French port on the Red Sea - and was therefore an accomplice in every sense. Russia promptly denied that it did not know what the mission was all about.

At about this time, a most bizzare incident took place in this part of Africa. It nearly dirupted the beginnings of the Franco-Russian alliance. Admiral Orly, a renowned French soldier of the epoch and Commander in Chief of the French Naval Forces in the Indian Ocean, came to Tadjoura together with Lagarde, the French Governor at Obock, at the head of a cruiser and three gunboats to demand Atchinov to evacuate the post. In the ensuing misunderstanding Orly's gunboats opened fire killing some members of the Atchinov mission. According to Jesman, "the incident did for a time endanger the growing friendship between them. There was anti-French indignation in the Russian press."

125
DDF, 1st. ser., Vol. 7, No.119.

126
Ibid., No.302.

127
Ibid., Nos.320; 328.

Because of the special alliance that was now developing between France and Russia, both were not willing to let such a minor military incident mar the projected friendship between their countries. There was, therefore, a mutual interest to deliberately downplay the Atchinov incident. France, in particular, desirous not to let this unfortunate mishap disturb Franco-Russian relations, unduly condescended to St. Petersburg in extending its apologies. The Russian Government, on its part, denied having ever known Atchinov's mission and in fact appreciated French reactions regarding his conduct. Disapproving official Russian denials and allegations, Atchinov went to Paris to plead his case on his own directly with the French people. Atchinov's posturing proved to be embarrassing to the Quai d'Orsay.

The earliest recognized official relations between Ethiopia and Russia commenced about 1889 when, under the cover of religious

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Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.15.

129

DDF, 1st. ser., Vol.7, No.329.

130

"The Russian authorities did everything to hush up the incident. Baron Giers, the Russian Foreign Minister, assured Marchetti, the Italian Minister at St. Petersburg, that he deeply deplored the whole affair. In fact, he had not even been informed that Ashinov had sailed. The Imperial government had nothing to do either with the Cossack or with Passi. The best proof of this was the Emperor's unwillingness to grant an audience to Ashinov....In St. Petersburg de Giers stormed. He accused Ashinov of being a deliberate mischief-maker who was trying to create difficulties between France and

and cultural institutions - and encouraged and supported by the Russian Geographical Society - St. Petersburg sent out feelers to the Red Sea area, and subsequently to Ethiopia. A Lieutenant Vasili Fedorovich Mashkov, an officer of the Russian Guards, was about the first to have set foot in Ethiopia in October 1889 and later on in April 1891 to give St. Petersburg a first hand information on the possibilities of the establish-
 132
 ment of official relations with Menelik. When Mashkov was sent out to Ethiopia by the church, and this time in full cognizance of the Russian Government, he almost exclusively devoted his time to the study of the doctrine and theological tenets pertaining to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. In the journal 'Novie Vremia' we find published excerpts from Mashkov's diary which reads:
 "...Menelik said: 'We all love Russia and have always desired to enter into friendly relations with her. Do they believe in Russia
 133
 that there is a difference of religion between us?' Mashkov's

Russia for some dim Slavophile reason of his own. He suggested that the Cossack should be exiled to Siberia for five years and the other members of the expedition for three years." The Russians in Ethiopia, pp.16-17. See also DDF, 1st. ser., Vol.7, Nos.330; 332; 335.

131

DDF, 1st. ser., Vol.8, Nos.266; 267.

132

Ibid., No.267; Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, pp.80-84.

133

Ibid., p.81.

second mission was also sponsored, with the full support of the Government, both by the Russian Orthodox Church and the 'Societe de Geographie de Petersbourg.' During his stay of about one year, Mashkov travelled in Ethiopia extensively. His connections with Menelik, we are told, were cordial and friendly. Again, in January 1893, yet a third mission was sent to Ethiopia, this time with the full blessing and participation of the Government and with a status equalling that of a diplomatic mission. This time, some of the members of the mission were recruited from the Russian foreign service. To emphasize the weight of the mission, the party was received and briefed on the objectives of the mission by Baron de Giers, the Russian Foreign Minister.

The leader of the mission was Captain A.F.Eliseiev, a veteran who had already travelled in Ethiopia and some parts of Africa. Among the members of the mission was also Captain Nicholas Stepanovitch Leontiev, a very colourful and controversial figure of dubious credentials, who was to play an important role at Menelik's court at a latter stage. In order to assure the safety of the members of the mission, the Russian Government had deployed warships which were to cruise the Red Sea region during the mission's sejour in Ethiopia.

Among the objectives of the mission one was to invite Menelik to dispatch an official mission to Russia to further strengthen

the newly established relations. Another one was to persuade the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to actively consider the establishment of closer ties with the Russian Orthodox Church. Among other things, the mission was also to lay a wreath on the tomb of Yohannes who, in one of his many wars with Muslim invaders from the north, had recently died in the battlefield. The mission is said to have provided Russia the first real and meaningful contact with Menelik. The only hitch that prevented its complete success, however, was the death of Eliseiev on July 4. It was as of this time that Leontiev officially or unofficially succeeded to direct Russia's affairs at the court of Menelik and thus began his momentous diplomatic and commercial exploits both in Ethiopia and Europe.

With the return of the Russian mission to St. Petersburg the amount of interest generated about Ethiopia in the Russian press and among the public was so immense that it was taken as a firm ground for sending out a permanent official diplomatic mission to Ethiopia. The Treaty of Wichalle between Menelik and Italy had already been signed and the ensuing controversy over the protectorate article had set in motion anger and indignation in Russia. In fact, Russia, together with France, was one of the very few European nations which refused to recognize Italy's protectorate over Ethiopia. On July 15, 1895, Blanc, the Italian Foreign Minister, remarked in an Aide Memoire to Bullow, the German Ambassador in

Rome: "La Russie vient de déclarer finalement qu'elle considère Menelik comme souverain indépendant et qu'elle a le droit, ne reconnaissant pas le protectorat italien, d'avoir avec Menelik tels rapports qu'il lui convient."¹³⁵

It was widely speculated in Europe, and affirmed by many writers - especially in Britain and Italy - that Russia was then determined to gain foothold in Africa, particularly on the coasts of the Red Sea, by resorting to religious and other purely mundane pretexts.¹³⁶ From what transpired between Ethiopia and Russia, however, nothing indicates to us that Russia harboured, directly or otherwise, any ulterior motives other than developing friendly relations with this nation with which it was so sentimentally involved for sometime now. Menelik, an ardent admirer of nations who respected his country's independence and sovereignty, never missed an opportunity to praise Russia's good intentions and its relations with his country. He praised Russia's selfless and disinterested endeavours to help him in his international dealings. Responding to a letter from President Carnot of France regarding treatment of Russian marines visiting Toulon

135

GDD, Blanc to Bullow, July 15, 1895

136

"The Russians, who claim to be of nearly the same religion as the Abyssinians, are trying to get foothold in Africa by alliance with Menelik. and they also tried to get a seaport or coaling station from him. King Menelik had no coast port to give away, as the coast line ceased to belong to Abyssinia many centuries ago." Wylde, Abyssinia,

and other French ports, Menelik, in responding to Carnot, praised him warmly for this because he said the Russians were friends of Ethiopia:

...Nous avons ete egalement bien heureux d'apprendre la venue de l'escadre russe a Toulon pour rendre sa visite a l'escadre francaise, ainsi que les magnifique fetes qui se sont donnees, de Toulon a Paris, aux marins russes, parce que depuis longtemps le Gouvernement russe est notre ami. 137

In his note of September 10, 1896, Prince de Hohenlohe, the Russian Chancellor, writes of his audience with the Russian Emperor and therein records the reaffirmations of the Emperor as regards his country's policy towards Ethiopia. He wrote: "En ce qui concernait l'Afrique, la Russie n'avait pas d'interets la-bas. C'etait tout au plus si des motifs religieux pouvait inspirer a la Russie des sympathies pour l'Abyssinie." Jesman rightly concludes that "the Russian effort in Ethiopia hardly deserved... a condescending description: there was not enough of it." He goes on to say, "at a glance it was hardly even a deliberate move on the chess board of international politics. The Russian government

pp. 50-51. For similar views see also Skinner, Abyssinia, pp.96-97; 'General Report on Abyssinia,' p.16.

137

DDF, 1st. ser., Vol.11, No.5, Menelik to Carnot, p.6.

138

Ibid., Vol.12, No.2962, p.145.

itself, or at least its leaders, was officially against African
 139
 entanglements."

What Tsarist Russia maintained in Ethiopia constituted a politics of low profile. About and during Menelik's war with Italy, Russia dispatched the Russian Red Cross to help aid Ethiopia's wounded and dying in the battle field. However, the request to allow it to enter northern Ethiopia through Eritrea
 140
 was declined by Italy. At a subsequent stage, when Ethiopian-Russian relations were said to be at their climax, we find out that Russia had established a hospital in Menelik's capital which had helped immensely in taking care of the sick. Of this queer Russian role in Ethiopia at the time, many political analysts have observed, and rightly, that it was being assumed without benefiting substantial political gains from the Ethiopian side. Skinner writes that it was "the most interesting mission in Ethiopia" because he comments:

...It is the least comprehensible by the ordinary rules of interest which govern international relations. Our Russian friends have no apparent stake in Ethiopia - or at least that which modern society regards as such. There are no Russians in Ethiopia other than official Russians. There is no Russian trade in the country, and there are no Russian

139

Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.126.

140

GDD, Vol.11, No.2815, p.258; Vol.12, No.2824, p.10.

frontiers nearer than Turkestan. Yet the Russian mission presided over by the accomplished M. Leschine, the Minister, included a hospital and dispensary, together with doctors, nurses, and everything else, all of which Ethiopia enjoys without money and without price.¹⁴¹

At the end of the first official Russian mission to his court, Menelik was sufficiently persuaded, perhaps by Leontiev, to reciprocate the visit of the Russian mission by sending his own mission of good will to St. Petersburg. In view of the mounting pressure from Italy and the imminence of war, Menelik, more than any time in his political career, was in need of the sympathy and cooperation of other friendly European nations. The first week of July 1895, an Ethiopian mission was therefore in St. Petersburg. Accompanied by Leontiev, a veteran Russian army officer "passione pour l'Abyssinie," the mission was given a
142
wonderful reception by the Russian Emperor. Among the mission's objectives, two specifically stress the direction towards which

141

Skinner, Abyssinia, p.96.

142

"The Russian press in June and July was full of reports of the celebrations offered to the Ethiopians. Two hundred roubles were spent on champagne alone each day; the total cost of the embassy to the Russian government amounted to half a million roubles; the servants of the imperial court under a chamberlain were in attendance; representatives of the Asiatic section of the foreign ministry were attached to the embassy for the duration of its stay in Russia; all the grand dukes of consequence received the Ethiopians. In fact, no European embassy was ever received in Russia with greater show of consideration and esteem." Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.87.

Ethiopian foreign policy was heading. The first one was geared towards acquiring Russia's help against Anglo-Italian threat which Menelik now felt was becoming a reality. The French Ambassador in St. Petersburg, Monsieur De Montebello, reporting to his Foreign Minister on the Ethiopian mission to the Russian capital, points out that "le Negus a certainement une arriere-pensee et desirerait obtenir l'appui de la Russie et de la France." He goes on to say: "'Appui moral,' affirme M. Leontieff; mais il est difficile d'admettre le caractere purement platonique d'un appui donne a l'Abyssinie contre l'Angleterre et l'Italie."¹⁴³

The Russian mission to Ethiopia had made it amply clear to Menelik that the Russian Government had wanted to see closer ties established between the two countries. Menelik had therefore instructed his mission to St. Petersburg to indicate to Russian authorities that he was willing to enter into such a relationship. He had particularly made his wish known for the establishment of meaningful relations between the Ethiopian and Russian Orthodox Churches.¹⁴⁴ The Ethiopian mission's first gesture of good will was to place a crown sent by Menelik on the tombe of Alexander III.¹⁴⁵

143
DDF, 1st. ser., Vol.12, No.98, p.127.

144
Ibid., No.90, (Note 1), p.119.

145
Ibid

During his embattled years before and at the time of the Battle of Adwa, Russia's sympathy to Menelik, along with France, was one of the most important factors which contributed to the ensuing friendship between the two nations. It is to be remembered that both France and Britain had, immediately after the victory at Adwa over Italy, approached Menelik and subsequently sent missions to his court. Russia had also followed suit in October 1897 and sent the first diplomatic mission to Ethiopia under
 146
 Vlassov. Jesman says that Vlassov, a Counsellor of state and a member of the Russian consular service, and the other members of the mission, were assigned to it because they were "among the tall and ornamental-looking officers of the best regiments of the Imperial Guards" and because "they were chosen so as not to appear inferior to the officers of Sir Rennel Rodd's mission, who aimed to impress Menelik with their height and grand manner
 147
 and so with the splendour of the British Empire."

However sympathetic and good natured the Russian diplomatic mission to Ethiopia was, like any other European mission before it, this mission was also regarded and observed - not with mistrust - but with caution and skepticism. Menelik never left his affair of state to chance. It is a truism that "Menelik believed that the Russians were friends, but he did not trust

146

F.O. 1/37, Harrington to Salisbury, February 24, 1900; DDF, Vol.13, No.386, p.647 (Notes 2& 3); Vol.14, No.101, p.190.

147

Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.90.

them sufficiently to allow them in the interior loose, unguarded
148
and uncontrolled." Ethiopian-Russian relations, undramatic and
colourless though they may seem, they were correct and deliberately
low-keyed.

4. Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan: The past history of the relations between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan is basically one of constant political hostilities and antagonism. Two factors, more than others, have been the dominant determinants to exacerbate the hostilities. The first factor was the importance of the Nile as the life sustaining gift of nature to the latter two and the hypothetical possibility that the former was endowed with the controlling capacity of slowing, diverting or blocking its flow at will. The other factor emanated from the Christianity versus Islam controversy which had historically plagued their relations for long.

The political as well as economic significance of the Nile to the riparian states of Egypt, the Sudan and even Congo and Uganda was such that it was the main bone of contention on which nineteenth century European rivalry seriously tested itself in Africa. In order to readily appreciate the importance of the Nile in the understanding of the dynamics of the area, the

involvement of a number of national interests in this long and extended geographical corridor will be studied at a latter stage. However, it is essential to indicate here only some of the essential points which led to the late 19th. century European rivalry in the Nile Valley.

On May 12, 1894, Britain and the Belgian Congo State had entered into a treaty agreement which was ultimately to lead into the famous Fashoda debacle. According to Article 2 of the treaty, a wide corridor extending from Lake Albert to a point at Fashoda was leased to King Leopold along the banks of the upper Nile while, in return, Britain secured an other narrower corridor running from the southern tip of Lake Albert Edward to the northern end of Lake Tanganyika. The main purpose behind the treaty was the need to have a stake in controlling this important life line of the region. France and Germany, also working towards the same objective of possessing the same corridor from an east-west and south-north direction respectively, had found themselves to be the losers in this international gambit. Both governments, therefore, protested against the stipulations of the Anglo-Congolese treaty. As a result, the active rivalry which ensued among these powers reads like a tale in the Arabian knights. Suffice it to point out here

that it was the geopolitical importance of the Nile in the area which had focused the attention of the colonial powers in this direction and subsequently hardened their positions.

The Sudan, it must be remembered, had earlier been occupied by Mehmet Ali of Egypt. His successor, Khedive Ismail, however, a conqueror indefatigably enthralled with war and its spoils, had sent out expeditions and conquered territories far beyond the Sudan. These were ports like Massawa, and along the Red Sea coast, Cape Guardafui, as far south as what is now present day Somalia. He also advanced, via the Red Sea, into the southern province of Ethiopia and included Harar under his domain. Between 1860 and 1870 the Khedive also entrusted the task of exploring the Upper reaches of the Nile up to Uganda and the extension of Egyptian rule up to Lakes Albert and Victoria, the Province of Equatoria and the Bahr-el-Ghazel to such renowned colonialist pioneers as Sir Samuel Baker and General George Gordon. At the beginning of the 1880s, the strong nationalist and religious Mahdist movement had been sweepign over the Sudan, and England, which by 1882 had already occupied Egypt, had realized that the

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See p. 69 ff.

151

Harar will be discussed in some detail in subsequent chapters.

152

Budge, A History of Ethiopia, p.522.

force unleashed in the Sudan was something that it was never able to contain. The most viable alternative and political solution to British entanglement there was the abandonment of the Sudan. In 1883, therefore, as a calculated step to avoid humiliation, the Gladstone Government was determined to evacuate Egyptian and its own forces from the Sudan. To elude encirclement by the Mahdists, the safest way for the Egyptians and British forces was through the Red Sea port of Massawa in Ethiopia. It was Sir William Hewett who in June 1884 negotiated a treaty with Yohannes to the use of Ethiopian territory for such a safe exit.

The abandonment of the Sudan by Egypt was taken too seriously by many political circles in that it was feared that the effective control of the waters of the Upper Nile by an ever hostile enemy sounded the death knell to the very symbol of the source of life of Egypt. To appreciate the mentality which prevailed in Egypt it is important also to bear in mind that for almost time immemorial it had been believed in Egyptian scholarly circles that such a happening was a possibility not only from the regions in Upper Sudan but also from Ethiopia.

153

Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.103. See also pp.69-70.

154

Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, p.422. For a background history on the Hewett Treaty and the related controversy over Massawa, see pp.70-71.

El Macin, writing in his 'Chronicles of the Saracenic Empire' in the 13th. century, records that at about the 11th. century the King of Abyssinia had actually diverted the waters of the Blue Nile until the Egyptian Sultan had to send gifts and tributes to the spiritual leader of the Ethiopian Church. "Even if this was a fable," says Langer, "...it is significant that the tradition became firmly fixed in Egypt during the later Middle Ages."

More or less, the same stories were repeated by such writers as Friar Jordanus, Simon Sigoli, Guillebert de Lannoy and Bertrandon de la Broquiere in 1330, 1384, 1422 and 1432 respectively. James Bruce, the Irish traveller in Ethiopia, writing by the close of the 1790s, makes mention of a letter the King of Ethiopia had addressed to the Egyptian Pasha in 1704 in which the King warns that "the Nile would be sufficient to punish you , since God has put into our power this fountain, His outlet, and His increase, and that we can dispose of to do you harm."

155

As referred to in Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.103.

156

Ibid., p.104.

157

Ibid

158

James Bruce, Travels to Discover the Sources of the Nile, London, 1790, II, pp.525-527.

In the late 19th. century, Baker, the most persuasive authority who based his analysis of the threats to Egypt on the Scriptures, strongly emphasizes that "should a civilised, or even a semi-civilised, enemy be in a possession of that point (Khartoum), the water of the Rahad, Dinder, Blue Nile and the Atbara Rivers could be diverted from their course and dispersed throughout the deserts, to the utter ruin and complete destruction of Egypt proper." Baker was, therefore, of the opinion that Egypt, in her act of the abandonment of her suzerainty over the Sudan, had put herself in complete danger of being strangled by others.

The second most important factor in the relations between Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sudan, namely religion, was so crucial that it was responsible for the many battles and wars these three countries fought on both sides of the Nile. Ethiopia, a nation which had adopted Christianity at about the 4th. century, was now uncomfortably lodged next to the boundaries of Muslim nations. The Muslim nations, on the other hand, had vowed to convert the "Kaffirs" and "nonbelievers" and free their subjects from slavery and human bondage. Ethiopia, which for long had taken this threat too seriously, had also clung firmly to a patriotic passion of jealously defending herself and her religion against the intruding

Muslim nations. As far back as the 6th. century, King Kaleb of the Aksumite Kingdom had gone to war with a South Arabian Prince to come to the rescue of Christians persecuted in the country of the Prince.

It could in fact be said that most of the relations initiated by the Ethiopian Kings and Emperors with the European nations were done so primarily in wanting to align themselves with sympathetic Christian Kings and Emperors who could render help against the Muslim nations. Whenever Ethiopian leaders felt they were victims of aggression, especially from the Muslim nations, they invariably invoked their Christian identity with Europe. In 1543, Emperor Gelawdewos (1540-1559) invited the Portuguese to help in thwarting the conquests of Ahmed Gragn who swept Ethiopia from south to north burning and demolishing Christian churches, shrines and monasteries. In 1862, Emperor Theodros wrote to Queen Victoria: "Mr. Plowden, and my late Grand Chamberlain, the Englishman Bell, used to tell me that there is a great Christian Queen, who loves all Christians." It was his wish, therefore, he said, that she "may arrange for the safe passage of ... [his] ambassadors everywhere on the road" because the Turks were giving him trouble both inside and outside
160
"the land of my ancestors." In 1888, Yohannes addressed a letter

to President Julius Grevy of France in which he said: "It is in slight things like colour that we are different from each other. Otherwise we and you are one in religion. You believe in Christ and the Cross. And we too." Writing to Victoria on the "traite injuste" by which Italy claimed protectorate over Ethiopia, Menelik appealed to the European Governments for justice and equity by strongly reminding her how, in the past, Ethiopians had enviously guarded and protected their faith and country from Muslim invasions:

Nous avons conserve notre sainte religion depuis plusieurs siecle en la defendant contre l'invasion musulmane....S.M. l'empereur Jean, notre illustre predecesseur, confiant en la verite de notre sainte foi et a laisse sa vie sur le champs de bataille avec des milliers de nos soldats, et les consequences de ces guerres desastreuses deciment nos populations et nos bestiaux.162

Christian Ethiopia had considered the damages that had been inflicted upon its churches, monasteries and holy places sacrilagous and unpardonable, and we find this sentiment being pointed out at different stages in the history of the country. Commenting on Britain's request to Menelik in 1897 not to accomodate or help the Mahdi against Egypt, for example, Rodd writes that he "submitted,

161

Archives Diplomatique, Paris, Yohannes to Julius Grevy, Ashenghe, Hidar 29,1880. [A literal translation from the Amharic original.]

162

Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, Menelik to Victoria, Tahsas 6,1882, [December 14,1889], p.403. For the English version see F.O. 95/750.

for His Majesty's consideration, an Article framed in the spirit of my instructions." Rodd was delighted to indicate that "His Majesty at once said that the enemy between his Empire and the Dervishes was irreconcilable. They had burned their churches and taken his people prisoners. It was inconceivable that he could ever give them aid or countenance." The Mahdi was also so puritanical and devoted in his religious commitments that his dictates to the "kaffirs" left no room for political conciliation. He wrote to Yohannes in no uncertain terms: "Become a Muslim and peace will be unto you....If on the other hand you choose disobedience and prefer blindness...no doubt you are falling into our hands as we are promised the possession of all the earth....God fulfills his promises....Let not the Devil hinder you."

163
The significance of this statement will be considered contextually in a subsequent chapter where European rivalries in Ethiopia are studied.

164
'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' 1897, Rodd to Salisbury, May 13, 1897, p.26.

165
Mahdia 1/34/11, The Mahdi to Yohannes, 1302/1884-5 (n.d.). [As supplied by G.N. Sanderson, "Contributions From African Sources to the History of European Competition in the Upper Valley of the Nile," *Journal of African History*, III, I (1962), p.69.] Yohannes, it is to be remembered, was equally committed and firm as regards his principles on the issue of religion. It was unthinkable, therefore, for him to have been intimidated by these messages from the Mahdi.

The history of the relations between Egypt and Ethiopia 166
 until the time the former definitively evacuated from Ethiopia
 - Massawa and Harar - at the close of the 1880s, was never one
 of peace and tranquility, and each had been governing the other
 at one time or another.

A brief survey of the relations existing between Abyssinia and Egypt during the last 60 years does not redound entirely to the credit of Egypt. It is a record of continual frontier conflict, in which Abyssinia has almost invariably come off as victor, and the last official act which took place was the surrender, in 1884, of the Boghos province to Abyssinia in compensation for the assistance rendered by the latter in extricating the Egyptian frontier garrison from the revolted Sudanese by whom they were beset.167

The chapter of Ethiopian-Sudanese rivalry was closed at the beginning of 1889 when Yohannes, after almost two decades of repeated wars and sustained hostility with the Mahdists, finally died in one of his last battles with them. With a blend of diplomatic ingenuity and a calculated display of friendship and peaceful overtures towards the Mahdi, Menelik was quick at forging a new

166

See G.Douin, Histoire de Regne du Khedive Ismail, Vol.III. part 3, Cairo, Societe Royal de Geographie d'Egypt, 1941.

167

'Precis of Information Obtained by the British Mission to Abyssinia,' March-June 1897, p.11.

era of quiet between the two nations. This he did because first, he had realized it would be paying in the long run and secondly, he had anticipated that he could not afford to go to war with the Mahdi for, as actively as he was now engaged with Italy, it was impossible for him to spread his military power too thin and thus risk being at a disadvantage.

P A R T T W O

THE POLICY OF INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY

CHAPTER 4

THE TREATY OF WICHALLE: ITALY'S ATTEMPT AT PROTECTORATE

The instruments of foreign policy are recognizable as being effective only when they bring about recognition to the actions of a state in its relations with other states. On the other hand, for a state to be able to possess such effective instruments of foreign policy, it must, among other things, be able to represent not only the tenets which, in the conventional sense, characterize a nation state, but also must be the accepted political authority in whom the articulation of the spiritual, cultural and social values of the nation resides. In short, it must stand to represent the ethos of the nation and, in some sense, epitomize its aspirations. It will then be admitted and recognized by other states as reflecting or representing the actions and behaviours of the nation. A foreign policy lacking in these fundamentals will, by the very concepts of the definition of the prevailing international law,

be found to be wanting in credibility. If indeed this were the case, it would bring adverse problems to the state by hindering such a foreign policy from fostering first, the required linkage with the outside world and secondly, by minimizing the chances of the state to enforce its international duties and obligations.

The crux behind Italy's attempts to conduct Ethiopian foreign policy was primarily based on the implicit desire to exploit an alleged absence of such instruments of foreign policy in Ethiopia. As a result, it was Italy's wish to attain protectorate roles over Ethiopia. It was, on the other hand, Menelik's sustained efforts to deny Italy such a role that brought the two nations into an irreconcilable conflict.

Menelik, as would be attempted in the analysis of subsequent chapters, was very well aware of these trappings and he was alive to the dangers which could follow from such conflicts. In Africa, where authority mostly depended not only on constituted power but also on an amalgam of a host of social, economic as well as political factors, its appreciation and therefore its application in the international sense poses some difficulties. The difficulties become obviously exaggerated and much more defined where tribal and ethnic differences fail to match the patterns evolved by recent scholastic postulates in the field of the study of the process of national integration. If the modern approach or what is now known as the scientific approach to the study of governments were therefore

to be literally applied to that of traditional African realities, not only would this be an exercise in futility, but would entail the imposition of one set of political norms and values on an altogether asymmetrically placed social, economic and cultural order. Such an application may or may not, of itself, constitute a serious problem. The danger is that it will not contribute to a better understanding of the problems involved. Unfortunately, this was actually the line of approach that was being persistently advanced by the precursors of the modern approach in their attempt to lay precedents which they thought would justify their future actions of conquests in Africa.

For Menelik, the challenge that was coming from Italy was to be met with all determination and vigour. By so doing, he was trying to demonstrate, first, that in the final analysis, ultimate power resided in him and that he also retained the final say in the administration of the affairs of the state. He was also conveying to the adversary that in order to enforce his authority he also retained in him the means to effectively control the military, social, religious as well as economic sectors of the nation. Secondly, he had also strongly maintained that military, social, religious, economic and cultural interactions had strongly helped to bring together a cohesive, united and integrated people against hostile encroachments from outside. For him, Ethiopia was a strongly united and indivisible nation and it existed, as it

had existed for thousands of years before him, as an unfragmented and coherent entity. Not only Menelik but also Kings and Emperors before him believed, despite the absence of central governments that commanded authority in the entire Empire at different epochs, that Ethiopia was there in fact and in reality. Menelik, therefore, advanced a strong and, in many respects, a viable policy of an integrated and united Ethiopia. He insisted that it was to be recognized as such. In giving out his official version of the limits and extent of Ethiopia in his circular letter of April 10, 1891 to the European powers, he pointed out in particular this aspect of his policy:

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. 1

Menelik attempted to present himself to the outside world as the custodian and provider of national unity and security, and in this image of his person he stressed that the primary responsibility for the survival of his nation rested with him. Naturally, he was

1
 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' 1897, p.16.

also conveyign by this that as a guardian of the nation's supreme values he was the articulator of the foreign policy of the nation.

To a great extent, the Treaty of Wichalle was a prelude to an emphatic assertion of the independence of Ethiopia, a rejection of colonialism, and the portrayal of a strong, viable and determined image of Ethiopia. However, when the projected image was challenged and undermined by Italy, the ensuing Battle of Adwa represented the refusal to accept foreign impositions over Ethiopia. Wichalle and Adwa, therefore, are a study in the dynamics of peace and war between Ethiopia and Italy. It is within this context that an attempt would be made to study and analyze the different issues which were involved and try to offer some generalizations regarding not only their significance but also how these issues were responsible for a host of political decisions that were to be made both by Menelik and the foreign powers in the following two decades. Especially, Menelik's decisions will be closely scrutinized and in the process such analytical categories as motivations, communication and competence of the role of the major decision makers will be employed to study these decisions. As we shall see, these decisions we shall soon be considering were, in many ways, responsible for determining the course of events not only in Ethiopia but also in Europe and Africa.

What was the rationale which led Menelik and Italy to revert from a treaty of peace and cooperation to war? In the study of

the discrepancies existing between man's rational and irrational behaviours in the field of peace and war we are furnished with stimulating thought that often times man's own nature was, and still is, the very cause which brought about the differences we will be considering in this chapter. Various explanations are furnished in the works of St. Augustine ('The City of God'); Machiavelli ('The Prince'); St. Aquinas ('Suma Theologica'); Rousseau ('Social Contract'); Montesquieu ('The Spirit of the Laws'); Hobbes ('Leviathan'); Hume ('Inquiry into Human Understanding'); Clausewitz ('War, Politics and Power'); Reinhold Niebuhr ('Moral Man and Immoral Society'); Aron ('Peace and War') and others.

The very dominant doctrine among the classical spiritual fathers was that the authority of the state was established by God for the benefit of man. War, together with coercive government, private property and slavery, constituted one of the four institutions of the 'ius gentium' and it is most of the time brought about not because rational human nature was inclined to propagate it but because of the sinfulness inherent in human nature. "Coercive power was divinely appointed remedy for sin, designed to be used as an instrument of justice to put men into the right path. Hence when

force was used justly, it was good, not an evil."³

The Christian teachings of the medieval era were likewise dominated by the doctrine of the "just war" which was authoritatively discussed by Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine during the fourth and fifth centuries. Saint Ambrose argued that not only was the state endowed with a right to make war ('ius belli') but, under given conditions, it was morally obliged to make war. He wrote: "Man has a moral duty to employ force to resist active wickedness, for to refrain from hindering evil when possible is tantamount to promoting it."⁴ However, he had qualified his position by insisting that war was permitted only for a just cause and by fair methods. Similarly, Saint Augustine recognized the tragic aspects of war and condemned its unjust preparations on human beings. Nevertheless, he affirmed that there are occasions when men have no alternative but to accept war as a remedy. He wrote: "War and conquest...are a sad necessity in the eyes of men of principle....It would [however] be still more unfortunate if wrongdoers should dominate just men."⁵

³
Ibid., p.151.

⁴
See F.H.Homes Dudden, The Life and Times of Saint Ambrose, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1945, II, pp.538-539.

⁵
Saint Augustine, The City of God, Book IV, chapter 15, Demetrius B. Zema, S.J. & Gerald G.Walsh, (trans.), New York, Fathers of the Church, 1950, p.193.

In short, war was taken to be acceptable provided the right moral intention was present and if such a resort to force would bring about positive good than evil. These were also the teachings of medieval thinkers such as Antonius of Florence and Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Spinoza linked conflict or war to man's own imperfection as a rational being. Montesquieu and Rousseau, on the other hand, refuted Spinoza's analysis with the proposition that the sources of all conflict are not so much in the minds of men as they are in the nature of social activity. Rousseau, for instance, contends that if only man was able to abide by the true spirit with which justice was given to him by God then "we should need neither government nor laws."⁶ This is in contradistinction to Spinoza's admittance that "men in so far as they live in obedience to reason,⁷ necessarily live always in harmony one with another."⁸ Rousseau objects to the proposition that a people of true Christians would form the most perfect society imaginable. He maintains that such

⁶
Waltz, Man, the State and War, Columbia University Press, New York, p.168.

⁷
Rousseau, The Social Contract, Book II, Chapter VI, G.D.H.Cole (trans.), Everyman's Library, New York, 1950, p.34.

⁸
Spinoza, "Ethics," Part IV, Prop. XXV, proof.

a society "would not be a society of men." He writes: "For the state to be peaceful and for harmony to be maintained, all citizens without exception would have to be good Christians." Thus, Rousseau parts way with the view that man being a social animal, his behaviour in society is explainable by his animal passion and or his human reason. According to him, man being born free of prejudices, has no innate goodness or badness as such. He contends it is the evil emanating from the vices of established society which brings about the human qualities that spoil and corrupt man. Like Plato, he maintains that bad social orders make man bad and that good ones make him good too. Thus, by the same trend of thought, Rousseau absolves man from being the major cause of war and instead locates the source in the state system.

In his lectures published under the title 'Politik' the German historian Heinrich Von Treitschke holds man responsible for the actions of the state. Aron paraphrases Treitschke's reasoning thus: "Man fulfills his moral vocation only in and through the state. States realize their essence only when they come to grips with each other. War, in fact, is not barbarism but a holy ordeal which rightly determines the destiny of peoples." ¹⁰

9

Rousseau, The Social Contract, Book IV, Chapter VIII, pp.135-136.

10

Aron, War and Peace, p.586.

Karl Von Clausewitz, an other authoritative writer on war and its significances, while admitting that war is directly linked to motivations in human nature, nevertheless rejects the assertion that it is an act of blind passion as some assert. According to Clausewitz, the essence of war is represented by its 'political object' and that it is therefore the value of this object which determines its measure and the sacrifices it entails.¹¹ In further explaining the point that war is not determinable only by sheer blind passion, he asserts that "as soon, therefore, as the required expenditure of force exceeds the value of the political object,¹² the object must be abandoned, and peace will be the result."

It is not intended here either to appraise or refute any of the contentions discussed above. War and its implications are too vast and complex a field to be adequately considered even within the contest of our present study. Suffice it to say that this paper prefers to start from the premise that all human acts begin in the minds and emotions of men. The corollary follows therefore that peace and war also begin in the minds and emotions of men. As man by his very nature is prone to seek happiness (that is, peace), his ills and misfortunes (that is, war when representing

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Clausewitz, War, Politics and Power, (Selections from 'On War,' and 'I believe and Profess'), Edward M. Collins (trans.), Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, 1962, p.93.

12

Ibid

the ultimate of his ills and misfortunes) are also, to a considerable extent, attributable to him and his actions. Waltz expresses the man versus human nature concept very adequately when he writes: "Our miseries are ineluctably the product of our natures. The root of all evil is man, and thus he is himself the root of specific evil,¹³ war."

In trying to analyze the confrontation between Menelik and Italy, we will subsequently come to the following conclusion. War between Menelik and Italy was made possible as a result of the stubborn exercise of crude will by each other. Initially, both needed peace to further their respective ends, Italy wanting her piece of the cake in this part of Africa through cunning and persuasion and Menelik jealously and tenaciously guarding his nation's pride and independence. Determined as both were in this test of will, the drive of what Clausewitz termed as the 'political object' was pushing them further apart towards confrontation and war. In their determination, it is particularly essential to note, that the psychological element involved was very important. Italy, then relatively mighty by Ethiopian and other standards, was feeling comfortably at ease and superior to the ill-equipped and untrained Ethiopians which it had now vowed to crush and bring

13

Waltz; Man, the State and War, p.3.

under subjugation. On the other hand, Menelik's Ethiopia was all too hesitant to go to war with Italy but too determined and stubborn not to allow the other side an easy victory over its own survival as an independent nation. This strong impulse to preserve oneself, Aron says, is "best illustrated by the celebrated formula: he is not conquered who dares not admit defeat."¹⁴

The circumstances surrounding the differences between Menelik and Italy and the causes which brought them about are varied and complex in nature. The immediate cause for their misunderstandings, however, was the individual interpretation each side gave to Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle of May 2, 1889.

Who wanted article 17? A preliminary background study of the historical sequences which led to the signing of the treaty is already furnished in chapter 2. From the foregoing analysis we have established that the essentials of this sequence initially revolved around the hostilities and power struggle which had then developed between Yohannes and Menelik. This period of hostilities was also marked for its dynamism in which Italy was hard at work to exploit the political differences which existed between the two Ethiopian rulers.

Menelik had needed the rapprochement offered by Italy primarily to counterbalance the growingly threatening power of Yohannes and

14

Aron, Peace and War, p.25.

secondly to use the newly acquired friendship with Italy as an effective means to political ascendancy. Yohannes, on the other hand, did not require the support of Italy for, as previously pointed out, Italy had nothing to offer him which he did not already have. He was King of Kings and comfortably dictated his terms not only to Menelik but to most important fiefdoms and Kingdoms.

At this juncture, however, one other point must be emphasized, namely, that while Menelik wanted the treaty for crucial political reasons mentioned above, he certainly did not want Article 17. It was Italy which wanted it, for it was an article of protectorate by which, like other two previous proposals,¹⁵ it wished to advance its colonial design in Ethiopia. It is obvious from past discussions that Menelik would have nothing to do with it because it was anathema to his staunchly adhered to policy of maintaining Ethiopian independence and assuring its sovereignty. It would be these marked differences concerning the Treaty of Wichalle and its subsequent culmination in the Battle of Adwa that this chapter would attempt to critically look into as a case study and try to provide some concluding judgments on the factors which motivated several foreign policy decisions.

15

'The Massaja Treaty Proposal' (March 1, 1897), pp.86-90;
"Treaty of Friendship and Commerce' (March 21,1883), pp.90-93.

As the treaty negotiations are complex and in some instances very involved, it is not intended here to discuss the Treaty of Wichalle in all its details and its entire historical context. In the course of the analysis, only the salient aspects of the negotiations and the essential elements of the treaty will be brought to the fore and discussed in a pertinent manner so as to be able to show why and how the respective policies of the two countries seriously clashed, parted ways and made war inevitable. The Treaty of Wichalle and, later on, the resultant Battle of Adwa are presented as case studies the better to scrutinize the different aspects of the foreign policy of Menelik, how such a foreign policy was motivated, conceived and in what way it was implemented. Here, the decision-making factor is important, and wherever feasible, the rationale behind major decisions will be closely studied. The most important aspect of the analysis, however, will deal with those circumstances which will furnish us with the explanations as to why the foreign policy of Menelik underwent a similar course because of the present treaty and a combination of a host of other factors.

Wichalle: a preliminary study in motivations, options
and decisions

What are the circumstances which brought about the treaty of Wichalle? What were the major motivating factors which induced Menelik

to seek Italy's friendship and to decide on such a course? What were his options, if any, and to what extent were his decisions instrumental in either influencing or stimulating Italian foreign policy decisions in this regard?

The motivations behind the initial Menelik-Italian relations were, at least on the surface, complementary in that each depended on a set of factors which emphasized the mutuality of interests of the two parties. Menelik was aspiring for the achievement of national prominence, and to this end he had intended to make use of Italian friendship. On the other hand, Italy was determined to benefit from an alliance with Menelik in its hostilities with Yohannes.

It is to be remembered that some time before the death of Yohannes, Italy was actively at work to develop friendly relations with Menelik if not for love of him simply to further weaken the relationship existing between him and Yohannes, and thus to seriously undermine the position of the latter in the north. More than anything else, what Italy needed at the time was neutrality of Menelik against Yohannes in case of hostilities with him. Italy wanted to make sure that Menelik, with the large Showan army at his disposal, would not come north to strengthen the hands of the Tigrean Emperor. At this particular point, political circumstances

16

Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, Robilant to Antonelli, March 11, 1887, p.260. See also p.81 ff.

were such that both parties were in need of each other. Italy, as indicated above, was desirous of the collaboration of Menelik so that he would deny Yohannes the help he so urgently wanted to check Italian drive from the Red Sea area. Italy therefore sought, and acquired, a treaty regarding Menelik's neutrality in October 17 1887. Menelik, however, had no need of the treaty of October 1887. Why, therefore, did Menelik decide to accept the reality? The decision was mainly as a result of his wish to obtain arms in order to counter-balance the power of his rival - Yohannes. In accordance with the 1887 agreement, while Italy assured Menelik that it will not annex Ethiopian territory, it promised to supply him with some 5000 Remington rifles which will reach his Kingdom within six months. That these arms were also meant to be used against Yohannes and on behalf of Italy was stressed in the draft agreement presented to Menelik, and also in a letter Crispi addressed to him on January 5, 1888.

In the draft, not included in the signed treaty, we find that it was suggested that "...che queste armi non saranno mai impiegate a recare danno agli intersessi italiani, ma che anzi 18 serviranno a recare vantaggio all'Italia stessa." When Dr. Ragazzi-

17

Ibid., Antonelli to Crispi, September 19, 1887, p.274. See also Conti Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia, p.3.

18

Ibid., "...that these arms will never be used to cause damage to Italian interests, but, on the contrary will serve to procure advantages to Italy itself." (Translation as supplied by Rubenson, Wichale XVII, p.47.) p.275.

the envoy who took the draft agreement to Rome - returned to Menelik's court at the end of October 1888 with some one thousand rifles, the letter he brought from Crispi reminded the Shoan King that the rifles were meant to "carry destruction among the enemies¹⁹ of Your Majesty and those of my country."

However, other than preparing himself against possible attacks by Yohannes there were no evidences of hostility by Menelik towards his monarch. In fact, Menelik's loyalty was such that he followed the instructions of Yohannes to the letter in their execution. At a time when the Emperor's military strength was spread too thin over much of his northern territory Menelik had moved up to the Province of Wello and Begemidir to maintain the national security and stability which was so menacingly threatened by the Dervishes. Yohannes, however, was an ill-advised Emperor as regards Menelik's intentions at about this particular time. He had become very suspicious of Menelik, and especially his dealings with Antonelli had brought strong reactions from the courtiers at the palace of Yohannes at Mekelle.* It was at this particular moment in their coexistence that Yohannes took the unfortunate decision that soured relations between them and thus induced Menelik to drift away from the former into the embrace of Italy. Yohannes returned

¹⁹

Ibid., Crispi to Menelik, February 5, 1888, p.313.

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See Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, Antonelli to Crispi, June 10, 1888, p.336.

to his capital without embarking on his stipulated war with Italy and at the same time ordered Menelik to speed back south to his own capital. Menelik was also suspicious of the steps taken by Yohannes. Thus, the existence of a seemingly precarious situation brought about yet another decision to isolate Yohannes. The motivation, in this instance, was inspired by the desire for political survival. Therefore, to make sure that he would not be found the weaker of the two in case of a confrontation, Menelik speedily arranged to align himself with King Tekel-Haymanot of the Kingdom of Gojjam in a pledge that each will stand by the side of the other if Yohannes intended to march over their territories and demanded their submission. It is also to be remembered that Menelik, as a result of the agreement at Liche, had wed his daughter Zewditu to Ras Araya Selassie, the son of Yohannes, to possibly minimize existing tensions between the two royal houses of Tigre and Shoa. This tie was no more there, however, when Ras Araya Selassie died and the new situation gave Menelik a much more freer hand in the national political struggle.

Nevertheless, the new situation had not left Menelik with readily available alternatives. He had to decide between two options.

Option No. 1: Go to war with Yohannes at once and defeat him decisively and speedily.

Option No. 2: Buy time while negotiating with Italy for (a) the acquisition of arms and ammunition; (b) for establishing friendly relations the better to benefit from (a) and (b) above at

a crucial time.

Evaluation of options (1) and (2):

The first option, if decided upon, would have left Menelik quite vulnerable, for an immediate attack by Yohannes would have meant a possible defeat in his hands. Menelik was no match to Yohannes militarily.

The second option gave Menelik the required time to prepare himself and build his army for any future eventuality. This, however, carried with it the risk that an earlier attack by Yohannes was a possibility and that since political situations then could have drastically changed he could have been the loser as a result. Menelik was prepared, or at least willing, to take such a risk because by and large it provided him with the other possibility of considering other options to the danger that posed itself so threateningly before him.

Thus, as a result of this particular decision, the groundwork for the new Menelikian foreign policy was laid. Faced as he was with an imminent danger from his opponent, Menelik commenced in earnest to implement his decision by building up his relations with Italy.

The very first action brought about by this decision was the acceptance of Italy as an ally, and based on this promise, the acquisition of arms and ammunition to strengthen Menelik's army.

The new situation had also given Italy the role of the provider. Consequently, it was decided to send Antonelli to Rome to represent the request to the Italian Government. Menelik was now in urgent need of no fewer than 10,000 rifles if he were to defend himself against Yohannes.

The Italian decision: In this regard, Italian foreign policy decisions were greatly enhanced in that the situation gave Rome the opportunity to act decisively in a manner that suited its own political ends. A very keen colonialist, Crispi realized that this was an opportune time to obtain some political concessions from Menelik. He therefore immediately instructed Antonelli that he was to assure Menelik that the requested arms and ammunition would be provided. However, as a guarantee that Menelik will observe Italian interests in Ethiopia he would also have to enter into an obligation. This obligation was nothing less than allowing certain members of his royal family to give themselves up as political hostages to Italy and the consideration of the modification of some boundary lines with Ethiopia.

In an interesting document which reveals the intentions of subsequent Italian actions, Antonelli enumerated the would be gains and advised the followign steps in their achievement. Some

of the most pertinent points are the following:

1. The revenge of the Italian dead at the battles of Saati and Dogali will be effected in the hands of Menelik;
2. Menelik would engage Yohannes in the south giving Italy a free hand in the north;
3. Menelik would settle the problem of the occupation of Massawa once victorious;
4. In order to achieve the above two points Menelik would be the recipient of 10,000 rifles and ammunition;
5. An Italian mission would be sent to Menelik with a proposed agreement and for its eventual signing before the arms reached him. 21

The 'modus operandi' was not new. Already, a year and a half back, more or less the same stipulations were advanced just before the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance of October 20, 1887. A March 11, 1887 document in ciphers from the Italian Government to Antonelli demanded clarification on the following essential points:

1. Is Menelik disposed to give, in an opportune moment, effective cooperation against Yohannes?
2. What would eventually be the importance of such a cooperation?
3. Failing effective cooperation, will he take such an attitude as to occupy part of the forces of Yohannes in the south [Shoa] or will he be absolutely neutral

in the conflict.²²

Next to Crispi, the most crucial and significantly important personality behind the conception and drafting of the treaty was Antonelli. What was the competence of Antonelli as an adviser and as an aide to the actors who were responsible for decision? Count Pietro Antonelli, grandson of Cardinale Giacomo Antonelli,²³ was born in Rome on April 29, 1853. Antonelli was not an altogether new person to Ethiopia. At the young age of twenty six he was already attracted by prospects in Africa and it was in the spring of 1879 that he, together with G.M. Giulietti, joined - as a 'privato viaggiatori' - the third mission of Captain Sebastiano Martini* to Shoa to assist Antinori in the expedition he was now

22

Ibid., Robilant to Antonelli, March 11, 1887, pp.260-262. For further readings on this aspect of Ethiopian-Italian relations, see Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, Antonelli to Crispi, September 19, 1887, p.274 ff; Crispi to Menelik, February 2, 1888, p.313; Rosseti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.29-30. See also chapter 1, pp.41-44.

23

M.A.E. Etiopia: Mar Rosso, Vol.I, Tomo 1, pp.147-148; Arturo Lancellotti, Pionieri Italiani in Africa, p.157.

*

Martini, accompanied by Captain Antonio Cechi, was in Shoa in October 1877 with a letter and gifts in arms to Menelik from King Victor Emanuel II. (Details of the letter are to be found in A.S. MAI, 36/1-4, Vittorio Emanuele II to Menelik, February 25, 1887. See M.A.E. Etiopia: Mar Rosso, Vol.I, Tomo 1, footnote 10, p.161)

24

conducting in Ethiopia on behalf of the Italian Government.

Count Orazio Antinori was in Ethiopia since 1877 as leader of a so called Italian scientific and exploratory expedition in Shoa, financed and supported by the 'Societa Geographica Italiana' -²⁵ which in return was financed and supported by the Italian Government.

Antonelli was in Ethiopia at an important moment in the history of the relationship between Ethiopia and Italy. Primarily, it was the epoch during which Italian interest and attention was being actively directed towards Ethiopia and the adjoining areas. Secondly, it was a period during which the power struggle for the Ethiopian leadership between Yohannes and Menelik was assuming its upward escalation. By 1882, Italy had already established herself at the Red Sea coast of Asseb and the situation had called for a renewal of diplomatic contacts on a much more accentuated level. The 'Societa Geographica Italiana,' a political arm of the Italian Foreign Office in Shoa, had by 1876 already decided to send a representative and in January 1877 Antinori was given a warm reception by Menelik. The society which he represented was

24

M.A.E. Ethiopia: Mar Rosso, Vol.I, Tomo 1, pp.144-145; 147-148.

25

Ibid., p.143.

26

also given a permanent residence at Let Marefia. It was Antinori who was slated to negotiate the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce of May 21, 1883 had he not died at Let Marefia earlier in the year. On August 27, 1882, after his return to Italy at the end of 1881 and an absence of a few months from the Shoan capital, Antonelli had again sailed from Naples for Ethiopia to join Antinori as a member of his mission. However, because of the latter's death, Antonelli was made head of the mission and took charge of the negotiations. With this appointment Antonelli's diplomatic career was to be closely associated, for some historic and charged years yet to come, with Ethiopia. On May 21, 1883, he successfully concluded the treaty which designated Italy as Ethiopia's 'porta
27
lettere' with Menelik. Again, in 1887, when hostilities between Italy and Yohannes were at their height, it was Antonelli who succeeded in acquiring a treaty of friendship and neutrality from
28
Menelik.
29

Thus, when for the third time Antonelli was given the important role of the treaty maker in 1889, his credentials were

26
Ibid

27
Ibid., pp.266-268.

28
For details see chapter 1, pp.37-41.

29
Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, p.23 ff. (Treaty of Amity and Alliance), see chapter 2, pp.87-89; 91-93.

never found to be wanting. He very well knew the people and the country, and what is important, he also knew Menelik and his respected state Councillors intimately.

Antonelli was already such an accomplished and suave diplomat in Ethiopian politics that in a court where etiquette and protocol requirements were so significantly different and rigorously demanding than that of the Quirinale, he was indeed faring well. By all standards, he was correctly respected, heard to and held in reasonably high esteem until, at the nadir of his Ethiopian diplomatic career in 1890, he fell out of favour because of irreconcilable differences and disagreements between him and Menelik over Article 17^{*} (The Treaty of Wichalle). During his prolonged negotiations with Menelik, he faithfully represented his country's ideals, and even though his detractors and political opponents at home had a different view on this, he executed the foreign policy decisions and instructions of the Italian Foreign Office to the best of his ability. Above all, Antonelli was a nationalist who took his country's pride and virtues to heart and a diplomat who valiantly defended them to the maximum, right or wrong.

At the end of his career in Ethiopia, however, the harvest of his hardest toils was not so rewarding. He left Ethiopia a morally

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See chapter 2, pp.108-109.

dejected and psychologically battered individual with his star at home very low and not so encouraging for a person of his career and stature. Like most politicians, Italian diplomats too did not like losers. Antonelli had lost in the diplomatic arena in Africa and the then politically volatile situation in Rome did not give him a cheerful welcome reception. The man who once ably represented and promoted Italy's cause in Africa was being hounded in public and denounced in the legislator, in the corridors of the office of the Prime Minister and the army barracks. After the ensuing disagreement over Article 17, Rudini, the Italian Foreign Minister, referred to the episode as an 'Antonelli-Menelik' difference and not an 'Italy-Menelik' one, suggesting that Antonelli was to be blamed for the failure. On March 28, 1892, answering to interrogations at the Chamber of Deputies on the Ethiopian problem, Rudini had this to say:

Quant aux rapports de l'Italie avec Menelik, ils ont été rompus au moment du départ du comte Antonelli....Ce traité, notamment en ce qui touche l'article 17, est toujours obscur. On a cherché à dissiper cette obscurité; on a écrit à Menelik; celui-ci a répondu. Mais il est à remarquer que la question soulevée est moins entre le Gouvernement italien et Menelik qu'entre celui-ci et le comte Antonelli. Quand Menelik verra que le comte Antonelli combat le Gouvernement, il finira peut-être par se fier davantage au Gouvernement italien. (Hilarité) 30

Going back to 1888, it was this Antonelli of vigorous nationalistic persuasion, who left the Shoan highlands and set sail for Rome one fine Ethiopian spring morning to convey Menelik's proposals to the Italian Government.

At this juncture, it is important to note the existence of two important and divergent national interests at play in Ethiopia. Italy was now already settled on the Red Sea coast and the upward surge from the sea coast to the Ethiopian highlands was being checked and resisted by the military forces of Yohannes. The latter had also adamantly refused to open channels for diplomatic overtures with Italy. This decision by Yohannes had led Italy to make false readings into Menelik's own position as regards the independence and sovereignty of his country. It was speculated in Rome that now that Menelik was the only one who acceded to Italy's requests to establish relations with Italy he could easily be persuaded, or may even be used as an agent, to be a partner in the advancement of Italian colonial designs in Ethiopia. The speculation, however, was based on false hopes. Menelik had needed Italy to advance his own interest. He had very much needed Italian arms (option 2) to thwart what could have then been a devastating defeat to his military forces by Yohannes if the latter was in a position to do so. It should be pointed out that Antonelli was in the first place sent to Rome by Menelik to acquire for him the arms and ammunition he needed. Menelik had

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wanted him to be back in Shoa by September. Once Antonelli was in Rome, he in fact became one of those officials to advise for the conceivment and drafting of the Treaty of Wichalle.

In accordance with Antonelli's advice, Menelik's arms deal was to be tied to a weel-arranged 'quid pro quo.' Among other things, it was suggested that an Italian envoy should precede the delivery of the requested arms and present Menelik with a proposed agreement for ceding Ethiopian territory in order to make such an offer good, in case Menelik chose to proclaim himself King of Kings
32
of Ethiopia. Most significantly, the spirit of the protectorate paragraph ("S.M. il Re Menelik consente di servisi..."), namely, the 'carte blanche' offering Italy a definite say in Ethiopian foreign affairs, was put on paper.

It is to remembered that already in October 20,1887, Italy had strongly sought Menelik's neutrality against Yohannes and
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agreed to supply him with 5000 Remington rifles. However, non of these rifles had reached Menelik, and in fact, they were later on added to constitute the 10,000 rifles Menelik so urgently requested
34
at a time of the dispatch of Antonelli to Rome at the end of 1888.

31
Rubenson, Wichale XVII, p.49.

32
A.S. MAI. 36/5-47, Antonelli to Crispi, August 30,1888. (As supplied by Rubenson, Wichale XVII, p.50, footnote 46.)

33
Article 4, 'Treaty of Amity and Alliance,' October 20,1887.

34
A.S. MAI. 36/5-47, Antonelli to Crispi, August 30,1888.

Evaluation of relations: In deciding to send Antonelli and Giulio Pestalozza to Menelik's court to negotiate the anticipated treaty, King Humbert stressed in his letter of September 12, among other things:

L'appello fatto dalla M.V. a noi ed al nostro Governo non abbiamo voluto che restasse senza un'immediata risposta. Nei momenti difficili ci è grato di dare una prova del nostro affetto ad un Re lontano ed amico....Il conte Antonelli è incaricato di sottoporre all'approvazione della M.V. un trattato d'amicizia e di commercio, tale da rendere sicura e durevole la pace a tutta l'Etiopia. 35

Antonelli, with a few thousand rifles and a copy of the draft treaty of Wichalle, arrived in Addis Ababa on January 26, 1889. Menelik was not satisfied since Antonelli was not back with all the 10,000 rifles. He therefore asked Antonelli to urge his government to hasten their dispatch and delivery as fast as was practicable. Menelik was satisfied that his suspicions regarding the intentions of Yohannes were reasonably correct because by September the latter had already attacked King Tekle Haymanot with whom Menelik, for fear of a similar sudden attack on himself, had earlier made peace and pledges of cooperation. 36

The same day Antonelli had arrived in Addis Ababa, he had

35

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, p.55.

36

Doc. Dipl., 1889-90, Antonelli to Crispi, August 8, 1888, p.338 ff; Pellenc, Les Italiens en Afrique, p.29. See also chapter 1, pp.45-46.

cabled Crispi through Cecchi, the Italian agent in Aden, to hasten the dispatch of the rifles and ammunition Menelik had requested. ³⁷ Menelik also wrote Crispi emphasizing the urgency ³⁸ of their dispatch. It is important to note here that even though Antonelli wanted to recognize the urgency indicated by Menelik out of diplomatic expediency, he had never doubted for a moment the inevitability of war between Yohannes and Menelik. ³⁹ Traversi had also assured Crispi of the same. ⁴⁰ Thus, in order to see the rupture come true, Italy commenced to stall in earnest.

Indicating that the delay in delivery was based more on strategy than technicalities, and which strategy was contained in Antonelli' letter of August 30,1888 to Crispi ⁴¹ (after the former saw the desperation of Menelik), Rubenson comments :

that arms reached Minilik so late cannot have been due only to difficulties in purchasing and transporting them. It was part of Antonelli's plan that the envoy should precede the arms, so that these could be used once more as an argument

37

Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, Antonelli to Crispi, January 1,1889, p.397.

38

Ibid., Menelik to Crispi, Yekatit 14,1881 (February 20,1889), p.403.

39

Ibid., Antonelli to Crispi, October 31,1888, p.360 ff; January 4, 1889, p.378; January 22,1889, p.396.

40

Ibid., Traversi to Crispi,December 16,1888, p.388 ff.

41

See chapter 4,239-240

in bargaining for more favourable treaty....
 The delay of the Italians in furnishing Minilik with the arms and ammunition he had asked for, and their reluctance to commit themselves actively on the northern frontier, had demonstrated to Minilik that they were not particularly eager to help him but rather intent on gaining as much as possible from his dilemma.⁴²

A turning point in the whole situation occurred in the second week of March 1889 when Yohannes decided to revert his attention to the north and make war with the Dervishes. On March 10, in the ensuing battle at Metemma, Yohannes fell. The power struggle between the Ethiopian leaders was partially settled in favour of Menelik and Italy had lost her important trump card in her Ethiopian colonial policy. No doubt, the Tigrean house still had its contenders to the throne now vacated by Yohannes in the person of Ras Mengesha - the son of the deceased monarch - and the most admired and powerful Tigrean warrior of Tigre, Ras Alula. However, none commanded the respect and prestige of Menelik and possessed the military power newly acquired by him so as to be a threat to his authority. Naturally, Menelik had very little need of Italy and perhaps even of the proposed treaty at this particular time. In fact, some three weeks earlier, when Yohannes was preparing for war with the Dervishes, it had even been suggested to Crispi by Menelik that the consideration of the treaty should

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be postponed. The altered situation had therefore deprived Italy

42

Rubenson, Wichale XVII, pp.53-55.

43

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, Menelik to Crispi, February 20, 1889, pp.57-58.

of her power to bargain favourable concessions with Menelik who, just a few weeks ago, was indeed susceptible to pressure.

Italy, under these circumstances, had not contributed significantly to the position Menelik was later on to be elevated on the national level. So, any suggestions that Menelik was "pitchforked" to power by Italy and that later on he proved to be an ingrate by denouncing the treaty after using Italy, ⁴⁴ is without foundation. For all practical purposes, Italy had lost her case as regards the treaty the day Yohannes had died at Metemma on March 10, 1889. In two weeks time, on March 26, 1889, Menelik had proclaimed himself King of Kings at the historic city of Gonder. It was exactly two months to the day since Antonelli arrived at the court of Menelik to negotiate the treaty. Approximately a month later, on May 2, 1889 (Miazia 25, 1881), the Treaty of Wichalle was signed between Antonelli and Menelik at the latter's ⁴⁵ military camp of Wichalle.

The treaty and a study of pertinent decisions

The treaty of Wichalle was essentially a treaty of friendship and commerce with twenty articles in it. Generally speaking, these

44

An Italian school of thought strongly argues that Menelik had in fact acted in bad faith. For details see pp. 344-349.

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See for treaty in Appendices.

articles dwell on six major aspects of Ethiopian-Italian relations:

1. The necessity of perpetual peace and friendship between Ethiopia and Italy. (Articles 1 & 2).
2. The setting up of a special Commission to delimit the limits of the territory over which Ethiopia and Italy exercise sovereign rights in order to remove doubts and therefore future misunderstandings. (Article 3).
3. The establishment of freedom of commerce, travel, religious liberty and jurisdiction over nationals. (Articles 5,6,7,8,9,10,11, 12,13, & 18).
4. The prevention of slave trade. (Article 14).
5. The power of either party to modify or revise the treaty after 5 years with an advance notice of one year. (Article 16).
6. The utilization by Ethiopia of Italian good offices in her contacts with outside powers. (Article 17).

The most important article with which this chapter is primarily interested is Article 17, or what is now generally referred to as the protectorate paragraph. Now that a concise background concerning the circumstances which led to its conception and inclusion in the treaty is provided, an attempt will be made to analyze the events which brought about the differences and which ultimately led Menelik to make the decision to denounce the treaty at the cost of going to war with Italy.

Perhaps to fulfill his own suggestions contained in his letter of August 30, 1888 to Crispi, namely, that should Menelik consent to sign the proposed treaty a Shoan mission should come to

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Rome to pay its respects to the Italian King, Antonelli requested Menelik to allow him to take with him to Rome an Ethiopian mission which will be headed by Ras Mekonnen. The successful accomplishment of the signing of the treaty was more than enough cause for jubilation to Antonelli. He had already broken the news of his success to Cecchi, the Italian Consul at Aden, and who in turn had transmitted the contents of the message to Rome by telegramme. Antonelli's message read: "King Menelik has signed the treaty with concession of territory. I am now with Degiacc Maconen [Mekonnen], governor of Harrar, who will be sent as Ambassador

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to our August Sovereign." A day later, Crispi congratulated Antonelli on his achievements and promised to send a Royal Boat to Zeila and a grand reception for Mekonnen when he arrived in Italy. Some days later, Crispi, bent on impressing Mekonnen, and to show Italy's friendship towards Menelik, decided that instead of the Royal Boat promised a man of war would be sent to Zeila to bring the Ethiopian mission to Italy. At last, for Crispi at least, it was a dream come true. Italy had finally believed that it had now achieved its design of acquiring a territory adjoining the much coveted Red Sea coast and assured a say in Ethiopian affairs.

46

See p.246 ff.

47

Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, p.413.

48

Ibid., p.228.

The 'Colombo' arrived at Naples on August 21, 1889, with Ras Mekonnen, other dignitaries and Grazmatch Yosef Negussie - his interpreter and the man responsible for translating the Treaty of Wichalle - on board to a very warm and becoming welcome. On August 28, King Humbert received Mekonnen in an "udienza solenne." In the palace ceremony Ras Mekonnen made a speech which was translated in French by Yosef reiterating that "il mio Re vuole la pace."⁴⁹

For a little over a month after his arrival in Italy, Mekonnen was taken on visits around Italian cities and was entertained in grand style. It was towards the close of September, however, that negotiations were commenced, Ethiopian-Italian relations revised and the so-called Additional Convention to the Treaty of Wichalle signed at Naples on October 1, 1889 between Crispi, on behalf of the Italian Government, and Mekonnen in the name of Menelik. It is very difficult to know why, in the first place, Mekonnen signed the Additional Convention and why he entered into negotiations without obtaining the clearance and consent of Menelik. The Convention added nothing new to the benefit of Menelik. It was, in fact, typical of conventions by which colonialist countries legitimized their possessions which

49

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.59-60. ("My King wants peace.")

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Giglio says that even though the Additional Convention was published with the date of October 1, 1889, it was not signed before

they have acquired through the simple act of conquest and proclamation. Aware that he had gained nothing but, on the other hand, lost much to Italian tactics, Menelik wrote to King Humbert on September 27, 1890, indicating these very same losses:

En outre, quand j'ai envoyé ras Meconen avec le comte Antonelli, c'était dans l'espoir que le traité que le comte m'avait apporté, et qui a été devant moi, serait terminé tel qu'il fut apporté, mais non pas qu'il en serait ajouté un autre. Quand, après, ras Meconen était de retour, et que j'ai vu qu'il y avait un autre traité supplémentaire, préférant votre amitié, j'ai accepté beaucoup d'articles qui ne sont pas avantageux pour notre pays. 50

In this useless of conventions which Menelik had so far concluded, the King of Italy recognized King Menelik as Emperor of Ethiopia (Article 1) while, in a very significant way, King Menelik also recognized "the sovereignty of the King of Italy

the dates of October 16 to 20. (Reference is made to A.S. MAI, 36/8-69). Carlo Giglio, "Article 17 of the Treaty of Uccialli," Journal of African History, VI, 2, 1965, p.227. This paper maintains the date appearing on the Additional Convention.)

50

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, Menelik to Humbert, September 27, 1890, p.79-82. ("On the other hand, when I had sent Ras Mekonnen with Count Antonelli, it was in the wish that the treaty which the Count had proposed to me, and which was in front of me, would be finalized the way it was proposed, and not that some more will be added to it. When Ras Mekonnen had returned and I had seen there was an other supplementary treaty, I had accepted many articles which are not advantageous to our country in preferring your friendship.") [A literal translation.]

in the Colonies which go under the name of Italian possessions in the Red Sea." For Italy, an other important provision of the convention was provided for in Article 5. It stipulated a loan of 4,000,000 Lire to Menelik from an Italian bank with the Italian Government as a guarantor for its payment. The article was detrimental to Ethiopian security and national sovereignty. The importance Italy attached to the strategically placed eastern city of Harar in the fulfillment of her grand design in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa will be discussed at a later stage. It was nonetheless a dream come true when Ethiopia, at a time hostilities were yet far away, was to recognize the right of Italy to take over the administration of the Harar custom house in the event of a regular non-payment of the loan (Article 6).

Unless one wishes to recognize Article 1 as being beneficial to Menelik, the spirit of the convention set a dangerous precedent regarding the national interest of Ethiopia. By this convention Italy obtained Menelik's recognition of Italian sovereignty over yet undefined and amorphous colonial territories generally labelled as "Italian possession in the Red Sea." In fact, what is more revealing was that while the negotiations for the Additional

51

Castonnet des Fosses says that in addition to the 4,000,000 Lire (he mistakenly calls it Francs) the King of Italy also sent to Menelik 38,000 Vitterli rifles and 28 seven milimeter canons.) L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, pp.354-355.

Convention were underway, Italy was rapidly expanding her "Italian possessions of the Red Sea" northwards into the highlands by occupying the area up to and including the two important positions of Keren and Asmara, some 100 kilometres inside Ethiopian territory from Massawa and the Red Sea coast. After General Baldissera had occupied Keren and Asmara in December 1889, General Orero had crossed the Mereb river, moved south, and by January 1890, had taken over the town of Adwa.⁵² In less than a few months Italy was therefore able to incorporate into her sphere of influence a territory as vast as present day Eritrea.⁵³ Mekonnen had left Italy for home on December 4, 1889, and two weeks later, on December 20, a Royal decree proclaimed the "Italian Possessions in the Red Sea" and the newly acquired territories in the highlands a colony under the name of Eritrea.⁵⁴

On the negotiating table at Naples yet another question of importance was presented by Antonelli for the consideration of Ras Mekonnen. Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle had stipulated that "His Majesty the King of Kings of Ethiopia consents to avail

52
Wylde, Abyssinia, p.50.

53
Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, p.355. Castonnet des Fosses puts the area thus acquired, which is highly exaggerated, at 500,000 square Kilometres.

54
For a list of Italian Governors of Eritrea from 1885 to 1900 see Wylde, Abyssinia, p.495.

himself of the Italian Government for any negotiations which he may enter with other Powers or Governments." Basing himself on this article and upon instruction from Crispi, Antonelli informed Mekonnen of the intention of the Italian Government to notify other powers of the existence of this relationship and if, under the circumstances, he objected to such a notification.⁵⁵ Mekonnen's understanding of Article 17, as was also that of his sovereign, was simple: Ethiopia, of her own free will and accord, had agreed with Italy in which the latter would lend the services of its good offices in order to facilitate Ethiopia's dealings with other foreign powers. Mekonnen, therefore, saw no objection to Italy's notification of the existence of such an understanding and told Antonelli so. On September 25, Antonelli cabled his Foreign Minister from Naples to tell him that "Mekonnen recognizes the utility of such notification and approves that it be done at once."⁵⁶

The very first incident which was to precipitate Ethiopian-Italian differences was about to take place. Mekonnen had given Crispi a no objection statement for advertizing to other powers Ethiopian willingness to make use of the good offices of Italy

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See Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, Antonelli to Menelik, January 26, 1891, pp.281-282.

56

Doc. Dipl., 1889-90 XV, Bis, p.18.

when and if Menelik chose to do so in his dealings with other powers. Crispi, on the other hand, was trying to use Ethiopia's approval of friendship - and one which was given in good faith - for altruistic purposes. He was determined to use it as a pretext to establish a protectorate over Ethiopia the way it was suggested some four years back in the General Act of Berlin of February 26, 1885. On October 11, 1889, ten days after Mekonnen had signed the Additional Convention, Crispi, in pursuance of Article 34 of the General Act of the Conference of Berlin, instructed Italian representatives accredited in the capital cities of countries signatory to the General Act of Berlin and the United States, to inform the governments they were accredited to of the Italian intention. Article 34 of the General Act of the Conference of Berlin stated:

Any power which henceforth takes possession of a tract of land on the coasts of the African Continent outside of its present possessions, or which, being hitherto without such possessions, shall acquire them, as well as the power which assumes a protectorate

Rossetti, *Storia Diplomatica*, "Il trattato perpetuo fra l'Italia e l'Etiopia firmato da S.M. il Re Menelik il maggio 1889 e ratificato da S.M. il Re d'Italia il 29 Settembre ultimo scorso, porta nell'articolo XVII che 'S.M. il Re di Etiopia consente di servirsi del Governo di S.M. il Re d'Italia per tutte le trattazioni di affari che avesse con altre potenze o Governi.' Prego notificare a codesto Governo, in conformita dell'articolo 34 dell'atto generale della Conferenza di Berlino del 26 Febbraio 1885, la stipulazione suddetta. Crispi." pp.60-61.

there, shall accompany the respective act with a notification thereof, addressed to the other Signatory Powers of the present Act, in order to enable them, if need be, to make good any claims of their own.⁵⁸

The political trappings for recognition of Italy's new position vis-a-vis Ethiopia were already being set. To implement this and to protect Italian interests in Ethiopia Italy now appointed Antonelli Minister Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in charge of Ethiopian affairs. To assist him in the discharge of his duties, Salimbeni, an important person in the yet impending negotiations, was nominated Resident General at the court of Menelik and, Leopoldo Traversi and Cissare Nerazzini, two other important figures in Ethiopian-Italian politics, were appointed Assistant Political Officers at Let Marefia and Harar respectively.⁵⁹

Once Antonelli was in Ethiopia he started to set in motion the machinery that was to advance Italian strong hold over Ethiopian sovereignty. At the meetings convened between Menelik and Antonelli in the province of Tigre between the months of February and March 1890, the latter had already suggested to the former that Ethiopia should be represented at the Conference of Brussels which at the

58

Hertslet; Map of Africa by Treaty, p.484. For a general discussion of the conference and its act see, among others, Langer; European Alliances, pp.297-309; Mowat; European Diplomacy, pp.255-260.

59

DDF, 1st. ser., Vol.9, No.23, Billot to Ribot, September 25,1891, pp.34-36; Rossetti; Storia Diplomatica, p.74.

60

Giglio, "Article 17 of the Treaty of Ucciali," Journal of African History, VI, 2, 1965, p.226. For motives behind Ethiopia's representation

time was considering questions related with the commerce of arms and slave trade. To Italy, the relevance of this suggestion lay in the possibility that it will assist to legitimize Italy's contention that it now represented Ethiopian interest abroad. Menelik agreed to Antonelli's suggestions because, for him, the act represented nothing more than using the services of a friend as stipulated in the Amharic version of Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle. What is more important, Menelik was not as yet aware of the significance of Crispi's notification of October 11, 1889.

At the Brussels Conference, among the countries represented France and Russia were the most active to oppose the admission of Ethiopia into the conference. This opposition was not directed at Menelik. It was rather a concerted attempt by both to prevent any semblance of protectorate by Italy over Ethiopia. In Brussels, in order to avoid disagreement on the issue, it was suggested in March 1890, that the Italian representative to the Brussels Conference should write a letter wherein, without making reference to the treaty concluded between Menelik and the Italian Government, he would simply state that Menelik had expressed the desire that the

at the Brussels Conference by Italy see, Berkeley, Campaign of Adowa, p.29; Work, Ethiopia a Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.108; Pellenc, Les Italiens en Afrique, p.48.

61

Dubois et Terrier, Un Siècle d'expansion coloniale, p.704; Work, Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.238. In order to better appreciate the rivalry between Britain and Italy on the one hand and France on the other, see chapter 3, pp.148-178.

agreement of the conference be signed on his behalf by the Italian representative.⁶² Monsieur de Laboulaye, French Ambassador to St. Petersburg confirmed to his Foreign Minister on May 1, 1890 that Baron Marochetti, the Italian Ambassador, had been charged with the mission of soliciting support from the cabinet at St. Petersburg in the adoption of this suggestion. He added that Baron Marochetti was being assisted in his mission by the Ambassadors of Britain, Germany and Austria.⁶³ The same pattern - as regards this alignment - will be repeated at a subsequent stage when it comes to recognizing Italy's notification concerning Menelik's agreement to use the good offices of the Italian Government in matters related to communications with foreign powers.

At this stage, another Antonelli objective (after his return from the negotiations of the Additional Convention in Naples) was to ascertain if Menelik was willing, in practical terms, to allow Italy to be the middleman in his transactions with other foreign countries. As in the circumstances surrounding the Brussels Conference, Menelik was willing to allow Italy to be his channel of communication. On his part, his intentions were clear. He wanted to use a friendly nation as his intermediary when and if he wanted its services. When Antonelli was in the province of Tigre

62

DDf, No.52, footnote 1, p.73.

63

Ibid., De Laboulaye to Ribot, St. Petersburg, May 1, 1890, No.52, p.73.

in February and March for discussions with Menelik, the latter, as in the former case of the Brussels Conference, complied to allow the former to forward a letter to Queen Victoria "saying that he would write to her in the future via the Italian Government when the need arose."⁶⁴ Antonelli, prone to proving the role of the Italian Government to the European powers, had needed such a conveniently set diplomatic spectacle. In fact, it was known to Crispi, and through him to Antonelli, that Menelik had already corresponded with European countries independently of Italy.⁶⁵ To this, Antonelli had assured Crispi on February 12 from Tigre that he would make "strong representations"⁶⁶ to Menelik. However, we do not find anywhere such a representation being then made to Menelik by Antonelli. What we find is that he had rather resorted to the dubious tactic of achieving his end by persuading Menelik to send his letter of March 5 to

64

Giglio, "Article 17 of the Treaty of Uccialli," Journal of African History, VI, 2, 1965, p.226. Menelik's letter of March 5, 1890 to Victoria was dispatched to Rome by Antonelli from Massawa together with his own report on April 6.

65

Doc. Dipl., 1890-91 XVII, Crispi to Antonelli, February 9, 1890, p.3. Crispi to Antonelli, February 12, 1890, p.4.

66

Ibid., Antonelli to Crispi, February 12, 1890, p.4.

Victoria through him. Menelik, yet unadvised about the intricate political situation he was being framed into, was an unaware victim who dealt with Antonelli in good faith.

It was on December 14, 1889, some seven months after the Treaty of Wichalle, that Menelik addressed letters to Queen Victoria, President Carnot and Wilhelm II independently of Italy and without bothering to use Italian intermediaries. These letters were not meant, as asserted by many, to announce his coronation. Menelik had already done so both to Queen Victoria and President Carnot on May 2 - the day of the signing of the Treaty of Wichalle - and on July 29, respectively. The letters of December 1889 could rightly be referred to as some of the earliest diplomatic notes sent out to European powers by Menelik addressing himself as King of Kings

67

Rubenson is right when he writes that Menelik "had proclaimed his accession to the throne much earlier." This should certainly be the case because, for all what we know, these were the very first letters he had sent out to foreign powers signed 'King of Kings.' It is also the letter which Queen Victoria acknowledged (Victoria to Menelik, February 20, 1890, Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, p.405) and Menelik, in requesting King Humbert to "rectify the error" (Menelik to Humbert, Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.78-79) refers to. In his letter, we find a direct and specific reference to the letter in question when Menelik says: "Ayant envoyé, a l'ocasion de la fete de mon couronnement, la nouvelle de mon avènement au trone aux puissance amies de l'Europe, j'ai trouvé dans leurs réponses quelque chose d'humiliant pour mon royaume." However, King Wilhelm, having received no such communication from Menelik, in his reply to him, refers only to the letter of December 14, 1889 (the first he got after the coronation), Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, p.406. (Zaghi, however, wrongly puts the date as December 15.) Even in Menelik's own chronicle (Guebre Selassie, Chronique du Règne de Menelik II) de Coppet, in a footnote wrongly remarks: "Quelques jours apres, le 20 novembre 1889, [December 14, 1889?] Menelik écrivait au roi Humbert pour lui annoncer son couronnement." p.273.

seeking friendly relations with them. In his letter to Victoria he remarks: "I ought now, more than at any time before, to enter into friendly relations with all the European Powers, so as to cause them to look on us with a favourable and friendly eye." ⁶⁹ More than anything else, Menelik also stressed the need for a special relationship with "the great English Monarchy" because, he said, "through your occupation of Zeilah and Berbera, and through the Egyptian interests you take care of...have become our neighbours." Now that Britain was controlling Zeila on the Indian Ocean, Menelik's main concern and worry was to see to it that the flow of arms to his Empire through this port would not be hampered. In this important letter, therefore, he indicated that the main danger to his nation emanated from Mohammedan invasions and that "this warlike enemy of ours has now received more and more valuable instruments of war, and thus attacked us." In the same letter, he also registered his unhappiness about "the unjust and unequitable agreement by which European Powers agreed among themselves that no instrument of war...should be allowed to be imported into our country." This was why, he concluded, "trusting in the equity of the European Powers, I enter into communications with them, hoping that they will not fail to abolish an arrangement which ought not to exist...."

68

F.O.403/124, Menelik to Victoria, May 2, 1889 (Miazia 25, 1880), p.38. Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, Report of Savouré to Carnot, December 6, 1889, pp.398 ff.

69

F.O.95/750.

Menelik also indicated in the same letter that Great Britain will be on his side and assist him "by every fair means." It was his wish also, Menelik said, to send his representatives to discuss topics of mutual interest in order to strengthen their friendship. His two other letters to Carnot and Wilhelm were also written on the same vein in which he emphasized the need for friendship and requested the lifting of the arms embargo imposed on his country.

By any standard, these were not letters from a monarch who was willing to consent to a third party to conduct his foreign affairs. What we find is that there was no desire on the part of Menelik to tie his hand or to be put under an obligation in the execution of his foreign affairs. That there was no such an obligation, and Antonelli is on record, we find it registered in the following memorandum:

...At Mekelle [in the Province of Tigré], I, by virtue of my office, was obliged to speak about it [the use of Italian good offices] with Your Majesty, who asked me: "But is it because of friendship or because of an obligation that I must make use of the Italian government to negotiate with other Powers?" and I replied: "It is because of friendship and regard; and, if these two should fail, Your Majesty could do whatever he desired."70

Antonelli could not have done otherwise. He knew Menelik was a determined Emperor who wanted to run his house the way he knows best. The appropriate thing to do for Antonelli, therefore, was to tell Menelik that he was using Italy "because of friendship and regard" for the Italian King than to tell him he was being obliged and lose face. That this was the way Antonelli operated we are furnished with a piece of documented evidence wherein he contradicted the statement referred to above and said that, at the time, he had indicated to the Emperor of the gravity of his action for sending letters directly to the European powers and that Menelik had "immediately" made a written apology. On June 17, 1893, responding to questions at the Chamber of Deputies, Antonelli remarked:

Io naturalmente feci noto a Menelik quanto il Ministro degli esteri m'incaricava di dirgli; e Menelik fece immediatamente una lettera di scusa, dicendo che egli non aveva nessun rappresentante italiano, ed aveva creduto di dover mandare direttamente le lettere ai sovrani di Europa per informali della sua incoronazione ad Imperatore di Etiopia. E come prova che riconosceva, allora, l'articolo 17, diede incarico al governo italiano perche lo rappresentasse alla Conferenza di Bruxelles. 71

The existence of this document is doubted by Rubenson. He comments that "it is strange that this letter should be missing in the published documents, if it really ever existed."⁷²

71
Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, p.116.

72
Rubenson, Wichale XVII, p.17.

It is hoped that the foregoing analysis will give enough ground to preliminarily assume that Italy, in all probabilities, was laying the foundation for the future usurpation of Ethiopian sovereignty. That there was, from the very beginning, two divergent lines of thought, one by Italy and an other by Menelik, is evident from the 'raison d'état' each was advancing on his own behalf. Italy, by all means, and even if it meant misleading Menelik, was bent on assuming the role of the King maker. On the other hand, suspicious but yet partially unaware of the role sought by Italy in Ethiopia, Menelik was speaking in terms of establishing friendly relations with European and neighbouring nations and using Italy, of his own free will, in the furtherance of these relations. All along he was putting emphasis on an independent Ethiopia and for the need to an independently conducted foreign policy.

Menelik was informed of the situation he was "obligated" into only in the second week of July, 1890, when Salimbeni, the newly appointed Italian Resident General at his court, arrived in Addis Ababa and handed him the letters of Victoria and Wilhelm. On July 13, at 9.30 in the morning, Menelik received Salimbeni in audience and it was then that he gave him the letters he brought from Victoria,

73

Rodd, Memories, 2nd. ser., p.168. Rouard de Card, (L'Ethiopie au Point de Vue Droit International) says it is through a communication made to Menelik by Monsieur Deloncle, a French Deputy, that he first heard of Italy's interpretation of Article 17; p.28. See also Work, Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy, pp.108-109; Morié, L'Histoire de l'Ethiopie, Vol.2, p.493; Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, p.170. Menelik says that he first knew about it from the letters of Queen Victoria and King Wilhelm.

Wilhelm, Crispi and Pisani. When Menelik had the letters opened, Salimbeni remarked, one could tell that one of them was from a lady because, he said, it was full of decorations and flowers.⁷⁴ The contents of the letters he received from Salimbeni were not so cheering. They were, as far as Menelik was concerned, a smack on the face. Both Victoria and Wilhelm now recognized Menelik only in as long as he was represented to them through the Italian Government. Victoria's letter, written with an appreciable sense of decorum and with deference to Menelik as an Emperor, displayed determination and firmness.

Victoria noted the wish expressed by Menelik to cultivate the friendly relations already existing between their two countries and said she heartily reciprocates His Majesty's desire "for the continuance of cordial relations between Our people and Your people." She added: "We sympathize with Your Majesty's endeavours to promote the welfare of Your Country and with your noble and Christian resolution to suppress the iniquitous traffic in slaves." As concerns the arrangements between her Government and that of the French Government for the restriction of the importation of arms through their respective Protectorates on the Gulf of Aden, she assured him that "it is no longer in force as regards arms destined for Your Majesty's dominions" and that permission has already been granted to

74

Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, p.106.

his Governor of the eastern province of Harar to use the port of
 Zeila for the importation of some two thousand rifles. It is noted
 earlier that Menelik's letters of December 1889 to Victoria, Wilhelm
 and Carnot were perhaps the very first documents which went out from
 him seeking stronger diplomatic relations with them. In his letter
 to Victoria he had advised her that he will not fail hereafter "to
 send someone to discuss a mutual agreement on every subject, and to
 settle our matters of interest, as well as to strengthen our friend-
 ship which unites us with Your Majesty's subjects, who are our
 bretheren in Our Lord Jesus Christ." Victoria's reply to this request
 was direct and to the point. She said:

We note further Your Majesty's intention to
 send someone to us hereafter to discuss matters
 of common interest to our Kingdoms. In as much,
 however, as the Italian Government have notified
 to us that by a Treaty concluded on the 2nd. of
 May last between Italy and Ethiopia, "it is
 provided that His Majesty the King of Ethiopia
 consents to avail himself of the Government of
 His Majesty the King of Italy for the conduct of
 all matters which he may have with other Powers
 or Governments," We shall communicate to the
 Government of our Friend His Majesty the King of
 Italy copies of Your Majesty's letter and of this
 Our reply. 77

The message was clear. Victoria will deal with Menelik in as
 long as such a deal came through her "Friend His Majesty the King of

75

F.O.95/751, Victoria to Menelik, February 20, 1890; Zaghi ,
Crispi e Menelich, p.405.

76

F.O.95/750, Menelik to Victoria, December 14, 1889.

77

F.O.95/751, Victoria to Menelik, February 2, 1890.

Italy."

Wilhelm's reply conveyed more or less the same spirit. On the question of Germany's diplomatic assistance on the arms embargo on Menelik, Wilhelm also replied like Victoria, in a straight forward manner in which he indicated that according to the official notification he had received from Italy, "Your Highness has in the meantime signed a treaty of peace and friendship with H.M. King Umberto of Italy, Our true friend and ally" and therefore he - and by implication not Menelik - would be greatly interested in the progress of Ethiopia and "will certainly give sympathetic consideration to the wishes of Your Highness." ⁷⁸ It is obvious from the above two responses that both Britain and Germany had been approached by Italy to support it in its offensive against Menelik.

1. Preliminary decisions regarding Article 17:

A. Interpretations of Article 17:

- (i) Italian - Menelik has consented to use Italy as an intermediary between him and the rest of the European powers.
 - 'Ipso facto': (a) Italy handled Ethiopian foreign affairs, and (b) Italy has the prerogative of playing the role of the protector.
- (ii) Ethiopian- Emperor Menelik, may, if he so desires, make use of the services of the Italian

government in his relations with European powers.

- In so desiring, Menelik has not consented anything to Italy and has not accepted any obligatory engagement.

B. The decision makers:

- (i) Italian - Even though King Humbert and Crispi were the ones who both initiated and formulated decisions, in the preliminary stage and as the most direct person in contact with Menelik, Salimbeni was responsible for the recommendations on which Italian decision makers subsequently based themselves upon.
- (ii) Ethiopian-
 - (a) Menelik: As the most direct person who initiated, formulated and directed foreign policy he was the main actor who steered the negotiations. He weighed and judged the merits and drawbacks of each proposal and counter-proposal advanced by the Ethiopian foreign policy decision-making body.
 - (b) Empress Taitu: She was the gadfly in the decisional process. She used her influence over Menelik by goading him into accepting hard line positions.
 - (c) Ras Mekonnen: Even though he espoused his Emperor's cause with firmness and dedication he nevertheless played the role of a moderator.
 - (d) Ilg and Yosef: Both advised on foreign affairs and especially on the positions of the various European powers. On Article 17, the position of the latter - being the interpreter and translator of the treaty - was important and his advice therefore significant.

C. Preliminary decisions:

- (i) Italian - The Italian decision was made at an earlier stage. The decision was to use Menelik's

"consent" as a pretext to conduct Ethiopian foreign policy from Rome and to further translate the situation into a protectorate scheme. Salimbeni's position on the Italian argument over the protectorate clause of the treaty is ambivalent.

(ii) Ethiopian - (a) Rejection of "consent" by Menelik not to allow Italy to assume the role of 'eminence grise' in Ethiopian affairs.

(b) Rejection of the assumed role of Italy as a protector.

(c) Assertion of Ethiopian independence and territorial integrity.

D. Factors considered in preliminary decisions:

When Salimbeni arrived at Menelik's court to represent Italy, he recorded in his diary that the surprise in Addis Ababa was complete. Salimbeni was being constantly summoned to the court to give explanations and clarifications on his government's interpretation regarding Article 17, and from the very first instance it was clear that Menelik was becoming visibly irritated. It had also become increasingly difficult to Salimbeni to explain his government's stand for, as one could detect from his letters and diary in late August, his difficulty in articulating the Italian position on the issue and therefore his distress was evident. On August 31, in his letter to General Gandolfi, he commented on the impossibility of a negotiated peace on the affair and indicated:⁷⁹ "According to my point of view, war is the only solution to the Ethiopian problem."

79

"Dico che, secondo il mio modo di vedere, la guerra salamente e la possibile soluzione del problema etiopico." Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, Salimbeni to Gandolfi, August 31, 1890, p.158.

Again, writing to Traversi on the 2nd. of September, he indicated his dilemma when he debated within himself as to the advisability of his government's stand on the interpretation of Article 17. In desperation, he told Traversi that he was not willing even to verify ("cercare") if the translation was or was not faithful or authentic. For Salimbeni, the difference between the Ethiopian and Italian understanding about this important article was more than evident. In his diary of August 17 he recounts that on that particular day he came early in the morning to the 'Ghebi' (the Imperial court) and once in the 'elfign' (the audience room) the Emperor handed over to him the treaty of May 2 and made him read Article 17. Salimbeni says: "Evidently, the Amharic translation does not correspond with the Italian text." The way he summed it up was: "C'e una bella
80
differenza!" The irritation at Menelik's palace was so complete that it had also angered Queen Taitu, the "bella regina." Just two days after Queen Victoria's letter was read, Salimbeni speaks of an episode in which he recounts that the Queen, perhaps out of anger, protested strongly to Menelik on his apparent inaction. She told Menelik, Salimbeni says, that Emperor Yohannes, unwilling as he was to cede any Ethiopian territory, had fought and repulsed the Italians

80

Ibid., "Io non voglio andare a cercare se la traduzione fu, o no, fedele...." Salimbeni to Traversi, September 6, 1890, p.161.

81

Ibid., "There is an evident difference!" Diary of August 17, 1890, p.147.

and Egyptians. History will not say that he "sold" [betrayed] his country if he too were to sacrifice his life for such a cause and thus set an example among his countrymen. Otherwise, she questioned, what will history tell on him? In his diary of August 16 he also puts in record that Ilg had told him as having been said by the Queen concerning Article 17: "It was Antonelli who caused all this mess and amidst all this it is poor Salimbeni who is being left out." Salimbeni ends this piece of information by exclaiming, "brava, bella regina." Two months later, in a letter of October 9, 1890 to his wife, Salimbeni, while accusing Menelik of weaknesses, conveyed this very same information verbatim.

Since Salimbeni's arrival in Addis Ababa, the discussions held between Menelik and Salimbeni to clarify the misunderstandings over Article 17 were never easy and had so far bore no fruit. Salimbeni himself, we have observed, was not so sure that the Amharic and

82

Ibid., Diary of July 15, 1890. ("...Il re Giovanni non ha mai viluto cedere un palmo di territorio, ha battuto gli italiani, ha battuto gli egiziani per questo; per questo si e fatto uccidere, e tu, dopo un simile esempio, Vuoi vendere il tuo paese? Che cosa dira la storia di te?" p.110.

83

"Antonelli ha fatto tutti questi imbrogli e poi in mezzo ad essi ha lasciato questo povero Salimbeni." Ibid., Diary of August 16, 1890.

84

Ibid., Salimbeni to Amilia, October 9, 1890. ("Now I understand how one can obtain so easily such splendid success. One writes a treaty; in the Italian text one puts what is wanted in Italy. In the Amharic text one puts what Menelik wants, and it doesn't matter if the two do not agree. Those who come later will think about it. What a mess, my dear Amalia, what imbroglios, what lies....") [Translation as offered in Rubenson, Wichale XVII, p.38.) p.186.

Italian texts of the article in question ever matched in spirit.
 85
 Indicating that he felt humiliated in the face of the whole world,
 Menelik addressed an official letter to Salimbeni on August 18,
 totally contradicting Antonelli. He emphasized that he agreed to
 accept the Italian 'concession' "in amore (di buona volonta)" and
 "non per forza" only because Antonelli intimated to him, he thought
 in good faith, that he may, if he wished, make use of the services
 of Italian officials to send his letters and other correspondences
 to European nations. He made it also amply clear that he did not
 agree to anything else, especially to those which might undermine his
 86
 own or his country's position.

In less than a week of notifying Salimbeni of his "humiliation,"
 Menelik gave a reply to the letter of Queen Victoria, and a few
 weeks later he also addressed another one to King Humbert. To the
 former he told that he entered into such an agreement only, in the
 absence of his own representative in Europe, to obtain prompt replies
 through Italy for his correspondences and did not at all mean to
 oblige himself into submitting his sovereignty. To the latter he
 spoke of the very same "humiliation" he was referring to in his letter
 of August 18 to Salimbeni and reiterated directly, forcefully and

85

Ibid., "Adesso nella risposta una cosa che umilia me ed il mio
 regno ho travato." p.148.

86

Ibid., Menelik to Salimbeni, August 18, 1890, p.148.

in no uncertain terms that he will not accept now and that he will not accept in the future any obligation which threatens to undermine his country's sovereignty and independence from any power or
87
any quarter.

In his very first response to King Humbert since he was informed of the Italian interpretation of Article 17 and therefore of Italian intentions, Menelik - rejected all forms of obligation on his part and emphatically asserted his independence of action and the complete sovereignty of his country. In the very first paragraph of his letter he made it quite plain to King Humbert that having earlier addressed letters to friendly powers of Europe announcing his coronation, he was surprised to have found something of a humiliation to his Kingdom in their responses. He refreshed Humbert's memory by saying

87

Ibid., Menelik to Victoria, Nehassie 19,1882 (August 24,1890). The pertinent part of Victoria's letter read:"Quand j'ai appris par votre lettre que le Gouvernement italien vous a communiqué qu'il existait un traité qui stipulait que je consentais que toutes nos affaires avec les puissances européens devaient être traitées avec l'intermédiaire du Gouvernement italien, j'en ai été bien affligé. Comme auparavant les réponses à mes lettres aux puissances européennes se faisaient attendre ou n'arrivaient pas, et n'ayant pas de représentant en Europe, et comme amitié entre nous et l'Italie, commencée depuis longtemps, se resserrait de jour en jour dans l'espérance d'obtenir promptement les réponses à mes correspondances amicales, nous étions convenus, après de nous être consultés, de nous adresser au Gouvernement italien si cela nous semblait, mais je n'ai pris à ce propos aucun engagement obligatoire. Dans l'article XII du traité d'amitié et de commerce fait à Ouchali le 25 Miazia 1881, dans le texte écrit en langue de notre royaume, nous exprimons clairement que cela dépend de notre bonne volonté, mais que ce n'est point obligatoire pour nous." p.409. The article should have been XVII and not XII. (Emphasis is mine.)

that when he entered into such an agreement, he did so by counting on the friendship of Italy and having felt, because of this friendship, that their secrets would be protected and their affairs would not be leaked ("gatées) if his contacts with Europe were effected with the help of the Kingdom of Italy. Otherwise, he reiterated strongly, no one independent power will seek the help of another unless this was done in friendship. ⁸⁸ The main cause for all this, he said, was Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle. Of Article 17 and its implication, at least as regards the Ethiopian position, Menelik drove home the following pertinent points:

L'article 17 dit que je peux me servir de l'intermédiaire de l'Italie, mais il ne dit pas que je consens à me servir de l'Italie pour toutes les affaires que j'aurai à traiter avec l'Europe. Quand, en causant avec le comte Antonelli, au moment de la stipulation de ce traité, je l'ai interrogé bien sérieusement et qu'il m'a répondu "si cela vous convient, vous pouvez vous servir de notre intermédiaire; si non, vous êtes libre de vous en dispenser," je lui dis: "du moment que c'est à titre d'amitié, pourquoi me servirai-je d'autres gens pour mes relations?" mais je n'ai accepté, à cette époque, aucun engagement obligatoire, et encore aujourd'hui je ne suis pas l'homme pour l'accepter, et vous, également, vous ne me direz pas de l'accepter.⁸⁹

He told King Humbert with all seriousness that, for the sake of the honour of his friend (Menelik), he should now do well to "rectify

88

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.78-79.

89

Ibid. (Emphasis is mine.)

the error⁹⁰ committed in Article 17, and make known this error to friendly powers for whom he had earlier made notification of the said article.

At this juncture, it was also Menelik's desire to make peace with Italy and define the limits of his Empire to better assure the territorial integrity of Ethiopia. It was with this intention that he also wrote another letter to King Humbert on the same date on the question of delimiting their respective boundaries. In this important letter, he drew the attention of the King to the relations which existed between the two countries, and basing himself on this heritage, he tried to impress upon him that no opportunity must be lost to give the right course and the right direction to the state of affairs existing between them. What is more important, by evoking past history, Menelik wanted to impart to Humbert the extent to which he believed in peace and reconciliation.⁹¹

At the time of the height of differences between Yohannes and Italy we have noted earlier how Menelik had vainly attempted to bring about reconciliation between them. After the death of Yohannes and immediately after his accession to the throne and the signing of the Treaty of Wichalle, Menelik had sent to Rome one of his best councillors - Ras Mekonnen - to create an atmosphere of friendship and to bring about an era of peace and tranquility between the

90
Ibid

91
Ibid., pp.79-80.

two nations.

Menelik's second letter of September 27 to King Humbert is very important in the history of the relations of Ethiopia and Italy and in the understanding of the foreign policy of Menelik in the years to follow. It is an essential letter in that it also dealt with one of the most important causes which brought about the misunderstanding between Menelik and Italy. It was by Article 3 of the Additional Convention of October 1, 1889 that it was agreed that "a rectification of the territories shall be made, taking as a basis the actual state of possession" as of the date of its signing at Naples. Italy, however, in order to claim more territory and to give a semblance of an earlier occupation, was advancing beyond Asmara and to the River Mereb even at the time of the signing of the convention. This, as we shall later on observe in the analysis of the letter, had angered Menelik and made him question Italian sincerity as regards the treaty and agreement entered into by him and Italy. For him, therefore, the delimitation of his boundaries and the dispelling of the contentions contained in the new Italian approach was very important. Unfortunately, however, very little attention is devoted to this letter of importance and the few studies that had already been undertaken as regards Article 17 either give it a passing reference or totally ignore its existence.

It is important to note that it was this letter, and not the first letter of September 27 to Humbert - as belabouringly explained by some authorities on Menelik - which meant serious business in

92

the ascertainment of Ethiopian national and territorial integrity. To implement her long range designs in Ethiopia, Italy had needed a foothold in the Ethiopian highlands first. Once this was attained, it was her intention to commence her gradual penetration into southern Ethiopia working from the comfortable base of the healthy climate of the Ethiopian plateaux.

At the time of his attempt to reconcile Yohannes and Italy, Menelik adds in the same letter, he had put the question to Antonelli: "What are the desires of Your King?" to which Antonelli replied - and Menelik says "Antonelli will not deny it" - that he desired nothing than the placing of the Italian soldiers at Massawa in a cooler climate. When in 1889 Menelik signed the Treaty of Wichalle and conceded the said area to Italy, the Italian army had not yet come further west than Saati (a few miles from the Red Sea coast and Massawa).⁹³ And when he allowed Italy access to these areas it was with the intention of finding peace and tranquility, to avoid war, to let progress and modernization prosper and spread in his country and to allow both Italians and his subjects to live in a

92

Ibid., "...Le tracement des frontieres étant le lieu de toutes les affaires et la preuve de la fortification de notre amitié, j'attends impatiemment que vous veuillez bien vite faire terminer la question des frontieres...." p.82.

93

Ibid., p.81.

happy harmony through commerce, industry and hard work.

Menelik was an ardent believer in peace. One of the most recurring factor in the attainment of his foreign policy objectives was its achievement mainly through mutually beneficial accomodation and negotiated peace. In 1889, when Menelik conceded territory to Antonelli he did so, even with the opposition of some of his advisers, because he thought he was bringing about peace between Ethiopia and Italy. This desire, on his part, was being repeatedly evoked in his correspondences with Humbert.⁹⁵

In the Menelik-Antonelli encounter in Tigré after the latter was back from Italy after arranging the signing of the Additional Convention,

94

Ibid., "Quand j'ai donné ces pays, c'était dans l'intention de trouver la paix et le salut, d'éviter la guerre, de faire entrer la civilisation dans mon pays; que mes sujets, ainsi que les vôtres, par le commerce, par les sciences, par le travail, etc., puissent vivre heureux et d'accord...." p.81.

95

Some of the pertinent aspects of one such correspondence are the following: "Si votre Majesté veut bien prendre en consideration l'article 3 du traité supplémentaire passé entre ras meconen et le ministre Crispi, le 22 mascarem 1882, vous trouvez qu'a la date ou ras meconen et le ministre Crispi ont signé ce traité le pavillon du royaume d'Italie n'avait pas dépassé Asmara. Quand, a Makalé [Tigre'], au retour du comte Antonelli, j'ai vu le traité supplémentaire, j'en ai été tres étonné....A present... quand le comte Antonelli me dit: "Tranchons la question des frontières," et qu'il me demandait qu'elles soient fixée au dela du Mareb, je lui ai répondu: "Si je m'appelle Roi des Rois d'Ethiopie, c'est parce que j'ai ajouté le Tigré a mon royaume; et si donc vous preniez jusqu'au Mareb, qu'est-ce-qu'il m'en reste?"...Malgré que les grands d'Ethiopie et les propriétaires héréditaires du Tigré m'aient dit: "Comment laissez-vous nous nous prendre nos pays, que nous avons conservés au prix de notre sang en combattant contre les turcs?" J'ai reuni tous les

the former had taken steps for the delimitation of the boundary between Ethiopia and Italy as stipulated in Article 3 of the Additional Convention. Not only had Menelik sent Ras Meshesha and other respected state councillors to help in the delimitation of the boundary but also had instructed the same group to work for peace and help avoid any rancorous behaviour with Italian military leaders.⁹⁶ This was never a successful proposition. When Salimbeni, the newly appointed Italian Resident General, arrived at Menelik's court in July 1890, Menelik enquired of him "why the delimitation of the frontiers was not terminated."⁹⁷ Salimbeni's answer, of course, was obvious. He intimated that this was not possible because he was told that it could not be finalized unless the Italian frontier was extended up to the River Mereb.⁹⁸ In being informed about this,

dignitaires, et en me consultant avec eux, pour ne pas me facher avec l'Italie, je leur ai dit qu'il valait mieux avoir les chretiens comme voisins, que les musulmans, que la paix valait mieux que la guerre; donnons jusqu'a Chéket pour faire secher le sang. Et, malgré leurs plaintes, je vous ai ajouté jusqu'a Chéket." Ibid., pp.81-82.

96
Ibid., p.81.

97
Ibid

98
Ibid., pp.81-82.

Menelik said that he preferred to send a letter to King Humbert because he felt that such words would not come out of him for Ras Mekonnen had earlier recounted to him of his "loyal character" and because such a proposition was not present in his letter. In his letter Menelik said:

Pourquoi j'ai préféré vous écrire? C'est parce qu'avant, par la faute des hommes, l'Ethiopie et l'Italie, étant amies, ont été brouillés et faites arriver à verser du sang....A présent, le tracement des frontières étant le lieu de toutes les affaires et la preuve de la fortification de notre amitié, j'attends impatiemment que vous veuillez bien vite faire terminer la question des frontières, telles qu'elles ont été fixées dans l'article 3 du traité supplémentaire fait à Naples le 22 mars 1882. 99

2. Interpretation and significance of Article 17:

At this stage of the game Menelik was very well aware of Italian intentions, and more than before he was now determined not only to challenge Italian tactics but prepared himself on the political level to reject any Italian encroachments over Ethiopian territory and Ethiopian sovereignty. It was also clear to Menelik that the major cause for all these misunderstandings was the political importance attached by Italy to the benefits accruing from the interpretation of Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle.

What did Article 17 stipulate for Italy and why did Menelik reject it? Of the twenty articles in the treaty Article 17 is perhaps the simplest and also the most direct to understand as drafted in Amharic. The Amharic version of the article reads as follows:

፲፯ተኛ፡ክፍል፡

ዩኢተዩፍደ፡ገገሠ፡ነገሥተ፡ከኢዎሮፓ፡ነገ
ሥተ፡ለሚኒልገተ፡ገዳዲ፡ሁሉ፡በኢጣሊ
ደ፡መገሥተ፡እጋኸነተ፡መለለክ፡ዲቻላቸዎ
ል፡፡¹⁰⁰

The Italian version of the article is as follows: "Sua Maesta il Re dei Re d'Etiopia consente de servirsi del Governo di S.M. il Re d'Italia per tutte le trattazioni di affari che avesse con altre
101
potenze o Governi."

The difference between the Amharic and Italian versions is obvious. The Italian version stipulates that "His Majesty the King of Kings of Ethiopia consents to avail himself of the Italian
102
Government" for all state negotiations with other powers. The

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In its literal translation the Amharic version reads: "For all things which the Emperor of Ethiopia needs from European Emperors he can [may] do so with the help [aid] of the Italian Government." The Amharic version of the treaty is in Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, facing pages 152 & 153.

101

Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, "His Majesty the King of Kings of Ethiopia consents to avail himself of the Italian Government for any negotiations which he may enter into with the other Powers or Governments."p.455.

102

Ibid., (Emphasis is mine.)

Amharic version, on the other hand says: "For all things which the Emperor of Ethiopia needs from European Emperors he can [may] make use of Italian good offices. The spirit of the article as conveyed in the respective languages of the treaty does not, when studied in the literal sense, carry the same meaning or the same understanding. In the words of Salimbeni "C'e una bella differenza!" The catch words which brought about such an enormous difference in the interpretation and understanding of the article are, in the Amharic, "ዕቅድ ገብሮ" ['Yichalachewal'] and, in Italian 'consente.' The Amharic verb "ቻለ" ['Chale'] literally translated means "can" or "may." The Italian verb "consentire," however, robs of the article the sense of voluntariness implied therein and instead corroborates a sense of obligation to yield or give away to something.

The overall spirit within which the treaty was conceived, negotiated and later on signed must again be repeated here very precisely. Menelik sought the friendship of Italy, and because of this friendship, he entered into a treaty agreement so that he can or may use Italian good offices regarding his contacts with other powers when and if he wished to do so. Thus, there was no agreement, tacit or implied, to trade off anything for services rendered by

103

Italy. Italy, however, wanted from the very beginning such a

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Rossetti, *Storia Diplomatica*, Menelik, in his letter of September 27, 1890 to King Humbert asserts: "L'article 17 dit que je peux me servir de l'intermédiaire de l'Italie, mais il ne dit pas que je consens a me servir de l'Italie pour toutes les affaires que j'aurai a traiter avec l'Europe." p.78. (Emphasis is mine); Menelich e Crispi, p.154.

treaty agreement it needed a pretext to demonstrate to those very same foreign powers with whom it was intending to represent Menelik, that it now protected and controlled Ethiopian interest abroad and, therefore, in accordance with the stipulations of Article 34 of the General Act of Berlin of February 26, 1885, it would be sufficient for it to notify these powers to declare a protectorate over Ethiopia.

By all means, and in as far as it was attempted to show in the analysis the pertinent facts in this and earlier chapters, the inclusion of the key word "consente" was not inadvertent. It was rather there by design to promote, in a subtle but yet aggressive manner, the spirit of the colonial diktat of "Italia irredenta." Like in the articles of protectorate of the treaties of 1879 and 1883,¹⁰⁴ Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle was nothing less than a calculated pretext by which Italy offered its good offices to be the diplomatic "courier" of Ethiopia so as to effectively guide, control and represent Ethiopian foreign affairs abroad. Unlike the time of the two previous treaties, now, the General Act of Berlin of 1885 had sanctioned that "the power which assumes a

104

For details on the articles of protectorate of the treaties of 1879 and 1883 see chapter 2, pp.91-101.

Protectorate there [the coast of the African Continent], shall accompany the respective act with notification thereof" in order to make its possession good. ¹⁰⁵ Indeed, on October 11, 1889, Crispi ¹⁰⁶ notified the signatories to the Act of Berlin.

The reaction among the signatories to this notification was almost unanimous. Most of the thirteen governments who signed the Act had recognized it. Since the United States had not signed the Act of Berlin it had not felt obliged to acknowledge Crispi's ¹⁰⁷ notification. Turkey and Russia, for reasons already indicated at an earlier stage, were the only powers which, as signatories, did not acknowledge Crispi's notification. France, on the other hand, even though its Foreign Minister acknowledged the Italian notification, did not - as would be shown consequently - recognize Italy's assumed protectorate over Ethiopia. Turkey, it would be remembered, was in Massawa in the earlier part of the 19th. century, and the dubious nature by which Italy, with the

105

Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, p.468 ff.

106

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.60-61; Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, pp.457-458.

107

Work, Ethiopia, a Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.92. For details concerning the European alignment over Ethiopia see chapter 3, pp.153-178.

connivance of Britain, took possession of the Red Sea port had
 left Turkey no room but to reject Italy's presence in the region. 108

The Russian stand is mainly related to historical explanations to
 which, it seemed at the time, it attached sentimental significance.

The Russian Orthodox Church, for some time now, had, because of
 similarities and affinities between the Russian and Ethiopian Orthodox
 Churches, keenly and cautiously cultivated good relations between the
 two countries. Sentiments for Ethiopia both within Russia and the
 Imperial court circle were therefore high. Thus, from the very
 start, Russia dismissed any encroachment upon Ethiopian sovereignty
 by Italy. This, we have already observed at the time of the Conference
 of Brussels in 1890. 109
 At this particular epoch, as if to impart to
 France Russia's strong stand on the conference and also as regards

108

For documentary evidences see Rubenson, Wichale XVII, footnote 11, p.13.

109

Castonet Des Fosses is of the opinion that Russia did not want to
 accept Italy's notification and its implication of protectorate over
 Ethiopia because Russia herself had - through her religious affiliation -
 a colonial motive. "Malgré ces insuccès, l'idée abyssine continuait de
 faire son chemin en Russie. En 1889, des sociétés s'étaient formées pour
 fonder une colonie en Abyssinie. Cette même année, Menelick, qui n'avait
 jusqu'alors régné que sur le Choa, devenait roi de toute l'Abyssinie. Peu
 après, il signait avec l'Italie le traité d'Ucciali au sujet duquel la
 Russie formulait ses réserves." L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, p. 346. [However,
 as already indicated in chapter 3 where Ethiopian-Russian relations were
 briefly discussed, the contention that Russia then had some ulterior
 motives over Ethiopia is unsubstantiated.]

Ethiopia's representation through Italy, Giers, the Russian Foreign Minister, told the French Ambassador in St. Petersburg that he will not allow the signature of the Russian representative to figure alongside that of the Emperor of Ethiopia as represented by Italy. Russia, he stressed, did not recognize the treaty which stipulated such a
110
representation.

France's initial position was not amply clear. It was only as the situation further developed and was in fact affecting French interests in Eastern Africa, especially the Red Sea region, that it turned in complete favour of Ethiopia. In fact, France was one of the powers which immediately acknowledged receipt of the Italian notification. Some highly placed officials in particular, and French public opinion in general, did not recognize Italian presence in Ethiopia. In a lively discussion at the French National Assembly on April 3, 1890, Mr. Spuller, the Foreign Minister, was closely examined by members of the Assembly, especially the Marquis de Breteuil, on the validity and advisability of the French acknowledgement of the Italian notification. In replying to the stiff and hostile interrogations the Minister stated, without approval from any side, that on October 20, eight days after receipt of the notification, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had indeed acknowledged the same, "dans des termes

110

DDF., 1st.ser., Vol.8, Laboulaye to Ribot, April 14, 1890, No.36, pp.48-49. See also Ribot to Vavineux, April 7, 1890, No.28, p.35.

111
analogues."

Even though the French Foreign Office hastily acknowledged the notification, the official stand of the French Government, as was proved later on, was far from a recognition of Italian intention, in Ethiopia. In fact, the diplomatic history of the two countries regarding East Africa, and particularly Ethiopia, was one which was characterized by a mutual opposition and competition often marked by petty rancours and jealousies. French non-recognition of Italian designs in Ethiopia was so firm that the Quai d'Orsay and the Ministry of the Colonies were working in concert to weaken any Italian protectorate undertakings as regards Ethiopia. Britain, as an interested partner of Italy in the whole political gamble, was therefore affected by the French offensive.

112
Britain was not a neutral bystander in the scramble that was being undertaken in the Red Sea, the Blue Nile and the Horn of Africa. It was in fact one of the main actors which pursued its own Cairo-to-

111

Gouvernement Francais, Journal Officiel, April 3, 1890. "Conformément au désir de Mr. le Chargé d'Affaires, acte est donné de cette notification au nom du Gouvernement de la République." See also Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp. 62-69.

112

Covering as it does a whole lot of intricate political as well as diplomatic interactions, this aspect of French policy vis-a-vis Ethiopian-French-Italian-British relations will be analyzed in the following chapter.

113

Cape design. In this endeavour, Italy was a partner and an ally. In the furtherance of their mutual objectives both put to work their coordinated efforts in East Africa generally and Ethiopia in particular.

It is to be remembered that Britain was one of the powers signatory to the Berlin Act which acknowledged the Italian notification of October 11, 1889 and thereby recognized Italian protectorate over Ethiopia.¹¹⁴ Britain's role in the realization of the Italian protectorate over Ethiopia was the most lucid and the most detailed in its approach. Even though Menelik responded to Victoria in his letter of August 24, 1890 in no uncertain terms that he did not enter into any agreement which obliged him to curtail his independence of action and which minimized the sovereignty of his country,¹¹⁵ Britain persisted

113

For a thorough and detailed analysis of the British design, see Raphael, The Cape-to-Cairo Dream. Among others, see also Bourdaire, Fachoda-La Mission Marchand, Paris, 1899; Hanotaux, Le Partage de l'Afrique: Fachoda; Langer, European Alliances and Alignments; Lugard, The Rise of Our East African Empire, 2 Vols.; Michel, Vers Fachoda; Woolf, Commerce and Empire in Africa; Weinthal, The Story of the Cape to Cairo Railway and River Route, 1887-1922, 4 Vols.

114

F.O.95/751, Victoria to Menelik, February 20, 1890: "In as much, however, as the Italian Government have notified to us that by a Treaty concluded on the 2nd. of May last between Italy and Ethiopia 'it is provided that His Majesty the King of Ethiopia consents to avail himself of the Government of His Majesty the King of Italy for the conduct of all matters which he may have with other Powers or Governments,' We shall communicate to the Government of Our Friend His Majesty the King of Italy copies of Your Majesty's letter and of this Our reply."

115

Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, p.409.

is strengthening the hands of Italy by wanting to deal with Menelik only through the intermediary of "our Friend His Majesty the King of Italy."¹¹⁶ The better to appreciate the stand point adapted by Britain, it would be worthwhile, at this juncture, to deal with some of the important factors in their chronological order.

Subsequent to his letter of August 24,1890, we also find that Menelik, in a very little publicized letter of November 2,1890, renewed his friendship to Queen Victoria and her Government and requested the establishment of direct diplomatic contacts and good neighbourliness between their two countries. The reason why Menelik did this is of course obvious. After indicating that he was not able to bring about such friendly relations in the past because of the "absence of tranquility in our country," he said he sought the establishment of friendly relations now that the country is reunited under his authority and that peace is reigning in his Empire.

...Nous serions heureux si vous vouliez bien donner ordre a Votre Representant a Aden de se mettre d'accord avec le notre, Ras Meconen, pour le règlement de toutes affaires; ainsi il nous semble que si votre Représentant a la

116

For evidence that by now Britain had in fact recognized Italian protectorate over Ethiopia see F.O.403/154, Foreign Office to the India Office, January 20,1891; Ibid., Salisbury to Marquis of Dufferin, January 20,1891; Ibid., Dufferin to Salisbury, February 18,1891; Ibid., Sealy to Baring, February 24,1891; Baring to Salisbury, March 9,1891; Ibid., Salisbury to Dufferin, March 19,1891; Ibid., Baring to Salisbury, May 6,1891; F.O.403/155, Victoria to Menelik, August 18,1891.

Cote, et de notre part Ras Meconen, portaient tous deux leurs efforts pour s'entendre sur nos intérêts, ce ne pourrait être que pour la plus grande utilité de nos deux royaumes et c'est dans ce sens que nous avons posté notre attention sur cette question. 117

The British Government's reaction to Menelik's proposed rapprochement was disappointing. In fact, even before giving a response to Menelik's request, the Foreign Office dispatched this very revealing instruction to the India Office which now was following up British interests in the area under the close supervision of Cromer from Cairo.

...It will be seen that King Menelik asks that he may be given control over the Zeyla-Harar route, and that the Resident at Aden and the British Officers in charge at Zeyla may be placed in regular relations with Ras Makunan, Governor of Harar, who, he states, will shortly visit Aden. Lord Salisbury is of opinion that without further information it would be imprudent to return an answer to King Menelik, as the matter is one on which the Italian Government feel very keenly. I am to request that his Lordship may be favoured with any observations which Viscount Cross may have to offer as to the advantage of increased communication between the authorities at Harar and British Officers at Aden and Zeyla, and as to the restrictions which might be placed upon such communication, in order to avoid any appearance of interfering with the Italian Protectorate over King Menelik. 118

117

F.O.403/154, Menelik to Victoria, November 2, 1890.

118

Ibid., Foreign Office to India Office, January 20, 1891.
(Emphasis is mine.)

Salisbury himself dispatched a letter the same day to Marquis of Dufferin, the British Ambassador in Rome, enquiring as to the advisability of making the request of Menelik known to
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Crispi and seeking Dufferin's suggestions on the reply to be given to Menelik's letter. The content of the letter addressed to Dufferin was identical to that sent from the Foreign Office to
119
the India Office with the exception of the following paragraph.

I leave it to your Excellency's discretion whether you should mention King Menelik's letter at once to Signor Crispi, or whether any communication to his Excellency should be delayed until some decision has been arrived at as to what answers, if any, should be returned to it. 120

Dufferin's reply to Salisbury's enquiry was nothing more than a verbatim transmission of Crispi's wishes without adding his own recommendations. He wrote to Salisbury.

During my conversations on Sunday with the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, I touched casually on Menelik's proposal in reference to the relations he was anxious to have established between the British authorities at Zeyla and Makonnen, the Viceroy of Harrar. His Excellency, while fully acknowledging that it would be of obvious practical advantage that the English and Abyssinian border authorities in these localities should be able to communicate directly with each other, expressed a hope that your Lordship would

*
Crispi goes out of office at the end of the month.

119
Referred to above in footnote 118.

120
F.O.403/154, Salisbury to Marquis of Dufferin, January 20, 1891.

allow your reply to Menelik to remain in suspense until the negotiations which are now in progress between Count Antonelli, the Italian Ambassador, and the Abyssinian Empire should have reached a conclusion, as at the present moment they were in a somewhat delicate position. 121

Crispi had taken the affair too seriously that he visited Dufferin the next day at the British Embassy and told him that inasmuch as an Italian delegate of importance could always be Resident at Harar, any communication which the English authorities at Zeila might desire to make to Mekonnen might be transmitted through the Italian official, and vice versa. The placing of an Italian political agent in the strategic town of Harar in Eastern Ethiopia was already a long studied and stipulated formula by Italy in the furtherance of Italian protectorate over Ethiopia. When Antonelli was in Italy with Ras Mekonnen to arrange the negotiation and subsequently the signing of the Additional Convention, the idea of sending Italian officers to important political centres in Ethiopia in the implementation of the protectorate paragraph was settled. Thus, while Antonelli was appointed a Minister Plenipotentiary of Ethiopian affairs, Salimbeni, Traversi and Nerazzini were also made Resident General and Political Officers at the court of Menelik in Addis Ababa, Let Marefia and Harar respectively. However, what Crispi did not

121

Ibid., Dufferin to Salisbury, February 18, 1891.

122

Rossetti, *Storia Diplomatica*, p.74. For the circumstances leading to their placement in these strategic locations see pp.258-269.

tell the British Ambassador when he said that an Italian delegate of importance could always be Resident at Harar was the fact that not only were negotiations at the moment "in a somewhat delicate position" but that the Antonelli mission with Menelik - which had started in the second week of December 1890 - had collapsed, diplomatic relations almost severed and that all of the Italian officers, including Nerazzini, the political agent at Harar, had left Ethiopia on February 12, 1891.¹²³

Harar was so important to Italy that even after Nerazzini had left this town, the Italian Government was pressing hard on the British Government to allow him to function from Zeila. In March, replying from Cairo to Salisbury's enquiry as to this possibility, Baring informed Salisbury that Major Sealy, stationed in Aden, had telegraphed to him: "Yes; if the Italian Agent is duly accredited."¹²⁴ However, Baring made it plain to Salisbury that Major Sealy "fears that the French Government would have good ground for objecting to any recognition of Italian domination over Harar, since by our Agreement with France we were not to take Harar nor allow any other Power to acquire it."¹²⁵ For

¹²³

F.O.403/154, Baring to Salisbury, Cairo, May 6, 1891. Major Cesare Nerazzini, an important Italian agent in Ethiopia and in Ethiopian-Italian relations was later on appointed as a private agent serving the Italian Government to observe Menelik's activities from Zeila. Later on, he was again appointed to negotiate the Ethiopian-Italian peace treaty of 1897.

¹²⁴

F.O.403/154, Baring to Salisbury, Cairo, March 9, 1891.

¹²⁵

Ibid., Agreement of February 2, 1888 between Britain and France.

reasons related both to the British-French Agreement of February 2, 1888, and British suspicions of Italian intentions in the region, Britain was never willing to readily concede to any Italian requests regarding Zeila or Harar. Rudini, the new Italian Prime Minister, had also imparted the same wish of appointing an Italian Consular Agent at Zeila to establish communication with Mekonnen, and had even suggested of naming Nerazzini as Vice-Consul "owing to his intimate knowledge of the country, and to his having a great friendship with Ras Makunan, with whom his advice would always have had great weight." ¹²⁶ In the same message from Rome Salisbury also received the report that Mr. Rudini "had expressed a hope to Count Tornielli that the matter might not be passed," and that he "had at once refrained from urging the appointment." It was at about the height of hostilities between Menelik and Italy and a few months before the Battle of Adwa that Nerazzini's increased activities, apart from a short visit to Harar in 1893, were ¹²⁷ reported in the area.

126

F.O.403/155, Dering to Salisbury, September 21, 1891.

127

F.O.403/221, Consul Ferris to Cromer, "The Italian Government are sending a man to Zeyla who, while posing as a private gentleman having no official connection with the Italian Government, is to watch Ras Makunan from a coign of vantage in British territory, ascertain all his proceedings, which can only be done through the medium of spies, report them for the information of his own Government. In order to carry to a successful issue this work, the British Vice-Consul is required to afford to Dr. Nerazzini such "facilities as he may require for his residence at Zeyla as a private person, and for the unostentatious discharge of his duties in collecting and forwarding information to the Italian Government." In other words, to identify himself in his official capacity with the Italian scheme of watching and reporting

Menelik had realized that the concerted actions of some of the European powers for and on behalf of Italy was putting the effectiveness of his rule in jeopardy, and more than any other time in the past, the territorial integrity of his country was at stake. To dispel any such threats from without, Menelik had therefore sent out a circular letter to the European powers on April 10, 1891 defining the limits of his Empire. At this point in their relationships, while France was disposed to deal with Menelik directly, the British Government was bent on recognizing Ethiopia only through Italy. This was the sentiment which Mr. Billot, the French Ambassador in Rome, gathered by late 1891. In his letter of September 21 to his Foreign Minister, he reveals the British intention thus:

Il en résulte que le Gouvernement anglais aurait résolu de faire passer par l'intermédiaire du Cabinet de Rome sa réponse à la lettre-circulaire de Menelik...Nous devons par conséquent nous attendre à une explosion de mauvaise humeur lorsqu'on saura que la

on Makunan....Apart from the impossibility of preserving an 'incognito' in a small African town, where the only European resident is the British Vice-Consul, Dr. Nerazzini is intimately known - and disliked by Ras Makunan.... On the last occasion (in 1893)...he was practically expelled by Ras Makunan, who cordially disliked him, and considered him nothing but a spy of the Italian Government." Aden, July 31, 1895. Consul Ferris' assessment of the Menelik-Nerazzini relationship is different from that of Dering's. See footnote 126, p.298.

128

F.O.1/32, Original Amharic letter to powers, p.249 ff. This circular letter, important as it is in the study of Menelik's foreign policy, will be discussed in context at an appropriate stage.

réponse du Gouvernement de la République
a été adressée directement au Negus. 129

However, the point is that either Billot was late in his reporting or both the British Ambassador in Rome and the Italian Government were deliberately keeping him in the dark. Already, by the end of July, Salisbury had addressed a letter to Count Torielli, the Italian Ambassador in London, informing him of the happy news that he was now transmitting to him, "in compliance with the request which you made to me verbally on the 15th. inst., a copy of the letter addressed to Her Majesty the Queen in April last by King Menelik. [Circular of Miazzia 14,1883, (April 10, 1891)]." In the same letter to Torielli, he wanted to "learn whether His Majesty the King of Italy has received any similar communication." At this stage, Ethiopian-Italian relations were at the lowest ebb with the negotiations between Menelik and Antonelli regarding Article 17 having been disrupted and discontinued. Barely a month after this diplomatic rupture, Britain and Italy had concluded in Rome what are referred to as the Protocols of March 24 and April 15,1891, defining their respective spheres of influence

129

DDF., 1st. ser., Vol.9, Billot to Ribot, Rome, September 21,1891. ("Consequently, we should await an explosion of bad humour when it is known that the response of the Government of the [French] Republic had been addressed directly to the Negus.") [Emphasis is mine.] pp.28-30.

in Ethiopia. In the same letter he addressed to Torielli, Salisbury indicated that he proposes "to communicate to King Menelik, in the name of the Queen, the Agreement concluded between Great Britain and Italy" and that he "shall be happy to send this reply through the medium of the Italian authorities at Massowah, in accordance with the request made by your Excellency to that effect."¹³⁰ Victoria's letter, this time very terse, told Menelik that "so far as we ourselves are concerned, it is our intention to abide strictly by the terms of our engagements to our good brother, the King of Italy."¹³¹

For all practical purposes, it could be affirmed that, by the beginning of 1891 Britain had recognized 'de facto' the existence of Italian protectorate over Ethiopia.¹³² In a document

130

F.O.403/155, Salisbury to Count Torielli, July 24,1891.

131

Ibid., Victoria to Menelik, August 18,1891.

132

In July 1890, Menelik had received Victoria's letter by which she informed him that she now recognized him through Italy. He had given a reply to this in August and November to Victoria and to Humbert in September. In January, Salisbury wrote to Marquis of Dufferin, the British Ambassador in Rome: "I leave it to your Excellency's discretion whether you should mention King Menelik's letter at once to Signor Crispi, or whether any communication to his Excellency should be delayed until some decision has been arrived at as to what answers, if any, should be returned to it." Every decision thereafter indicates that Britain had recognized Italian protectorate over Ethiopia.

which very much reveals the policy of Her Majesty's Government, we find that even on matters concerning Menelik's own people and therefore his sovereign rights, Britain recognized only Italy and not - as he is now referred to - the "ruler" of these people. In a telegraph regarding an incident in the Somali coast, Salisbury instructed Dufferin to transmit the protest of Her Majesty's Government to the Italian authorities.

Her Majesty's Government have received intelligence from the Acting Consul for the Somali Coast that the Gadabursi tribe, who have Treaty relations with England, have been attacked by King Menelik. You should represent to the Italian Government that this action on the part of a Ruler, who is under their protectorate, places us in a difficult position, and you should express the hope that the Italian Government will call upon him to desist from acts of aggression. 133

The foregoing analysis of the reactions of the European powers to the Crispi notification regarding Menelik's "consent" was necessitated in order to provide the background for a comparative study of the way Italy manipulated existing political situations to impose its own diktat on Menelik. It is to be remembered that the task of Salimbeni - the Italian Resident General who came to Menelik's court in July 1890 - was never an easy one from the very start.

133

F.O.403/154, Salisbury to Dufferin, March 19, 1891. [Emphasis is mine.] Major Sealy, the British Political Officer in Aden had already reported to Baring in February: "Menelik has already, by writing to Her Majesty the Queen direct, Shown that he does not acknowledge the Italian control of his foreign relations...." Ibid., 403/154, Sealy to Baring, Aden, February 24, 1891.

Menelik's initial reaction to the Salimbeni mission was vigorous. Menelik had totally rejected the suggested obligation. A month after his arrival, Salimbeni recorded this very same point when, in his diary, he commented that "Menelik would accept no such obligation, and so the diplomatic struggle began." ¹³⁴ Towards the end of his mission he also wrote to General Luchino Dal Verme in this term: "Dear, I throw at you point-blank a bombe:article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle, already notified to the powers on ¹³⁵ the basis of the Berlin Conference, is an imbroglio."

The real diplomatic struggle on the interpretation of Article 17 began for earnest when Crispi, disheartened by dispatches from Salimbeni on his negotiations with Menelik, decided to hasten Antonelli back to the court of Menelik in the hope of obtaining an agreement in favour of Italy by any means. Antonelli arrived in Addis Ababa on December 17, 1890. Menelik's reaction to the new Antonelli demarche was no less vigorous than to the one by Salimbeni. Therefore, it was evident that Antonelli's mission was doomed to fail from the very beginning. The mission was to last for a turbulent one month and three weeks period.

King Humbert, in responding to the two protest letters of September 27 by Menelik also informed him that the notification

134

Zaghi, Storia Diplomatica, Humbert to Menelik, October 13, 1890, pp.82-83.

135

Ibid., Salimbeni to General Luchino Dal Verme, October 7, 1890, p.184.

sent out to the European powers regarding Article 17 was made after securing the agreement of Ras Mekonnen - his Envoy to Italy - and now, in order to settle this problem and "altri incarichi delicate" he was delegating Antonelli to his court.¹³⁶

In his very first encounter with Menelik Antonelli, in the presence of the already uneasy Emperor and Empress, started to strongly accuse and vilify Grazmach Yosef for being responsible for the differences between Menelik and the Italian Government. The tactic resorted to by Antonelli was obviously to sow discord and suspicion within Menelik's court itself. However, both Menelik and Taitu reacted immediately to stop the unwarranted attack on Yosef. Menelik's furry was such, we are told, that at the end of the session he lost his voice from scolding.¹³⁷

Yosef, because of his early association with French Catholic missionaries and his education in the French language, was later on to come to serve under Pierre Arnoux, the French traveller in Ethiopia in the second half of 1800. He came in contact with Antonelli when the latter was in the process of negotiating agreements with the Chiefs of Awsa on the Red Sea coast. Menelik, because of Yosef's capabilities in a foreign language

136

Rossetti, Soria Diplomatica, Humbert to Menelik, October 13, 1890, pp.82-83.

137

Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, Diary of December 22, 1890. "Antonelli comincia a mettere in batteria i suoi pezzi contro Menelich. Egli finisce coll'attacare a fondo e coll'accusare il Grazmac Josiéf. Il re e la regina costengono l'attacco e rispondo con pari violenza, anzi il re si imbriscola tanto che perde la voce." p.254.

and his experience with Europeans and European concepts, recruited him
 138
 as his official interpreter.

Both Rodd and Gleichen, while conducting the British mission in Ethiopia in 1897, had acknowledged Yosef as "the chief interpreter" of menelik and they were unanimous on his capacity, intelligence and his amiable personality. Rodd, in his 'Memories' says that Yosef was the "chief interpreter, an intelligent and agreeable Shoan who had been to Europe and could speak French." 139 Gleichen also speaks of Yosef as the "chief interpreter to the Emperor, an intelligent and pleasant-mannered official, who has been in Europe and speaks excellent French." 140 Michel, member of the 1897 French mission which came through Ethiopia to join hands with the Marchand mission at Fachoda also records that Yosef wrote the Imperial letters in Amharic and translated them into French." 141 Wylde, a British Vice-Consul for the Red Sea area, referring to Yosef as the King's

138

Michel, Vers Fachoda, p.251; Morié, Histoire de l'Ethiopie, Vol.2, p.445.

139

Rodd, Memories, 1st. ser., pp.147-148; 150. In his reportings from Ethiopia, Rodd calls him "King's chief interpreter and foreign adviser...." See also Rodd to Salisbury, May 13, 1897, 'Papers Respecting Rodd's Special Mission to King menelik,' p.27.

140

Gleichen, With the Mission to menelik, footnote 1, p.119; 130.

141

Michel, Vers Fachoda, p.251; Morié, Histoire de l'Ethiopie, Vol.2, p.445.

Chamberlain or Master of Ceremonies, says that "Gerazmatch Yusef talks French mast [sic] fluently and seems to be a very intelligent and superior sort of person."¹⁴²

Actually, Yosef's official duties extended into other state and government domains. By all explanations, and in the absence of any appointed officer in the field of foreign affairs, and next to Menelik's own role as his own Foreign Minister, Yosef was the sort of Director General in charge of foreign affairs. Apart from being the chief interpreter and consultant in the day to day activities of the court, he was also the principal figure who welcomed and saw off most foreign dignitaries, envoys and missions. In the implementation of Menelik's foreign policies, he acted as a liason between Menelik and the different foreign missions and personalities in Addis Ababa. It was Yosef who was also sent abroad with specific missions and accompanied other Ethiopian missions to different countries. Because of his experience in the field of foreign affairs, his expert opinion, like Alfred Ilg - his counterpart in the court regarding foreign relations - was being sought for and invariably accepted by outside envoys and Menelik.¹⁴³ Yosef's

142

Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, p.419.

143

The role of Alfred Ilg, a Swiss engineer who came to serve at Menelik's court as a technical adviser and later on as a state counsellor, would be discussed in subsequent chapters.

activities at the court of Menelik were very diverse. He signed official documents, arranged for certificates of decorations given out by Menelik and awarded documents and decorations. Yosef also signed and issued passports and received foreign travel documents for inspection. He was also entrusted with the duty of exchanging notes with foreign powers and missions.

Even though Antonelli had vainly attempted to placate Yosef as the source of the differences regarding the interpretation of Article 17, Menelik was totally invincible and Antonelli's initial demarche with Menelik was not to be successful. Within a day after his first meeting Antonelli submitted an other proposal for Menelik's consideration substituting Article 17. The proposal contained five articles. The first article abrogated Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle. The second article contained the declaration that Italy will not place Ethiopia under its protectorate. With article three the Emperor was placed under obligation not to allow such a protectorate to any other power, and if need be, such a protectorate would be given only to the preference of Italy. By article four, the

144

Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, pp.230-231.

145

Yosef gave the documents and decorations to the member of the Rodd mission at the close of the negotiations.

146

Ibid., p.255.

Italian Government was entrusted with the defence of the independence and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. Finally, article five stipulated that this agreement will be, as in Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle, communicated to the European powers. Menelik's reaction was obvious. Now, as before, he was not disposed to oblige himself to any protectorate insinuations from any power. On this point, the Emperor was also beign strongly supported by Queen Taitu. She vehemently and strongly reacted to the newest Antonelli proposal in a very firm manner: "Io sono una donna e non amo la guerra; ma piuttosto che accettare questo io preferisco la guerra." The Queen, just like the Emperor, was determined not to accept any protectorate proposals from Italy. In accordance with Antonelli's own reportings to Rome, the Queen was adamantly opposed to article three of his proposals. From the proposal made to Menelik it was obvious that Italy was still determined to pursue its protectorate ambitions over Ethiopia. Antonelli reported to his Foreign Minister that in presenting this alternative proposal to Menelik he declared to him that Italy, not having had a protectorate over Ethiopia and having by this proposed agreement abrogated Article 17, would have

147

Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, "I am a woman and I do not like war. But rather than accepting this I prefer war." p.255. [A literal translation.]

148

Rossetti, Stori Diplomatica, "L'articolo 3 incontro la piu vivace opposizione da parte dell'Imperatrice." p.90.

to be granted an other agreement which will guarantee Italy an
¹⁴⁹
 influential role in Ethiopia. Indicating that the negotiations
 were not easy, Antonelli reported again that the discussions,
 especially as regards the protectorate question, were long and
¹⁵⁰
 animated.

The role of Queen Taitu in the initial and subsequent stages
¹⁵¹
 of decision-making was very important and crucial. Even though
 Menelik was already determined not to concede to Antonelli on
 Article 17, the Queen acted as an active catalyst in desuading the
 Emperor not to give any more concessions to Italy. A staunch
 defender of the Ethiopian religious faith and a strong believer
 in the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the
 Ethiopian Empire, Queen Taitu was a very suave lady and a person-
 ality of iron will. As a result, her influence over Menelik
 regarding state affairs was very significant.

Rodd said of Queen Taitu: "This remarkable lady had been
 famed for great beauty in her youth, and she exercised a strong

149

Ibid., Antonelli to Foreign Office, December 29, 1890, p.90.

150

Ibid., "La discussione fu lunga ed animata, specialmente sulla
 parola protettorato...." p.90.

151

Queen Taitu's role in the decision-making process will be
 discussed in chapter 6.

influence over her husband." ¹⁵² In almost a similar vein, Robert Peet Skinner, the first American Commissioner to Ethiopia, described her as "a woman of great force of character, and, in her youth, one of striking beauty." ¹⁵³ Jesman called her "the greatest single influence on his [Menelik] life," ¹⁵⁴ and Gleichen said she "has the reputation of being a woman of much ability, and it is generally understood that the King owes much of his success to her counsels." ¹⁵⁵ Mèrab, himself a personal physician both to Menelik and Taitu, writing of his recollections at the court, reminisced that during his medical consultations with them he always observed that the Emperor acted in front of her as a child under a mother's or an elderly sister's care. He added: "Son appui moral est, avant tout, le clergé avec lequel elle s'identifie par son amour pour la religion nationale et sa haine de l'Etranger." ¹⁵⁶ As if to conform the important role played by

152

Rodd, Memories, 2nd. ser., p.155.

153

Skinner, Abyssinia of Today, p.121.

154

Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.60.

155

Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.147.

156

Mèrab, Impression d'Ethiopie, p.47.

Queen Taitu in the decision-making process of the court, Rodd, at the close of his mission with Menelik, reported to Salisbury that he had been informed confidentially by a court official - who should be in a position to know - that Menelik's concessions to certain of their demands was largely due to the "powerful influence of the Empress" on him. This court official who passed over the information to the British mission on the role of the Queen regarding decisions on the state level was no one else but Grazmatch Yosef, himself a key person in the decision-making process at the court.

Never for one moment - at least we do not find it documented - had Menelik lost confidence in Yosef and doubted his judgement and integrity in his official duty of translation and interpretation of Article 17. Antonelli's initial and subsequent attacks on Yosef were rather part of a deliberate orchestration to discredit him in the eyes of Menelik and thereby to gain his sympathy in further re-negotiating the fate of Article 17. For Menelik, however, the fate of the article was already sealed.

The last week of December 1890 and the whole month of January

157

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' Rodd to Salisbury, May 15, 1897, pp. 46-47.

158

'Precis of Information Obtained by the British Mission to Abyssinia,' March-June, 1897, p. 54.

the following year, Menelik and Antonelli had a series of meetings trying to thrash out differences regarding the interpretation of Article 17, boundary and other related matters. During the discussions, Menelik surrounded himself with some of his top aids such as the Queen, whom he considered a close adviser, Ras Mekonnen, Ras Tessema, Yosef and Ilg. Antonelli, on his side, had Salimbeni and he was being aided by Traversi who worked around the periphery of the capital, and by Nerazzini from Harar. Menelik, even though patient and willing to go to great lengths to come to a real understanding of the differences, his indignation and his displeasure were being put across to Antonelli in no uncertain terms whenever the occasion permitted. Antonelli, aware that Menelik was deeply affected, kept on repeating that the error came from the Ethiopian side, and that the Amharic article, because of Yosef, contained the defective text. On January 3, Antonelli presented Menelik with one such memorandum, and the Emperor was enraged when he read the very first part of the memorandum.¹⁵⁹ When two weeks later Antonelli went on to the extent of suggesting that the Emperor was not being flexible the Empress, as if to demonstrate Menelik's and his adviser's determination, retorted: " Not unless you desire war!"¹⁶⁰

159

Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, Diary of January 3, 1891: "Il re va in collera per il primo periodo della lettera, la dove si dice che l'articolo 17 e stato male tradotto dall'interprete dell'imperatore." p.266.

160

Ibid., "Non ci sei che tu a volere la guerra!" p.275.

By the close of January it was evident that no agreement was possible on the interpretation of Article 17 for both sides had religiously adhered to their 'modus operandi.' Menelik wanted none of Article 17, and Antonelli, conscious that Italy was at any rate the loser, resorted to tactics of elusiveness. Two important documents from Antonelli, one to Menelik and the other to the Foreign Minister of Italy, reveal the anger and desperation with which the Italian negotiating team was seized. The long note of January 26 to Menelik ¹⁶¹ was nothing else but a recapitulation of relations between Italy and Menelik from the 1880s up to the moment of the present negotiations and dwelling mainly on the Italian side of the story. ¹⁶² What makes the letter interesting was that it attempted to portray Menelik as an ingrate who had received all he wanted from Italy, including arms, ammunition and the Ethiopian throne, but who had abandoned its friend once that he had fulfilled his objective. ¹⁶³

Antonelli reminded Menelik in the same letter that at the beginning of the differences the Emperor had written to the Italian King an angry letter full of resentment ¹⁶⁴ in which he had protested

161

It is not known if this note had been submitted to Menelik.

162

Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, Diary of January 26, 1891, pp.280-282.

163

Ibid., pp.281-282.

164

Ibid., "una lettera molto risentita." p.282.

the fact that the Italian text of Article 17 was not in conformity with that of the Amharic. However, Antonelli strongly reiterated that such nonconformity was made possible because originally the text was written in Italian and later on badly translated in Amharic ¹⁶⁵ by the interpreter of the Ethiopian Government. He concluded, Italy did not want Ethiopia in French or British hands. Italy wanted Ethiopia to stay ¹⁶⁶ Ethiopian.

The other note to Crispi, that of January 29, dealt with the deterioration of the negotiations, and according to Salimbeni's diary of the same date, Antonelli revealed to Crispi the exact picture of the diverse phases of the negotiations between the Emperor and the Italian side. Antonelli concluded, Salimbeni says, by proposing an accommodation which consisted of abrogating Article 17 as suggested earlier by him. Antonelli dealt in the letter in a vain attempt to expound the differences between the Italian word "consente" and the Amharic one "yichalachewal" as contained in Article 17, and tried to show how the other Amharic word preceding "yichalachewal" - that is "agajinet" [help or support] - is, in accordance with d'Abbadie's dictionary, translatable into French to mean "appui" ["appoggio" in Italian] and therefore a different

165

Ibid., "...mal tradotto...." p.282.

166

Ibid., "Vogliamo che l'Etiozia resti agli etiopi." p.282.

*

See p.182.

167

approach satisfying Italian intentions was possible.

The last week of December and the whole month of January 1891 did not add anything substantial to the negotiations on Article 17. Menelik's stand was very firm throughout: either totally abrogate Article 17 or change the Italian text of the article in accordance with the interpretation and spirit of the Amharic text. It was evident for Antonelli that this was the beginning of the end of his mission. Thus began the two turbulent and decisive weeks of February which sealed the fate of Article 17.

Knowing very well that his mission had now crossed the Rubicon, Antonelli decided on the 1st. of February that his mission must take leave of Menelik. Accordingly, and more as a tactical measure, Antonelli agreed with Salimbeni that the latter must present to the Emperor his letter of recall. Presumably prepared in advance to meet certain arrangements of their own, Humbert's letter of recall to Menelik was dated October 28, 1890. A simple and courteous letter, it extended Humbert's thankfulness and Salimbeni's "profound gratitude" for the goodwill extended to him while residing in Addis Ababa.

167

Ibid., "Il re dei re d'Etiopia soporta di trattare colle altre potenze coll'appoggio dell'Italia." p.290. [Emphasis is mine.]

168

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, Antonelli to Crispi, Aden, March 26, 1891, p.93.

169

Zaghi, Crispi e Menelik, p.291.

At the request of Antonelli an audience was granted on February 2, 1891 to remit Salimbeni's letter of recall. The impressions Antonelli and Salimbeni gathered as regards Menelik's immediate reaction were not similar. Antonelli wants us to believe that Menelik was caught unaware - that he felt that he was outwited and the rug had been pulled from underneath him. Antonelli says Menelik was "very much surprised" in reading the letter. ¹⁷⁰ Salimbeni, on the other hand, records that he was rather sad and disheartened than surprised to see Salimbeni leaving without being able to serve some definite and constructive purpose. ¹⁷¹ Menelik said to him: "Why? You are leaving me without laying the bridge?" He therefore demanded that Salimbeni should stay behind until the arrival of his successor. The whole idea, however, was a gesture more related to Antonelli's own displeasure and departure than wanting to see Salimbeni take leave of Menelik. In the same audience, Antonelli also implied that he too wanted to take leave of the Emperor because he said he felt Menelik had no confidence in him and that it was therefore unnecessary to continue the negotiations under such ¹⁷² circumstances.

170

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, "Menelik si mostro molto sorpreso nel leggere quella lettera...." p.93.

171

Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, "Quando il re ha letto la lettera di Umberto si e mostrato molto dispiaciuto...." p.293

172

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, Antonelli to Crispi, Aden, March 26, 1891, pp.93-94; Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, p.293.

Very surprisingly, we are told Menelik softened his stance at this point. Regarding the two last weeks of closed sessions at Menelik's court, we have, in the absence of any Ethiopian or any other first hand documentations, to rely only on Italian papers and diaries of the time.¹⁷³ Because of the analysis in the previous chapters regarding Menelik's character, political aucumen and his firm stand on an implied Italian protectorate over Ethiopia, the researcher prefers no to accept any suggestion contained in the papers of Antonelli and Salimbeni to the effect that Menelik, at the very last moment, was persuaded to accept the spirit of Article 17 as interpreted and understood by the Italian side. This was in fact what was being suggested when both Antonelli and Salimbeni, the two persons present in the last sessions of the Ethiopian-Italian discussions, recorded that at eight in the evening of February 3 Ras Mekonnen remitted to Antonelli Menelik's draft letter to King Humbert wherein the former reiterated that Article 17 would now stand as stipulated in both the Amharic and Italian texts and that because of his friendship to the Italian King he would make use of Italian good offices in all his affairs with the European governments.¹⁷⁴

For some unknown and yet unexplained reasons, this was a complete reversal of Menelik's position since his adherence in July 1890 to a

173

For a similar version of the Italian documents in English, see F.O.403/154. This, in fact, is also a summary of Count Antonelli's mission to Ethiopia as it appeared in the Italian Green Book.

174

Rossetti, Storia Diploantica, Antonelli to Crispi, Aden, March 26, 1891, pp.95-96; Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, p.294.

vigorous stand against any such proposal. However, the suspicion that Menelik could have conceded to such a formula becomes all the more strong when we recognize that on the 6th. Antonelli was summoned to the palace to sign Menelik's so-called documents of accomodation, namely, (1) an agreement in Amharic and Italian on their territorial limits; (2) the new agreement only in Amharic on Article 17 (the Italian text to be signed as soon as one was translated and made available), and that some two days later Antonelli found out that the agreements he signed regarding the new Article 17 did not contain any accomodation at all. ¹⁷⁵ If ever this was the style Menelik operated, the only explanation to this last of incidents is that it was perhaps a deliberate and calculated trap set by him to demonstrate to Antonelli that after all one can sign an agreement in good faith and in a language one does not understand and yet may be taken seriously to have willingly accepted an obligation or an agreement to which one, under normal circumstances, will not accede to.

What actually happened was that Antonelli had given the agreement to Salimbeni for translation from Amharic to Italian and that it was on the morning of the 8th. - while working on it together with Giuseppe (Yosef), their own Ethiopian translator at the Italian Residence - that they discovered that Antonelli had in fact signed

175

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, Antonelli to Crispi, Aden, March 26, 1891, pp.98-102. Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, p.295.

an agreement which cancelled Article 17. "A phrase which I did not understand very well surprised me," said Antonelli in his diary of the same day. "For the first time I saw the verb 'sereze.'" The new agreement on Article 17 now said: Menelik and Antonelli have agreed that Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle as written in Amharic¹⁷⁶ and Italian is cancelled.

The same day there was a very heated debate at the court where Antonelli, while exchanging words with Ras Mekonnen, tore the document on which he had affixed his signature. Later on, in the ensuing stormy encounter with Menelik, Antonelli also requested that the other documents regarding their respective frontiers be returned to him. Menelik coldly promised that he will look for it and see to it that it is made available to him. Tempers were so high that the same evening the three Italian envoys sent to Ethiopia some eight months back by Crispi at the conclusion of the Additional Convention of October 1889 to promote Italian protectorate over Ethiopia, submitted a letter to Menelik informing him of their intended departure and the severance of whatever diplomatic relations there existed between their two countries since the late 1860s. The short and polite letter conveyed the thankfulness of the three envoys for the Emperor's kind

176

Rossetti, *Storia Diplomatica*, "...hanno convenuto che l'articolo 17 del trattato di Ucciali (25 Miazia, 1881) in italiano e in amarico come e scritto sia cancellato." (The verb 'sereze' in Amharic is equivalent to 'cancelled' in English. Emphasis is mine.)

hospitality and benovalence and stated that because of the prevailing state of things they did not deem their presence at his Majesty's court necessary. They therefore requested that they be allowed to leave for Italy by way of Harar. The suspicion between the two sides was complete and mutual. When Menelik was handed the letter which requested leave, he exclaimed to Antonelli: "Is it written only in Italian?" And to which Antonelli replied: "No, here is the Amharic translation."

On the 11th. of February, the day the Italian mission took official leave of Menelik, we are told that Antonelli confronted the Emperor with a determination that he had never displayed before by demanding the documents he signed on the 6th. instant regarding Article 17. Menelik was also equally determined, and shot back at Antonelli:

"No! I will send it to your government."
 "Only I represent my government and you owe it to me," countered Antonelli.
 "No," replied Menelik, "I will send it."
 "I will then have to tell you," interjected Antonelli, "that the document has no value and I consider it as if I have been robbed of it."

It is also suggested that Antonelli indicated in the same argument that Italy would stay at River Mereb and abide by the spirit of Article 17. Menelik's reply was short. He said: "Gidyelem!"

177

Ibid., Antonelli, Salimbeni and Traversi to Menelik, February 9, 1891, p.102.

178

Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, Diary of February 11, 1891, pp.298-300.

meaning, in a manner typical to an Ethiopian warrior with a highly sensitized 'amour propre,' "we shall see!" Thus, diplomacy failed and two nations were now at the treshhold of hostilities.

The behaviour of Antonelli both on the 8th. and 11th. was very unusual, in bad taste and unbecoming to an envoy dealing with an Emperor. Menelik's response too, at least the way they had been narrated both by Antonelli and Salimbeni, were very unsual and unlike him. We are given to believe that he was very condescending and pleading in regret in order to retain them in his palace for further discussions. He might have. However, Menelik was not the type who took insult lightly. Antonelli and Salimbenni might have attempted to resort to such a tactical position, at least in their reportings to their Foreign Office, in order to blame Menelik for the rupture of diplomatic relations and to down play their own faults and misbehaviour in the fear that this would be conveyed to their sovereign by Menelik. In fact, in the absence of an Ethiopian record on the proceedings of the meetings, we are supplied with a French document which states that in reality Menelik had declared Antonelli and his mission 'persona non grata' and asked the group to leave. A telegraphic dispatch of March 19 from Obock to the Minister of Colonies in Paris confirms the "complete rupture" between Menelik and Antonelli and adds that because Antonelli had "menaced" the Emperor the latter had asked all Italians to leave and advised Humbert on the lack of decorum on the part of his envoys

179
in Addis Ababa.

The foregoing analysis was a study of the anatomy of peace making. In the same analyses, we had also accounted for, briefly and on a time frame basis, the different stages of negotiations, counsellings, tactical manuevrings and finally shown the decisions of a determined King. The remaining part of this chapter will now be devoted to a study and analyses of the hostilities and the ensuing war between the two nations. As indicated in the introductory part of the chapter both elements, namely, peace and war, are indicators of the values human beings attach to priorities. Peace is viable and acceptable only when both or all sides or most elements are found to be relatively satisfied on the assessment of the value or values in question. War, however, becomes, inevitable when one or more sides are dissatisfied and thus as a result attempt to achieve the contested objective or objectives through the imposition of one's will over the other.

3. The final decision on Article 17:

On the 12th. of February 1891, the Italian mission left Ethiopia. This was the beginning of the end of sobre diplomacy between Menelik

179

A.D. (Archives Diploantiques, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris), Telegraphic dispatch from Obock to the Minister of Colonies; March 19, 1891: "Je vous prie de prévenir d'urgence Affaires Etrangères que rupture complète entre Antohelli et Menelick; Ambassadeur Italien ayant menacé Roi, celui-ci a renvoyé tous italiens et a écrit roi Humbert pour se plaindre du manque d'égard de son envoyé." p.219.

and Italy. The same day Menelik wrote a letter to King Humbert. It was one of his most telling and diplomatically strongest letters in the whole imbroglio.

Menelik pointed out to Humbert that despite many earnest discussions, it was impossible for him to come to terms with Antonelli. Asserting that two "powers" such as Ethiopia and Italy should not, because of the mistakes of an envoy, sever friendly relations before giving answers to their respective questions, he said it was appropriate for him to bring the substance of their differences to the attention of Humbert. In this letter, Menelik reiterated the 'raison d'etre' which necessitated Article 17. He also stated to Humbert that when the spirit of Article 17 was originally discussed between him and Antonelli, it was him, that is Menelik, who made mention to Antonelli that having had no representative in Europe he was at a difficulty to make contacts with other countries. The discussion is so important that the essential parts of the content of the letter on the discussion are indicated below as outlined by Menelik:

When Menelik remarked on his difficulty in contacting European powers because of the absence of his own representatives abroad, Antonelli replied: "Why will not the Emperor accredit the Italian Government to represent him and act on his behalf? Would it not be a sign of your friendship?"

Menelik readily agreed to such an arrangement simply because he thought it served his nation's interest and he felt the action

would strengthen the relations existing between Italy and his country. During the time of the resultant differences and the negotiations which followed, Menelik emphasized in the same letter, he queried Antonelli very closely:

"Why have you sought to mislead me, without having consulted me on this question, and why have you not talked to me frankly?"

"We have now already communicated this article to all powers," replied Antonelli, "and the government cannot renounce an agreement already communicated. If you accept it, well and good. If you would not want to accept it, it is impossible for us to retract our word vis-a-vis the powers."

"If this is the case," Menelik then said he retorted to Antonelli, "you cannot ask me to accept forcibly something which not only have I accepted but of which you have not talked to me; and I had never expected that. After having been mistaken, you would embarrass not only me but also Your own Government? How come! You, who very well know the Amharic language and who know very well that what you have written in the Italian text is not at all that which you have discussed with me, want me to support the consequences of your personal errors at a point when you are disrupting the relations of the two governments which up to now had lived together in peace?"

It is on the basis of Antonelli's own response, Menelik wrote to Humbert, that he proposed to him two points of importance in their final discussions:

"Either we stipulate the Amharic text as it is actually written, or abrogate Article 17 both in the Amharic and Italian texts."

Antonelli, Menelik said in his letter, replied that he could not accept these propositions without the consent of his King and his Minister of Foreign Affairs. Instead, Antonelli proposed that a letter be addressed to Humbert. After the letters were sent out to

Italy, Menelik said, Antonelli requested:

"Why wait the answer to the letters? If we agree among ourselves, I myself can finalize the question."

"Very well!" Menelik responded, "if so, why should we leave the affair [suspended] for so long? Let us, in a common agreement, cancel Article 17...."

"Very well," Antonelli replied.

This is how, Menelik said in his letter of February 11, that the document he was now enclosing had earlier been sent to the Italian King. Menelik was not also pleased with Antonelli's action when he tore the copy of the signed document which was mentioned above as having been sent to Humbert. Menelik said in his letter that this was why he asked Antonelli:

"Are there in your country any such usages which permit such a conduct? You lower the prestige and respect due to sovereigns by reacting this way. Why have you torn the said document without consulting me?"

"I have accepted this," Antonelli replied, "if the Amharic and Italian texts of Article 17 stayed as they actually were. But I have never consented to abrogate the said article."

Menelik then emphasized:

"If this is the case, can I not justly refuse to accept the article I have already refused [Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle] and by the same token abrogate it? Precisely, is this not that which brought about the discussions between us?...It is therefore better if you stay behind while waiting for the reply [clarification] from Italy."

"I have nothing to do here," Antonelli told Menelik. "I want to go, at the same time taking with me the other representatives of Italy present here...."180

Antonelli's own explanation of the differences is contained in his letter of April 14 to Rome. In this letter he defends his action, and contradicts Menelik's allegations. He concludes:

Menelik would never have acted as he did had he not been instigated by our enemies, and if their intrigues had triumphed they would have become all powerful at the Shoan Court, and would have rendered any future agreement with the King and Chiefs of Ethiopia impossible. Menelik had a right to refuse an arrangement, but he was bound to respect the Representative of the King of Italy. 181

The manuevrings of Italy were not yet over. Barely had two months elapsed since the rupture of relations when Italy concluded an agreement with Britain regarding the delimitation on paper of the spheres of influence of each power respecting Ethiopia. Italy had urged its partner in this agreement to approach Menelik only through it so that the protectorate spirit could be kept alive and be maintained even after the incidents which had led to the severance of relations between the two nations. True to its commitments towards Italy, Britain, in the person of Salisbury, assured Rome thus:

I propose to communicate to King Menelik, in the name of the Queen, the Agreement concluded between Great Britain and Italy, contained in the Protocols signed at Rome on the 24th. March and 15th. April [1891], and to inform him that His Majesty's Government intend to abide by it. I shall be happy to send this reply through the medium of the Italian authorities at Massowah, in accordance with the request made by your Excellency to the effect. 182

181

F.O.403/154.

182

F.O.403/155, Salisbury to Count Torielli, July 24, 1891. [Emphasis is mine.]

That Britain would take such a stand was also transmitted to the German Government through Salisbury's instructions of August 5, 1891 to Sir Malet.

Menelik was not unaware that the validity of a nation's sovereignty depended much on its territorial integrity. He had therefore insisted for an agreement which will delimit his boundaries with Italy. Italy, however, was never in a hurry. It had assured itself that in the long run the whole sphere under Menelik would subsequently fall under its control. Now that discussions between him and Italy were suspended Menelik came out with his own solution for maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity he sought for his Empire. On the 10th. of April he sent out a circular to the different powers delimiting the frontiers of his territories. The pertinent part of this circular read:

፲ 400 ዓመት ሙሉ ኢትዮጵያ አገረ ክርስቲያን ደቡቅ በአረመኔ በሕር ተከበ ሲኖር ከፋቅ አገር የመጣ መንገድ አፋሪያን አገባረላለን ቢሰጥ ዝቅ ብዩ ማዳመጥ አላሰብን። አገዛዥ ስር ኢትዮጵያን አስከዛረ አገረጠበቻት አገገዷህም ይጠበቃል ያሰፋታል ብዩ ተስፋ አደርጋለሁ አገረ ለሌላ መንገድ አከፋፍሎ ይሰጣል ብዩ አልጠራጠርኩ። 185

183
Ibid., Salisbury to Malet, August 5, 1891.

184
Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.35; Skinner, Abyssinia of Today, p.145.

185
F.O.1/32, original text of Menelik's circular letter to the powers. See also 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,'

This was a declaration of political faith. Menelik was prepared to defend Ethiopia. He had earlier declared that "if Powers at a distance come forward to partition Africa between them, [he does] not intend to be an indifferent spectator." So were Italy and the imperialist powers determined in pursuing their respective national interests. Queen Victoria's reply to Menelik's circular letter was indeed revealing in that it was still clinging to a typical colonialist 'modus operandi' which the Ethiopian monarch had for so long energetically resisted and rejected. Victoria wrote to him:

We have received the letter which your Majesty addressed to us in the month of April last relative to the limits of the Empire of Ethiopia. We thank you for this communication, and send you in return copies of two Protocols which have been signed by the Representatives of ourselves and our good brother, the King of Italy, for the demarcation of our respective spheres of influence in Africa. So far as we ourselves are concerned, it is our intention to abide strictly by the terms of our engagements to our good brother, the King of Italy. 186

Up to now, it was a strictly civilian point of view spearheaded by Antonelli that was being followed in the establishment of Italian protectorate over Ethiopia. Antonelli, supported by the Italian Foreign Office, was of the opinion that the diplomatic offensive leveled at

Inclosure in No.16, p.16. "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 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."

Menelik would definitely bear fruit and that Italy would be rewarded a protectorate over Ethiopia without the need of going to war. Now that what was generally referred to as the Italian 'Shoan policy' had failed on the diplomatic front Italy commenced to consider using military as well as political tactics as a leverage. The military strategy was being strongly advanced by the top military brass stationed in Eritrea which, for some time now, was restive for the duration of the Menelik-Antonelli diplomatic encounter. Generals Baldissera, Orero, Gandolfi and Baratieri, all Governors General and military commanders of the Italian army in Eritrea from December 187 1889 to March 1896, were staunch supporters of the view that Italy must advance a 'Tigrean policy' by instigating and aiding Ras 188 Mengesha of Tigré, the son of Yohannes, against Menelik.

After the death of Yohannes, Ras Mengesha was acting and behaving as if he was independent of Menelik and it was this aspect of Tigrean political ambition that the military faction was intending to fan in the realization of Italian protectorate over Ethiopia. The main argument of the proponents of the military point of view was, short of vision as it was, to use Tigré as a buffer zone between

187

Wylde, Abyssinia, Appendix IX, pp.495-496.

188

Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, pp.20-23; 25-27; 30; 32; 36; 54; 83-91; 100-102; 123.

Eritrea and menelik's Empire so that it will serve as a springboard to advance future Italian aggression and protectorate schemes.

Both he [Baldissera] and General Orero perceived that Menelik was merely using Italy for his own purposes; they believed in dealing directly with the Tigréan chiefs, - in bringing them under the immediate suzerainty of the Roman Government, and thereby weakening Menelik. They did not care so much for the existence of the protectorate, provided that Italy obtained the immediate and substantial advantages. 189

Both Baldissera and Orero resigned from their posts because they felt that their advice on the 'Tigréan policy' was never heeded by Rome and which they thought was now sold on the Antonelli 'Shoan policy.' Baldissera "disapproved of the philo-Shoan policy of Antonelli, whose advice was followed in everything by the Government; he saw plainly that the only true course for Italy to pursue was 'Divide et impera.' namely, to play off the Tigréan chiefs of the North, against the Shoan chief of the South." At the height of his military success Baldissera insisted on resigning because he was literally repulsed by the Antonelli Shoan policy. Berkeley comments that "ostensibly he asked to be recalled because he was suffering from ophthalmia, but in Italy it was diagnosed as ophthalmia Antonelliana." General Orero too, "disgusted by Antonelli's philo-Shoan

189
Ibid., p.26.

190
Ibid., p.22.

191
Ibid., p.23. See also Work, Ethiopia, a Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.99.

policy that constantly paralysed his own action, sent in his
 192
 resignation and was succeeded by General Gandolfi." Baratieri,
 the last of the Generals before the deteriorating Ethiopian-
 Italian relations culminated in the disastrous Battle of Adwa,
 also advocated a military solution. In his memoir he wrote of
 the need to establish a buffer zone between Ethiopia and Eritrea
 in order to safeguard their colony's security. He blamed the
 absence of support to this type of consideration in Rome on what
 he called a sympathetic tendency ("tendenza simpatica") in Italy
 193
 in favour of Shoa.

The difference between the civilian and military points of
 view on the establishment of the envisaged protectorate was more
 procedural than substantial. The former point of view, if carried,
 could have acquired Italy a vast territory immediately and perhaps
 with a minimum of effort. This point of view could have been very
 advantageous in the long run had it been successful in its operations.
 This scheme, as we attempted to show in the previous chapters, was
 to allow Menelik at least nominal sovereignty over most territories
 the Italian Generals wanted as a buffer zone while in the mean
 time effectively putting Menelik under Italian protection and

192

Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.30.

193

Baratieri, Memorie d'Africa, 1892-1896, Torino, Fratelli
 Bocca, 1898, p.5.

194
overlordship.

With the departure of Antonelli from the Shoan court the Italian Shoan policy was also undergoing a slow death. The Crispi Government had fallen and in the premier's place the Marquis du Rudini had come with a new set of policies regarding Ethiopia and Italian interest in Ethiopia. While supporting the military point of view of using Tigréan chiefs and Tigré as a buffer between Eritrea and Ethiopia, his government introduced a policy of austerity in the implementation of this operation. It was proposed to limit the extent of Italian territories in Eritrea and reduce the strength of the armed forces considerably so that it could be administered effectively with a relatively little strain on the home economy. The proposal, however, did not work out. An other important factor during Rudini's government was that more than before it attempted to exploit the benefits to be accrued from the European alliance and cooperation to the full in the advancement of Italian aims in Ethiopia.

After Antonelli left Addis Ababa nothing substantial was undertaken other than a quiet diplomacy that was being conducted

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The so-called "Tigréan policy" and the role of Ras Mengesha in Ethiopian-Italian foreign relations is an interesting study in itself. It will not be dealt with here as this will be beyond the scope of this research.

195
Baratieri, Memorie d'Africa, p.43.

through letters. However, the Rudini government had decided to send an other Italian mission to Menelik to revive the negotiations stopped in February 1891. Two years later, in February 1893, Colonel Piano was sent with a mission to Menelik's court. His mission involved the carrying out of the programme left unfinished by Antonelli.¹⁹⁶ Like his predecessor, Piano's mission was not to be successful. Menelik was not willing to open up negotiations and the hostility generated by Antonelli's mission had poisoned the atmosphere so much that the indifference from the Ethiopian side was complete. Berkeley says that Piano, unhappy about the whole working relationship prevailing in Ethiopia, remarked: "It would be a grave illusion to think that we enjoy in Shoa either the esteem or friendship to which our past benefits should entitle us."¹⁹⁷

At about the same time, and since the Menelik-Antonelli diplomatic rupture, a second Italian mission led by Traversi was again at Menelik's court. It is to be remembered that Traversi was a member of the original Italian mission of 1891 led by Antonelli. Traversi was head of the so called Italian Geographical Society -¹⁹⁸ a political wing of the Foreign Office - seated at Let Marefia.

196
Ibid., p.45.

197
Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.60.

198
See pp.259-260.

Italy had very well known Menelik's determination on Article 17. However, it revived the offer of 1889, probably with the suggestion of Antonelli, by extending the loans and ammunition stipulated in the Additional Convention. Traversi was supposed to be in Ethiopia with this offer before Menelik had hardened his position vis-a-vis the protectorate article. It was only after seven months on the way that Traversi, with the two million promised cartridges, reached Addis Ababa on February 27, 1893. His mission "was received with all due formality, but with great coldness."

At this juncture, the Italian "Tigréan policy" to which great importance was attached by the military governors in Eritrea was greatly undermined and being eroded from the foundation. First, the chiefs in Tigré had already felt that the Italians were not to be trusted because of their broken promises, and second, because of the circumstances surrounding Italy's prostration to Menelik, the Tigréan policy was losing credibility. This credibility was lost, at least to General Baratieri, when by the close of 1892 - at the time the shoan policy was being actively considered - Mengesha was considerably subordinated by Italy when it asked him to submit to the overlordship of Menelik. Mengesha's pledge was to be taken to

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Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia, p.67; Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, p.11.

200

Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, pp.52-53.

Menelik by Traversi. In his letter of September 13 to Brin, the Foreign Minister, (and not published in the Green Book) Baratieri included Mengesha's pledge, the important part of which read: "Condiscendendo alla suprema volonta di S.M. il Re d'Italia, io dichiaro di esser pronto a riconoscere Menelik re dello Scioa, a Negus Neghesti ed imperatore di Abissinia, ecc...."²⁰¹

The sudden shift by Italy in seeking to alter the balance in favour of Menelik - and of course considered as a trump card capable of acquiring a political kickback - had set in a new situation.

1. The role of Mengesha and therefore the Tigréan threat to Menelik was considerably reduced.
2. Menelik's role as a unifier of the Empire was greatly strengthened and his military might was tangibly augmented.
3. Italy, already a loser vis-a-vis Menelik, also lost her chances of using the north as a leverage against him.
4. The animosity and hatred generated by Italy both in the north and in the south - where Menelik was in firm control - gave ground to unify heretofore hostile elements under Menelik, the strongest of them all.

Baratieri writes in his memoirs that at the time of the Piano and Traversi missions, the position of Italy was such that throughout

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Baratieri, *Memorie d'Africa*, "Obedient to the supreme will of His Majesty the king of Italy, I declare my readiness to recognize Menelik, King of Shoa, as Neguse Negest [King of Kings] and Emperor of Abyssinia, etc...." p.10.

Ethiopia a kind of "negative patriotism" had set in. He comments of a now popular patriotic chant from Shoa to Tigré in which the lead refrain said: "Dal morso del serpente nero si guarisce, dal morso del serpente bianco non so guarisce giammai." Baratieri, true to his soldierly instinct, was opposed especially to the Traversi mission which went down to Shoa to hand to Menelik the two million cartridges in turn for some concessions from the Emperor. Baratieri repeatedly emphasized that such an easy 'quid-pro-quo' would not be obtainable from Menelik under the existing circumstances.

By June 1894, Mengesha, stripped of his Italian support and cognizant of the fact that it was now the beginning of the end for his apparent Kingship in the north, descended to Shoa to render his submission and homage to Menelik. At the same time, he also requested to be given the Tigréan Kingdom to render his services as a loyal servant of the Emperor. Mengesha, in the tradition of the country, as once Menelik also did before Yohannes, prostrated himself in front of the Emperor, as a sign of total submission, with a small rock on his shoulder. Mengesha's dignitaries also followed behind him carrying with them a picture of Mary, the traditional Saint of mercy and forgiveness. However, as Mengesha was now regarded as a traitor to

202

Ibid., "Of a black snake's bite you may be cured, but from the bite of a white snake you will never recover." p.48. See also, Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.61.

203

Guebre-Selassie, Chronique du Regne du Menelik, Tome I, p.354.

the national cause and the unity of the country at the court of Menelik - Menelik was also such a suspect at the court of Yohannes - it was decided that the Tigréan Ras would not be crowned King. Menelik, in fact, had never bestowed the title Negus (King) on any body. He had felt that by abolishing or at least minimizing the stature of the office he was making one constructive step forward towards the realization of a unified Ethiopia under him. It was only his grandson , Iyassu, who revived the title by appointing his own father, Ras Mikael, Negus.

After strict reproaches from Menelik, Mengesha was sent back to Tigré retaining the governorship of his ancestral province in order to better prove himself loyal to Menelik and to do his utmost to check Italian advances from the north.²⁰⁴ It should be emphasized that at this particular point in time, Mengesha was never the main pre-occupation of Menelik. No doubt, Mengesha's acceptance of Menelik's leadership as King of Kings and Emperor of Ethiopia had given the Emperor the moral and psychological boost that he so much needed in his attempt to unify the nation for any eventuality with Italy.

Menelik was more than aware of the gathering storm around him. The slow but calculated military penetrations from the north;

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Tekle-Tsadik Mekuria, Ye Etiopia Tarik, p.74.

the many threatening ultimatums and other diplomatic maneuverings hostile to Ethiopia's interest; the strengthening of the military garrisons throughout Eritrea; the thousands of Italians embarking from ships at Naples and other Italian ports and headed for Massawa; the tens of thousands of tons of military materiel sent to Ethiopia, all these, have conveyed the message to Menelik that war was inevitable and not very far off. When Italy was actually engaged in the build-up of her own military strength and in fact was mobilizing the whole Italian nation for war, it was also active on the political and diplomatic fronts to ensure arms embargo on Ethiopia.

For about two years now, since the rupture of Ethiopian-Italian relations and the departure of the Antonelli mission in February 1891 and the failure of the Piano mission in February 1893, Menelik had also been busy - under difficult circumstances - acquiring arms and ammunition from Europe, including some two million cartridges from Italy, through the Traversi mission in February 1893. On February 12, 1893, Menelik officially denounced the Treaty of Wichalle and communicated his position to the European powers on February 27, 1893.

205

DDF., 1st. ser., Vol.10, No.265, Billot to Develle, Rome, June 14, 1893: "D'après M. Brin [Italian Foreign Minister], le Roi Menelik a effectivement manifesté l'intention de dénoncer ce traité par des lettres adressées aux Souverains d'Italie, d'Allemagne, d'Autriche, d'Angleterre et au Président de la République française." p.390; Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, p.111; DDF., 1st. ser., Vol.11, No.9, Memorandum of Italian Embassy, Paris, January 10, 1894, p.11. Ibid., Vol.10, No.260, pp.380-382 also comments on press reactions on the denunciation. Regarding the denunciation see also Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia, pp.67-68; Work, Ethiopia, a Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.134 ff; 239 ff; Skinner, Abyssinia of Today, p.144 ff.

The letter which Menelik wrote to President Carnot of France regarding the denunciation is very interesting. It strongly reiterated his determination to keep Ethiopia independent and free of outside interference. He made clear to him that his Empire "has a sufficient importance [of its own] to need any protectorate...." In a cover note of July 1, 1893, Develle, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, dispatched to Billot, his Ambassador in Rome, the letter Menelik addressed to Carnot by which he had notified the latter of the denunciation. Develle warned his Ambassador that this letter was strictly confidential and only for his own information. Menelik's letter, partially said:

Par cette lettre je tiens a vous faire connaitre que j'ai écrit aujourd'hui a sa Majesté le Roi Humbert Ier., lui déclarant que le traité conclu avec l'Italie a Ucciali le 25 Miazzia en l'an 1881 et complété le 22 de Maskaram 1882 prendra fin le 24 Miazzia de l'an 1886....Je tiens donc a ce que vous soyez informé que mon intention est de ne renouveler aucun autre traité. Mon Empire a une importance suffisante pour ne rechercher aucun protectorat et vivre indépendant....206

Develle had also attached with his letter to Billot two other documents Menelik addressed to Carnot previously. The first one expressed his desire to put in circulation his own coins and that for the coinage he had requested the assistance of France. By the second letter, which was written only two days before he wrote the

letter of denunciation to Italy, he thanked the French President for having honoured him with the decoration of the 'Grand Cordon de la Legion d'honneur' which he had received through Chefneux, a French resident in Addis Ababa looking after France's interests in Ethiopia.

207

The French position vis-a-vis Ethiopian-Italian relations was clear. In order to establish itself as the most favoured nation at Menelik's court the French Government was now doing everything possible to please Menelik. More than anything else, the situation allowed Menelik a relatively unhindered passage of arms through the port of Djibouti while it also made possible for him to acquire a generous number of arms and ammunition. Informing President Carnot how well such a French donation was received and how such a support could maintain Menelik's independence, Lagarde, the French Governor at Obock, wrote on December 9, 1893: "J'ai lieu d'espérer, que (le Vice-roi Makonnen), fortifié par le subside important que je lui ai donné, les armes que j'ai mises a sa disposition, pourra réussir a se maintenir et a maintenir le Negus dans la voie de l'indépendence."

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A.D., Menelik to Carnot, February 10, 1893, pp. 335-337.

208

DDF., 1st. ser., Vol. 11, No. 56, Lagarde to Marty, December 9, 1893: "I have ground to hope that (the Viceroy Mekonnen), fortified by the important subsidy I had given him, the arms I had put at his disposition, could succeed to strengthen himself and to strengthen the Negus towards independence." Footnote 1, p. 85.

In another telegraphic report of February 25, 1894 to the Minister of Colonies about the success of his remitting arms to Menelik, Lagarde assured him that his mission had been successfully accomplished and that cordial relations, which had since been troubled by the tendancious Italian declaration of last year and the negative stand of Britain and Germany against France, had been established. Lagarde makes mention of the letter Menelik gave him to deliver to President Carnot in which he warmly thanked him for his assistance and reiterated his determination to maintain his country's independence. In the same letter he lauds the visit of Russian war ships and marines to Toulon and the kind courtsey rendered to them. He says that this gave him pleasure because he would like to see two of his old friends coming together in love and friendship. In the letter, Menelik again emphatically stresses his determination to uphold his country's independence.

209

This, perhaps is a reference to the Italian accusations of 1892-1893 of France for its attempts to thwart Italian protectorate designs over Ethiopia.

210

DDF., 1st. ser., Vol.11, No.5, Menelik to Carnot, January 5, 1894. "The independence of Ethiopia comes to us from our fathers. For it, we have worked very hard and we will continue now with all our power to maintain it. The French Government, having proved to us its great friendship in recognizing our independence, has given us a great satisfaction and we hope, after this, you will continue [to give us] this cordial friendship and these excellent sentiments." [A literal translation from the French.] p.6.

In the diplomatic struggle between Ethiopia and Italy followign their misunderstanding on Article 17, France and Russia, were favourably disposed to aid Menelik in his difficulties and render any reasonable support they were able to give him both individually or in unison. After the denunciation of the treaty by Menelik Develle made his country's position clear to the key Embassies in London, Berlin, St.Petersburg and Cairo. ²¹¹

Even at this late stage Italy was still adhering to its past claims. It protested to those who were supporting and recognizing Menelik's independence and asserted to friends and foes alike that in as far as the Italian Government was concerned the Treaty of Wichalle was still valid. In a protest memorandum submitted to the French Foreign Minister on January 10, 1894 the Italian

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DDF., 1st. ser., Vol.10, No.357, Develle to Diplomatic ~~re~~representatives of France in London, Berlin, St.Petersburg and Cairo: "L'Ambassadeur d'Italie a Paris m'ayant demandé, pendant un entretien que nous avons eu ensemble dans le courant de Juin, si j'avais recus la lettre susmentionnée de Menelik, je lui ai déclaré que je n'avais pas répondu a cette notification et que mon intention était de ne pas répondre. J'ai fait observer que, le Gouvernement de la République n'ayant jamais reconnu le traité d'Ucciali, il ne nous appartenait pas de nous prononcer sur les difficultés auxquelles a pu donner lieu, entre les deux Puissances contractantes, l'application de cet acte, mais que notre abstention ne signifiait pas que nous reconnaissons le traité, ni que nous donnions notre adhésion a l'interprétation de l'Italie." August 31, 1893, pp.515-516. The French Foreign Minister had earlier sent a similar note to the Ambassador in Rome. See DDF., 1st. ser., Vol.10, No.269, Develle to Billot, June 19, 1893, p.395.

Embassy in Paris made reference to a report the Italian Government received from its envoy in Addis Ababa which contained the information that the French President, the Foreign Minister and the Governor of Obock had addressed letters to Menelik thanking him for the welcome he had given to Chefneux, one of their agents, and that by so doing the French Government had given recognition to Menelik's independence of action. The memorandum, in the mean time, emphasized that the Italian Government "considers the Treaty of Wichalle as continuing to be in full force and that its political attitude towards Ethiopia stands like it was notified in the month of October 1889 to the Powers who have formally given act to this notification." ²¹² Apart from protesting official French attitudes vis-a-vis Ethiopia, Italy even registered its displeasure and irritation concerning the action of private French individuals residing in Ethiopia. As late as the end of 1894 the Italian representative in Paris protested to the French Government on the behaviour of such "agents du Gouvernement de la République" at Menelik's court. The names mentioned were that of ²¹³ Chefneux, Savouré, Mondon and Ilg, the last person being from ²¹⁴ Switzerland.

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Ibid., Vol.11, Memorandum of Italian Embassy, Paris, January 10, 1894, p.11.

213

See p.146.

214

DDF., 1st. ser., Vol.11, No.264, Minister's Note, November 1, 1894, pp.398-400.

The seriousness with which Italy was still considering its position of October 1889 regarding Article 17 is evidenced in the 'Official Gazette' of June 16, 1894 in which Crispi, now back to power as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister gave the official line adopted by the Government while being interrogated by no one else but Antonelli himself. Antonelli's intention in requesting to interrogate Crispi on Article 17 was never clear. Antonelli had, for motives which were not expressed, resigned his post as Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on May 3, 1894.²¹⁵ On June 16, Antonelli queried Crispi closely in the Chamber of Deputies if the "Italian Government considers the Italo-Ethiopian treaty of May 2, 1889 as being still in force." The 'Official Gazette' paraphrasing Crispi's answer records: "Ce traité et la convention de la même année, non seulement sont en vigueur, mais sont perpétuels de leur nature; et il le démontre en lisant les articles de l'un et de l'autre."²¹⁶

A persistent Italian school of thought still held to this sort of argument. It is not the intention of this research to go into the analysis and discussion of the many arguments advanced by the proponents of this policy. This would be beyond the scope

²¹⁵

Ibid., No.99, Billot to Casimir-Périer, May 4, 1894, p.148.

²¹⁶

Ibid., No.150, Billot to Hanotaux, June 16, 1894. "This treaty and the convention of the same year, not only are they in force, but are perpetual in their nature; and he demonstrated this by reading the articles in both." pp.225-226.

of the research. Nevertheless, some of the pertinent and persistent arguments by writers in this group would, for the sake of contrast, be discussed below very briefly.

In a bizzare and unidirectional deduction, Professor Carlo Giglio , for instance, asserts: "Theoretically, the protectorate existed until the date of the signature of the Treaty of Peace (October 26,1896)" because he contends, such a "protectorate existed in practice as well as in theory even after 13 October 1890" as Italy gave consular protection to Ethiopians abroad and because Ethiopia was attributed to the "Italian sphere of influence in the Anglo-Italian agreements of 1891 and 1894." Regarding the circumstances surrounding Article 17 itself Professor Giglio wants us to believe that there was no Italian design to place Ethiopia under Italian protection. It was rather, he says, a coincidental act which was brought about by Crispi's notification, in accordance with the General Act of Berlin of 1885, of the powers involved and their acknowledgement of the same. "The real purpose of Article 17, or rather, of the whole treaty," he writes, "appears from the following words of its draftsman and negotiator, Antonelli," and he quotes him:

Certainly, when I signed the treaty at Uccialli a common intention then united me to the new Emperor Menelik: Italy and Ethiopia would never again have difficulties between them. Italy would preponderate among all the other nations in Ethiopia and reciprocal trade should open a new way for

industry and commerce.²¹⁸

A most forced argument is presented by Giglio when he concludes that "a great number of facts and circumstances prove irrefutably that in drafting the treaty neither Crispi, Antonelli, nor anyone else intended to create an Italian protectorate over Ethiopia by means of the term 'consentè.' Antonelli was authorized to modify and even to suppress Article 17 if Menelik requested it."²¹⁹ Yet, we are not provided by Professor Giglio with the facts. In the foregoing analyses of the circumstances surrounding Article 17 the paper had attempted to register a contrary view and had furnished adequate documentary evidences by which Menelik constantly and consistently rejected Article 17 and requested Antonelli, Crispi and Humbert to either modify or totally cancel the said article. All three did not comply with his request and, rather, they resorted to every possible means at their disposal to force it on him.²²⁰ Giglio, who contends that "if [the protectorate] is valid, it limited Ethiopia's sovereignty in the slightest way," or "this formula limited the sovereignty of Menelik in the slightest and most inoffensive, almost insignificant, way," presents the whole affair by basing himself on totally distorted juridical jargons. He often refers to an international law which

²¹⁸

Ibid., p.224. (Emphasis is mine before quotation.)

²¹⁹

Ibid., p.228.

²²⁰

For a comprehensive study of Italian intransigence on Article 17 in particular and the Treaty of Wichalle in general see pp.253-346.

either wholly depended on and legalized Western European values or rejected and underestimated the counterpart indigenous moral as well as social values existing in Ethiopia.

Conti Rossini, a prominent authority on Ethiopian-Italian relations accuses Menelik of want of good faith, and in line with the same trend of thought propagated by Giglio as regards the interpretation of values, he speaks of "the Abyssinian aptitude for cheating"²²¹ without even considering the fact, as Rubenson²²² says, "that there might have been bad faith on the Italian side." A persistent Rossini argument is that Menelik had acted, throughout the negotiations regarding Article 17, in bad faith and this, he strongly reiterates, was because of his late awareness that once he was "created" King of Kings by his "benefactors" he had no need of Article 17 and Italian friendship. He writes:

...For historical reasons and because of environmental conditions good faith was not a plant native to Ethiopia: the mental reservations, the violated trust, the broken oaths..., the fact that obligations were not usually transferred from a king to his successor weakened the treaty of Wuchalle very much. 223

221

Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia, p.45.

222

Rubenson, Wichale XVII, p.24.

223

Ibid (Translation as furnished by same.)

Zaghi, in his 'Crispi e Menelich' advances the same type of argument as Rossini by indicating that Menelik owed his position of King of Kings to Italian support and therefore his denunciation of his partner in peace is, according to him, tantamount to bad faith. Battaglia resorts to the very same approach of reasoning contained in Giglio's argument and accuses Menelik of a breach of contract as understood in the prevailing concepts of international law. He tries to ridicule Menelik by evoking, at repeated instances, his capacity to comprehend international law and by indicating if at all he knew of the "existence of such a concept." Berkeley, himself not an Italian, however shares and supports the feelings of the Italian school by portraying Menelik as an uncivilized monarch who after having obtained Italy's assistance in his struggle for power had wantonly abandoned a civilized nation of dignified history without any sense of decorum. In the introduction of the second edition of his book he laments however:

The first edition may be considered to favour the Italians. It was compiled entirely from Italian histories, memoirs, green books, military reports and other official documents. It was a politico-military study, and its chief value lies in the fact that it contains translations of the best Italian military opinion of the time. The Abyssinian standpoint was expressed only by information gleaned from one or two travellers, and from works such as Wylde's...and Wingate's...or Hughues le Roux, and a few others. Moreover, it was written by a lover of Italy who

could not do otherwise than sympathise with the disappointment of patriotic Italians over the failure of their colonial enterprise. 225

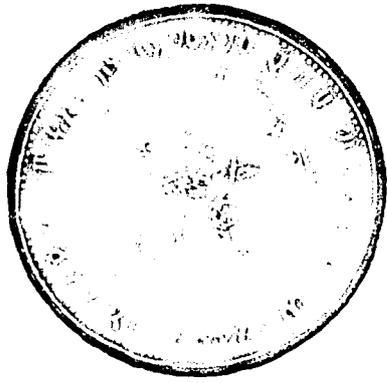
There are also a whole lot of arguments, pro and con, among some writers regarding as to who translated Article 17 and from which original text. For the present purpose, this again, is not so essential as to drag the research into the enquiry and analysis of its veracity. It is essential to simply note that Antonelli, as does the Italian school of thought, contends that the Italian text was the original one from which the Amharic was translated by Grazmach Yosef, Menelik's official interpreter. Thus, asserts the same group, Yosef and, therefore by implication, Menelik were responsible for the mistranslation, the resultant "imbroglio" and the Ethiopian "bad faith." Menelik, on the other hand, reiterates that the original text of the treaty was in Amharic and it was subsequent to an understanding over this text that it was translated into Italian. The researcher, for deductions already made from documents referred to in some detail in this chapter, recognizes the latter point of view as constituting the fact. Perhaps, misled by the controversy over the question of originality of texts, many writers such as Budge, Castonnet des Fosses, Duprey, Langer, Morie, Longrigg, Woolf, Work and others

assert wrongly that only the Amharic text was signed.

Budge, A History of Ethiopia, Vol.2, "The Amharic text of this Treaty, which was the one that had been signed practically made Abyssinia an Italian protectorate." p.528; Duprey, De l'Invasion a la Liberation de l'Ethiopie, Tome I, "L'Article 17 du texte Amharique qui avait seul été signé par les parties..." p.39; Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, "Le texte amhara seul portait les signatures." p.353; Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, "It happened further that only the Amharic text had been actually signed, so that it alone was valid." p.272; Morié, Histoire de l'Ethiopie, Tome II, "Le texte aharc [sic] avait été seul signé." p.425; Longrigg, A History of Eritrea, p.20; Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, p.169; Work, Ethiopia, a Pawn in European Diplomacy, "As a matter of fact there seems to have been but one copy signed by both Menelik and Antonelli and that was the Amharic copy, which is herewith reproduced." Footnote 53, p.119. That both texts were in fact signed see figure 2 next page. (Obtained in Zaghi, Crispi e Menelich, facing p.153.)

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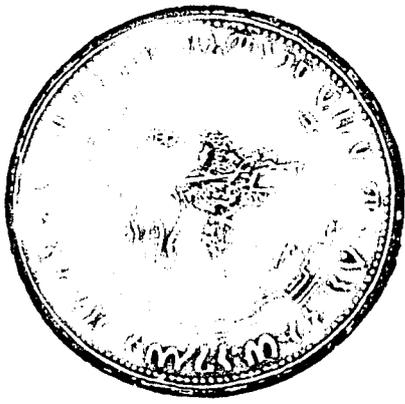
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Per Sua Maestà il Re d'Italia
Aristonante



hanno firmato e apposto il loro sigillo al
presente Trattato fatto nell'accompagnamento
di Ucciali il 25 Maggio 1881. orais.
pendente al 2 Maggio 1889.



Per Sua Maestà il Re d'Italia
Aristonante



Fig. 2

The grand seal of Emperor Menelik and the
seal of the Italian Mission as affixed on
the Treaty of Wichalle

CHAPTER 5

THE BATTLE OF ADWA: ASSERTION OF ETHIOPIAN

INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY

The factors which motivated both Menelik and Italy to go to war and their respective decisions to solve their differences by such a means are, even though incompatible with each other, nevertheless interdependent in their conception and formulation.

Factors which precipitated hostilities:

1. Italian:
 - (a) Italian intransigence on Article 17;
 - (b) Failure of the Antonelli mission and the subsequent rupture of diplomatic contacts;
 - (c) Failure of the Piano and Traversi missions;
 - (d) Preponderance of the military point of view over the civilian;
 - (e) Italian war preparations.

2. Ethiopian
 - (a) Rejection and denunciation of Treaty of Wichalle;
 - (b) Menelik's diplomatic contacts with the European powers, especially France and Russia;
 - (c) Arms and ammunition acquisitions by Menelik;
 - (d) Menelik's hardened position after initial overtures towards a negotiated and peaceful settlement (Reluctance to open discussions with Piano and Traversi).

The diplomatic and political phase of the Ethiopian-Italian conflict was now practically over. What remained was the assertion of their respective policies through might and the instrumentality of war. This section is by no means a narrative of the history of the ensuing Battle of Adwa. It is rather a study and analysis of the political and diplomatic factors and decisions involved at this particular stage of the game and the significance of the resultant situation in the assertion of Ethiopian independence and sovereignty. It must at the outset be said that the objective of the battle as regards Menelik was to redress a wrong done to him by Italy and to assert, once and for all, the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of his nation through the instrumentality of war. By any means, this was not a substitute for peace. It was a situation brought about by the necessity of choice. In the following pages, therefore, it would be attempted to show the rationale which motivated such a choice and how, in the absence of other viable options or guarantees for normalized relations, this choice was made the possible alternative which promised Ethiopian survival and independence.

Menelik was aware and very much alive to the fact that if he were to be successful in his objective he needed the muscle of arms and the combined strength of the whole nation behind

him. It is to be remembered that by the time Menelik denounced the Treaty of Wichalle on February 12, 1893 he had effectively held the reign of power and, perhaps with the exception of Ras Mengesha of Tigré whose loyalty was still questionable, all contenders to the throne were either out of the way or in complete submission. His Empire had enlarged through time to the south and south west and his wealth in men and tax levies had grown immensely. Mengesha's role in the north was never so threatening because, as already indicated in the first section of chapter 4, the base of his power was no more there since the crumbling of the so-called 'Tigréan policy' that was adopted by Italy for the past few years and prior to Menelik's denunciation of the Treaty of Wichalle.

Ever since the departure of Antonelli from his court in February 1891, Menelik had actively resorted to the task of building up his army and the acquisition of arms and ammunition in considerable quantities. In due course the army and the arsenal of arms Menelik developed were to constitute one of the major factors which readily facilitated the implementation of his foreign policy. In fact, it must at this stage be pointed out that arms and the army Menelik so systematically acquired and organized were the two main elements upon which the strength of his foreign policy depended and eventually brought about its implementation. In the past, even though such an organized army

was not used in the furtherance of any particular foreign policy, it was true of many of the Kings of Ethiopia that the organization of the army and the acquisition of arms and ammunition was their main preoccupation in advancing their domestic objectives.

Analyzing the strength of the Ethiopian army between the death of Theodros and the beginning of the reign of Menelik, for instance, Cecci estimated that among the four Kingdoms of Tigrè,¹ Gonder, Gojjam and Shoa there were about 145,000 soldiers. At the time of the height of hostilities between Ethiopia and Italy, Vitalien estimated that the Empire had a standing army close to 700,000 of which, he said, Menelik was able to deploy 200,000 at Adwa. He arrived at this hypothetical number by figuring out the strength of the three major units in the organization of the Ethiopian army. The first unit is composed of the Emperor's own army and the remaining two belonged to those of the Rases (next in command in the absence of a King) and the Dejazmatchs (third in the order of the present hierarchy). Vitalien attributed some 400,000 soldiers as having belonged to the then existing seven Rases, assigning 50,000 each to six and 100,000 to Ras Mekonnen of Harar, the most militarily organized and therefore important of them all. To each of the five Dejazmatchs he also attributed 20,000 soldiers. Together with the Emperor's estimated army of

1.

See Luzeux, Etudes Critiques sur la Guerre entre l'Italie et l'Abyssinie, p.21.

200,000 the suggested figure of 700,000 was arrived at. Even if these three major divisions of the army are readily recognized as constituting the structure of the Ethiopian army, in time of war their deployment in the field might be broken into several strategic

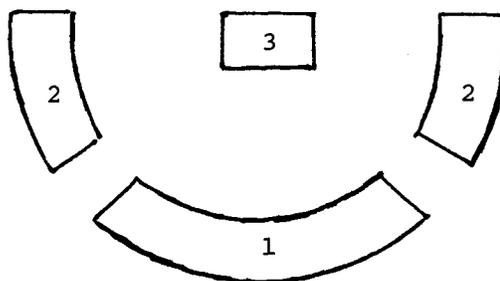


Fig: 3 (1) Emperor (2) Ras (3) Dejazmatch

sub-units still directly commanded and headed by other greater units. The diagramme in figure 4 roughly shows the formation of the different units and sub-units in the battle field and how they were coordinated to function in a concerted manner.

Regarding the soldiers deployed at Adwa, Gleichen also estimates "close to two hundred thousand, of whom nearly three quarters were armed with rifles."³ Wylde, perhaps the most authoritative of the

² Vitalien, Pour l'Independance de l'Ethiopie, pp.31-33.

³ Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.192.

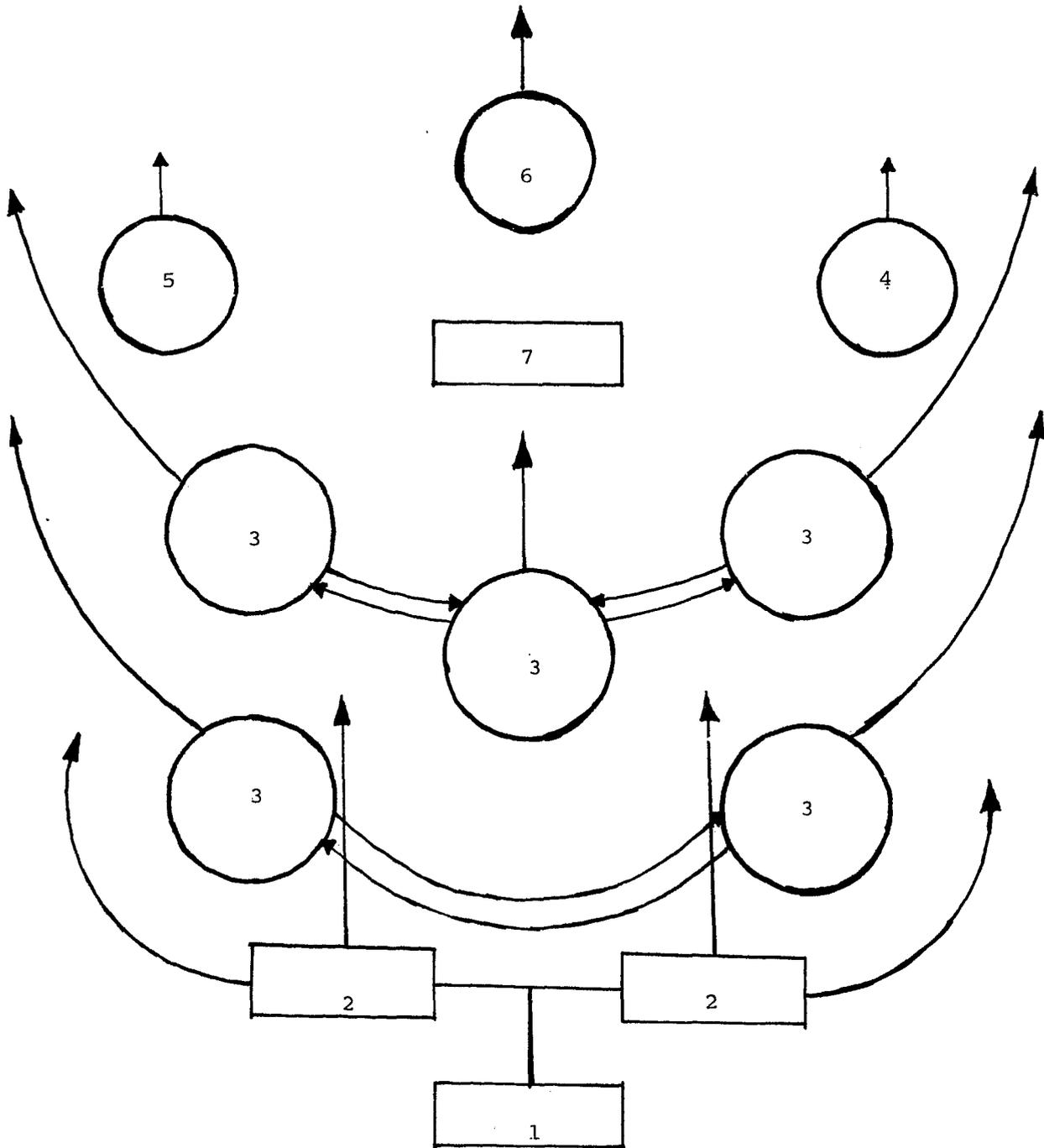


Fig: 4 (1) Emperor (2) Ras (3) Dejazmatch
 (4) Kegnazmatch - Right wing Commander
 (5) Grazmatch - Left wing Commander
 (6) Fitawrari - Advance Unit Commander
 (7) Balderas - Transport & Logistics

writers on the Battle of Adwa, puts this number at "120,000 fighting men." Berkeley records that Menelik's force at Adwa was about 100,000 strong. Gleichen, writing about Menelik's armament situation just after Adwa - and naturally including some more captured Italian rifles - says that "it is calculated that over a 100,000 rifles have thus been imported, and when the cargo of the 'Doelwyck' - captured last year [1896] by the Italians and subsequently released - has been sold, there will be considerably over 200,000 rifles in the country."

The number of arms and ammunition which Menelik was said to have acquired before Adwa also varies in number as supplied by different writers. The arms estimates given by European, and mostly Italian, writers ranges from 50,000 to 120,000. This by itself is indicative of the fact that the figures arrived at were generally based on conjecture rather than a systematic compilation of arms in the hands of Menelik. Wylde affirms that "there can be no doubt that soon after the battle opened the Abyssinians have had at least 70,000 rifles on the field" and

⁴
Wylde, Abyssinia, p.199.

⁵
Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, pp.268-269.

⁶
Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, pp.196-197.

⁷
Wylde, Abyssinia, p.200.

Berkeley, basing himself on Lieutenant Melli of the Italian Army, says the Ethiopian army had some 80,000 riflemen at the time of the Battle of Adwa. He breaks up this figure thus:

	<u>Rifles</u>	<u>Guns</u>	<u>Horses</u>
1. Emperor Menelik	25,000	32	3,000
2. Empress Taitu	3,000	4	600
3. King Tekle Haymanot	5,000	-	-
4. Ras Mekonnen	15,000	-	-
5. Ras Mengesha & Ras Alula	12,000	6	-
6. Ras Mengesha Atikem	6,000	-	-
7. Ras Mikael	6,000	-	5,000
8. Ras Wolle & others	8,000	-	-
Totals	<u>80,000</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>8,600</u>

In 1894, at the height of what could be considered Menelik's active period in his effort to acquire arms, Piano and Traversi, both Italians, affirmed that he had 82,000 rifles and twenty eight cannons. Baratieri says that by the end of 1895 he had been informed

8

Berkeley, Campaign of Adowa, p.268. For a comparative study of the facts in this field consult, among others, Work, Ethiopia, a Pawn in European Diplomacy, pp.125;136;240-242; Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.71; Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, pp.265-266; 267-269; Vitalien, Pour l'Independence de l'Ethiopie, pp.26-44; Rubenson, Wichale XVII, pp.21-22; Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.273;541; Starkie, Arthur Rimbaud in Abyssinia, p.91; Pankhurst, "Fire-Arms in Ethiopian History," Ethiopia Observer, VI, 2, 1962; Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.188; Wylde, Abyssinia, pp.196-225; Vivian, Abyssinia, pp. 315-318; Baratieri, Memorie d'Africa. Parte III, pp.347-367; Luzeux, Etudes Critiques sur la Guerre entre l'Italie et l'Abyssinie; Conti Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia.

9

Conti Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia, p.151.

that the Ethiopians then possessed about 80,000 rifles. His own assesment, however, was that among the five well-armed Rases and other minor officers, the number of rifles stood at 31,000.¹⁰ In January 1896, when the Ethiopian and Italian armies faced each other at the battlefield, it was reported by Italian sources that the Ethiopian side had from 50,000 upwords to 70,000 rifles,¹¹ and Baratieri, basing himself on military intelligence, estimated the Ethiopian army around Hidagamus to have been armed with some 62,000 rifles.¹² Two other Italians, namely Salsa and General Albertone reported that Menelik's army had 70,000 to 80,000 and 70,000 to 75,000 rifles respectively.¹³ Albertone, however, in his report he submitted after returning from Ethiopia as a prisoner, revised his estimate and raised it to 111,000 to 122,000 rifles.¹⁴ He put the total force of Menelik at Adwa at 150,000.

10

Baratieri, Memorie d'Africa, p.283.

11

Conti Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia, p.273; Baratieri, Memorie d'Africa, pp.289-290.

12

Ibid., p.289.

13

Conti Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia, p.280. p.323 footnote 1.

14

Ibid., p.341.

The facts regarding the quantity and quality of arms possessed by Menelik and Italy are both confusing and misleading and often times controversial. In the absence of official documents which systematically compiled the amount of war matériels which each side used in the war, much of the information supplied by critics of the war and by recent researchers is based mostly on approximation. The fact that such figures have at present gained authoritative credibility could only be attributed to the possibility that it is because they were the only sources available and were thus accepted as such because of repeated and prolonged references to them. A further complicating factor in the understanding of the exact military situation was the impossibility of finding out for certain which arms shipments announced, promised or dispatched in Menelik's favour reached his Empire or were even delivered to him. Similarly, not all treaty stipulations or agreements, be it on the state or individual level, were carried to the letter, so that it could authoritatively be affirmed that Menelik was or was not the recipient of the war matériels in question. In short, the pre and post Adwa arms and ammunition situation in Ethiopia is much of a guess work and mere speculation than a systematic recording of the shipments and caravans of arms which made their way into Ethiopia and therefore Menelik's arsenal.

The researcher's own compilation of the figures, by no means complete, shows that between 1881 and 1896 there were no less than

145,000 rifles of every sort, nearly 4,000,000 ammunition of every kind and over 40 cannons, promised, agreed upon, dispatched and subsequently unloaded in shores adjoining Ethiopia and said to have been received by Menelik.

If the acquisitions of arms and ammunition by Menelik were accounted for in a chronological order and were to be broken down in a schematic order, it will be found that:

1. Prior to the era of the beginning of the 1880s, that is, between Menelik's escape from captivity at the court of Theodros in 1865 and the close of the 1870s, Menelik had in his possession arms in the order of 4000 to 5000. 15
2. Between 1880 and 1890, Menelik's arsenal had swollen by some 60,000 rifles of different make, about 30 cannons and ammunition exceeding a million and a half pieces. 16
3. As of the breakdown of diplomatic relations between Menelik and Italy, that is about 1896, Menelik had accumulated more than 80,000 rifles, 15 more cannons and two and a half million pieces of ammunition, bringing the total to 145,000 rifles and 4,000,000 pieces of ammunition in all the Empire.

These figures, of course, could not be authenticated in any sure manner. However, taking all the marginal errors suggested above into consideration it could be said that Menelik must have deployed

15

Among the many sources, the following two writers give a fairly accurate picture of the period: Blanc, A Narrative of Captivity in Abyssinia, p.298; Pankhurst, "Fire-Arms in Ethiopian History," Ethiopia Observer, Vol.6, 2, 1962, p.54. See also chapter 1, pp.33-35.

16

Rimbaud, in 1887, says that Menelik, within the last five years had accumulated some 25,000 rifles. Starkie, Arthur Rimbaud in Abyssinia,

in the battlefield a fighting army with fire power anywhere between 80,000 to 90,000 and more than 30 cannons.

Italian war efforts were double pronged. The first involved the organizing and readying of a modern, relatively mobile and well-equipped army in the battle field. The second war effort resorted to a persistent diplomatic strategy bent on denying Menelik the arms and ammunition he so badly needed to counter the threat that was directed at him from Italy. As regards the first Italian effort, the available statistical data concerning the military arsenal and matériels is as confusing as were also the figures furnished on Menelik's armament supplies and fighting units.

General Baratieri, the Commander in Chief of the Italian forces puts the official number of rifles at his disposal at 14,519 and cannons at 56. Wylde, while restating the breakdown of Baratieri's figure of 14,519 rifles line for line also makes a point - as did Baratieri's notes - that "this [figure] does not include officers, artillery, camp followers, etc., or the irregular native levies belonging to the provinces of Bogos and Hamasen, who were also armed with rifles." Below are Baratieri's

p.91; Pankhurst says that in November 1887 "Count Antonelli reported that this ruler had perhaps 50,000 men armed with rifles of which 12,000 were modern." "Fire-Arms in Ethiopia," Ethiopia Observer, Vol.6, 2, 1962,p.155.

17

Baratieri, Memorie d'Africa, pp.383-384.

18

Wylde, Abyssinia, pp.198-199.

19

own breakdown of the strength of his army in the battlefield:

	Rifles	Cannons
1. General Albertone	4,076	14
2. General Arimondi	2,493	12
3. General Dabormida	3,800	18
4. General Ellena	4,150	12
Total	14,519	56

Luzeux, an authority on military affairs and a war critic on the Ethiopian-Italian hostilities, gives the following composition of the Italian armed units in the field:

	Officers	S o l d i e r s		cannons
		Italians	locals	
1. Chief of Staff	8	16	10	-
2. General Albertone	85	287	4,920	16
3. General Arimondi	119	3,576	500	12
4. General Dabormida	156	4,132	800	24
5. General Ellena	138	4,220	1,100	12
6. Others	4	180		
Total	510	12,411	7,330	64
		20,251		

Italy's efforts to block Menelik's arms supplies from Europe, even though tremendous and systematic, were never totally successful. The main supplier of Menelik, both on the person to person and state to state level, was France. France, for obvious reasons already indicated in the foregoing chapter, was willing to encourage the flow of arms to Menelik

19

Baratieri, Memorie d'Africa, pp.383-385.

20

Luzeux, Etudes Critiques sur la Guerre entre l'Italie et l'Abyssinie, pp.56-57.

through Obock and later Djibouti. Menelik was also keen and alert to exploit the situation which made itself so readily available. As of the very moment of the break of diplomatic contacts between him and Italy Menelik had already sent out feelers in search of arms and arms suppliers in parts of Europe, particularly France, Belgium and Russia.

The first French person intimately involved in arms trafficking to Ethiopia was Chefneux. After the breakdown of Ethiopian-Italian diplomatic contacts, Chefneux was one of the first private individuals who had been used by Menelik for establishing contacts with private arms dealers and the governments of France and Belgium. Already, at about the end of 1891, Chefneux was in Paris as an intermediary between Menelik and Prsesident Carnot trying to lay the grounds for future relations. At the same time, Chefneux was also used as a courier by Menelik to take a decoration and other presents to President Carnot. Upon the return of Chefneux to Ethiopia, Carnot also reciprocated by sending the
21
'Legion d'honneur' to Menelik. By the beginning of 1894 Italy was complaining about French predispositions towards Ethiopia. An Italian Embassy note from Paris dated January 10 complained that Italy was in the possession of concrete evidence that Menelik was now a receipient of letters from the the President of the French

Republic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Governor of Obock promising him, among other things, a "large provisions of arms and ammunition" and that this action was highly regreted by the Italian Government.

By the end of 1893, President Carnot had in fact commenced forwarding a sizable number of arms to Menelik via missions sent through Djibouti. Lagarde led one such mission from Paris to Menelik and after remitting the arms to Ras Mekonnen sent back a dispatch to Carnot on December 9, 1893 commenting that these arms which he had now put under Menelik's disposal could help the Ras and the Emperor to maintain the independence of their country. Lagarde, proud of the newly gained position by France in Ethiopia, also sent a telegramme to the Minister of Colonies in Paris on January 25, 1894 informing him: "J'ai heureusement terminé mission, rétabli avec Nègus Menelik cordiaux rapports si troublés depuis déclaration tendancieuse Ministère italien année dernière...."

French position on the arms issue vis-a-vis Ethiopia was an obvious official predisposition nourished by the desire to maintain

22

Ibid., 1st. ser., Vol.11, No.9, Italian Embassy Note, Paris, January 10, 1894, p.11.

23

Ibid., See in Lagarde to Marty, February 25, 1894, No.56, footnote 1, p.85.

24

Ibid

the Republic's interest in the area. Commenting on the favourable conditions which such a political largesse generated for the advancement of French interest in Ethiopia, Rodd, in his report regarding his mission of 1897 to Menelik, remarked:

It would not have been altogether surprising if the French Mission had received as they do not appear to have, a more cordial welcome than we did; for, whereas the French have largely contributed to the success of the Emperor Menelik by sanctioning the unrestricted importation of arms through Djibouti, the Abyssinians considered and were zealously instructed in the belief that they had distinct grievances against ourselves. 25

In this regard, the gains France was able to extract from Menelik were in many instances highly exaggerated. Nevertheless, the relative benefits the French Government had acquired out of this willingness to allow Menelik a substantial amount of arms and ammunition were never minimal. "There can be no doubt," Wylde wrote, "that had it not been for the French supplying Abyssinia through the port of Djibouti with unlimited quantities of arms and ammunition, both as presents and purchase from their merchants, that Menelik would never have been able to have gained the crushing victory at Adowa." With obvious exaggeration in his stipulations Wylde added that "for this help and services rendered the French have won their position, and with tact they are likely to be able to procure everything they wish in the country...."²⁶

25

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Mission to King Menelik.' Rodd to Salisbury, June 22, 1897, p.61.

26

Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, p.58.

Italian reaction to the French position was vigorous and at times desperate. Not only did Italy protest and make representations to France, Britain, Germany and other nations, but it also maintained persistently that, even though some time had now elapsed since Menelik had denounced the Treaty of Wichalle, it still represented Ethiopia and that the powers should therefore stop supplying Menelik with arms. Instead, Italy maintained that the powers should deal directly with it for any such future supplies.

In late March 1895 one such strong protest, conveyed in the sternest way possible, was made to Hanotaux, the French Foreign Minister, by the Italian Ambassador in Rome. The Italian Ambassador's note requested the French Government to stop the transit of some 15,000 Grass rifles destined to Menelik through the intermediary of the French 'Compagnie Franco-Africaine.' Hanotaux, in a confidential note addressed to his Ambassador in Rome, made an equally stern reply to Italy:

J'avais répondu que la vente des armes de guerre était interdite en France a cause des événements de Madagascar; que, comme l'indiquait l'Ambassadeur lui-même, les armes en question provenaient d'une manufacture Autrichienne; que ce commerce se faisait par Anvers, Hambourg, l'Angleterre, les Etats-Unis, la Belgique, l'Autriche; que, d'ailleurs, en ce qui concerne l'importation ou le transit par nos possessions, nous confèrerions a l'Acte de Bruxelles et que nous agirions dans un esprit de bienveillance a l'égard de l'Italie, sous condition de réciprocitéJ'ai répondu que j'étais disposé a examiner la question, mais que des importations d'armes pouvaient avoir lieu également par Zeila et j'ai demandé si des mesures avaient été prises par l'Angleterre.... Le comte Tornielli m'a dit en terminant qu'il comptait que je réglerais cette question le plus

tot possible, le baron Blanc lui ayant télégraphié qu'on considèrait a Rome "comme un acte peu amical" de notre part de laisser passer ces armes. J'ai répliqué immédiatement que cette expression* paraissait devenir a la mode...que je le priais de faire savoir au baron Blanc que lui-meme (l'Ambassadeur) n'avait pas pensé que j'accepterais une demande ainsi formulée.... 27

There were times when French stand on the arms issue, under persistent Italian, British and German pressure, was jittery and faltered at some instances. This pressure accelerated and mounted to a considerable height especially after the initial defeats of General Baratieri's forces in Tigre in the hands of Menelik's Rases. In particular, the Italian press had taken such an inimical position vis-a-vis France that it was enough an irritant to force a decision by the French Cabinet in favour of Italy. On June 18, 1895, the French Council of Ministers had decided to strictly enforce a decree issued

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The reference is to Sir Edward Grey's famous remarks made at about the same time (March 28, 1895) in the House of Commons regarding the French expedition from West Africa to enter the Nile Valley. Sir Edward said: "I cannot think that these rumours deserve credence, because the advance of a French expedition under secret instructions right from the other side of Africa, into a territory over which our claims have been known for so long, would be not merely an inconsistent and unexpected act, but it must be perfectly well known to the French Government that it would be an unfriendly act, and would be so viewed by England." Parliamentary Debates, IV, Vol. XXXII, pp. 388-406; Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p. 265. (Emphasis is mine.) See also chapter 5.

27

DDF., 1st. ser., Vol. 11, No. 462, Hanotaux to Billot, April 17, 1895, pp. 698-699. The Italian Ambassador in London had called on Sir T. Sanderson on April 9 to make known the substance of the talks between his Government and that of France regarding the supply of arms to Ethiopia. See F.O. 403/221, The Earl of Kimberly to Sir Clare Ford, April 9, 1895.

out to "provisionally suspend" all purchases of arms of war
28
in France.

Irritated by the "calumnious insinuations" of the Italian press which was accusing France of aiding Ethiopia at a time Italian forces were suffering reverses in the battlefield, the French Foreign Minister indicated to the French Ambassador in Rome the "unjustifiable attacks" by Italian opinion makers on the French Government and directed him to raise the matter with Baron Blanc, the Italian Foreign Minister. Berthelot said the fact that many of the newspapers dwelt on the same issue with more or less an identical line of thought was indicative of the fact that the Italian Government desired to force the issue. Such a stand, even though partially or tardily denied by Rome, he further pointed out, had contributed to the the spread of ill will ("facheuse impression")
29
in France.

At about the height of the Italian protests to France regarding the delivery of arms to him, fearful of the coalescing efforts exerted

28Ibid., 1st., ser., Vol.12, No.309, Berthelot to Ambassadors in London, St.Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna and Constantinople, February 22,1896, pp.468-469.

29

Ibid., No.289, Berthelot to Billot, January 28,1896, p.432. On March 13,1896, Billot, reporting back to Berthelot on the same issue said: "J'ai naturellement saisi l'occasion qui s'offrait de renouveler l'expression des sentiments de douloureuse sympathie que nous a inspirés la vaillance déployées par les troupes italiennes dans les derniers combats au Tigré. Mais je n'ai pas manqué non plus d'appeler l'attention de mon interlocuteur sur les insinuations malveillantes auxquelles nous avons été en butte, a propos du transit des armes par Obok, de la part d'une partie de la presse italienne, celle-la meme qui passait

on France by Britain and Germany, Menelik wrote a letter to the French President on September 24, 1895 requesting his support and assistance not to deny his country the right to defend and protect itself from its enemies.

Menelik, in his letter of September 24 makes particular mention of Italian obtention from Britain of an implied agreement not to allow arms transactions with Ethiopia. Britain, even though desirous of readily accomodating Italian demands, was nevertheless faced with the danger that such an action on its part might, in the long run, undermine the importance of Zeila and its commercial and strategic role in the region when and if France

pour suivre les inspirations du précédent ministere. M.de Rudini m'a remercié de mes éclaircissements sur les instructions donnés dans une pensée tout amicale pour l'Italie au gouverneur de nos établissements de la mer Rouge. Il était heureux d'avoir l'assurance qu'il n'y avait rien de fondé dans les nouvelles publiées a ce propos...." Ibid., No. 321, Billot to Berthelot, March 13, 1896, p.492.

30

"J'ai aapris que le Gouvernement italen avait obtenu de l'Angleterre et sollicitait de nouveau de la France l'interdiction du commerce des armes avec l'Ethiopie. Cette demande, que votre Gouvernement a eu déjà l'occasion de repousser, est d'autant plus injustifiable que l'Italie fournit elle meme des armes a l'Aoussa et cherche par les moyens les plus illégaux a en faire pénétrer chez tous mes ennemis musulmans. L'Europe jouit partout d'une grande réputation de justice et d'équité. Or, comment serait-il admissible que l'on puisse armer les musulmans les plus fanatiques et les plus sauvages de l'Afrique, alors qu'il serait interdit de fournir des armes au Souverain d'un peuple chretien, quoi qu'en disent mes ennemis? Combattre pour l'honneur et l'indépendance de son pays n'est-ce pas de bon droit?...Quant a la France et a l'Ethiopie je constate avec la plus grande satisfaction que l'amitié qui existe entre nous depuis tant d'années ne fait que s'acroitre de jour en jour. Ce sont ses qualités de bonté et de justice qui honorent et glorifient la France. Nous sommes sur également que vous nourrissez toujours a notre égard de ces sentiments de bonté et de bienveillance." Ibid., No.155, Menelik to President Felix Faure, September 24, 1895, pp.210-211.

seized the opportunity to promote its own port of Djibouti as an outlet for Menelik and as an alternative to Zeila. Britain, therefore, constantly sought assurances directly from France and indirectly from Italy that France will not attempt to divert trade and commerce away from Zeila to its own port of Djibouti.

The importance of Zeila to Britain was crucial primarily because it was the point of departure both into and out of the eastern commercial town of Harar which, from the time of its occupation by the Egyptians in 1874, had become one of the most important trading centres of East Africa providing provisions to British bases and particularly to the strategically located port of Aden.

British-French rivalry in the region was a growing concern to both, and in as long as Britain was keen at preventing France from developing Djibouti as a possible centre of trade and commerce on the mouth of the Red Sea so also was France ready not to allow Britain benefit from the prevailing political circumstances to promote Zeila

31

"There were five points on the Red Sea round which the European nations buzzed like bees attracted by honey - Assab and Tajoura leading to Abyssinia, to the Kingdoms of Tigré and Shoa; Zeyla and Berbera leading to Harar, and finally Guardafui, at the extreme point of the coast, guarding the opening of the gulf on the return journey to Europe from the East. Tajoura, Zeyla, and Berbera were all comparatively near Aden, commanding the whole of the gulf, which Sir Richard Temple said, in 1879, should never be allowed to pass from the sole control of Great Britain. If any other power held any of these positions, the importation of arms into Abyssinia would be an easy matter, and this would make Abyssinians 'uncomfortably powerful'....It would, moreover, be extremely awkward for England if any other power seized Zeyla or Berbera, for these towns supplied Aden with the necessities of life obtained from the market of Harar." Starkie, Arthur Rimbaud in Abyssinia, pp.3-4.

into one. On April 9, 1895, Sir Clare Ford, the British Ambassador in Rome, reported to Earl of Kimberley, the Foreign Minister, that he learned from "Baron Blanc that Count Tornielli [Italian Ambassador in Paris] has asked M. Hanotaux to stop the introduction of the rifles via Obock and Jibuti, and that H.E. believes that the French Government will forbid their entry by these ports if Her Majesty's Government prohibits their importation via Zeyla."³²

Even though not substantial, arms were in fact reaching Ethiopia through Zeila at a time when General Baratieri was already accelerating Italian hostilities in the north. This was only less than a year before the battle of Adwa. However, with the increasingly strong representations of Italy in London and the interplay of other political factors in the prevailing rivalry among the powers in the area, Britain completely shut off the use of the port of Zeila to Menelik. On March 25, 1895, for example, Mr. Fowler, from the India Office, telegraphed Brigadier General Jopp at Aden and enquired from him: "General Baratieri proposes that rifles be sent Makunan [Res Mekonnen] through intermediary of Italian Government. What is your view as to this proposal?"³³ Brigadier General Jopp replied the next day to say that he was "of the opinion that to send rifles through an Italian intermediary or agent might possibly cause complications in many ways. [He] would suggest that the rifles should be allowed to

32

F.O.403/221, Sir Clare Ford to Earl of Kimberley, April 19, 1895.

33

Ibid., Fowler to Brigadier General Jopp, March 25, 1895.

(go to) Makunan, and that [he] shall write to him impressing upon him that the importation is allowed with the knowledge and with the approval of the Italian Government."³⁴ Two weeks later, Fowler instructed Jopp to "refuse transshipment at Aden, on ground that Her Majesty's Government have reason to believe that they are intended for use against a friendly Power."³⁵

Germany, aligned to Italy's cause by treaty agreements, was also an effective catalyst in applying pressure on France so that it will put an end to its arms shipments to Menelik. Not only did Baron Blanc complain about the French stand to the German Ambassador in Rome at repeated instances so that his Government will bring about its pressure to bear on France, but, just like he succeeded to bring the Italian press into play in drumming up the issue as one that left a European nation indefensible in the face of mounting hostilities from "barbarians" in East Africa, so did he attempt to involve the German public in his efforts to arouse animosity against French actions in the region. On December 20, 1895 the Chancellor transmitted to the German Ambassador in Paris the contents of a report he received from the German Ambassador in Rome which dwelt on Italy's complaints regarding French attitude on the question of arms being supplied to Ethiopia and instructed him to report back on

34

Ibid., Brigadier General Jopp to Mr. Fowler, March 26, 1896.

35

Ibid., Fowler to Brigadier General Jopp, April 11, 1895.

the reactions in Paris. The Italian complaints contained in the Chancellor's dispatch again dwelt on French attitude on the supply of arms to Ethiopia. What is interesting to note here is the comment of the Chancellor on the issue. He remarked:

Effectivement, nos rapports avec l'Italie ont été établis par traité de telle manière qu'un conflit sérieux des Italiens avec une tierce puissance risquerait finalement de nous entraîner dans ce conflit. Il serait donc conforme aux desirs de Sa Majesté [Italian King] comme aussi à l'intérêt essentiel de l'Allemagne, d'attirer amicalement l'attention du gouvernement français sur les violations de la neutralité signalées ci-dessus, qui se sont produites, ou qui, à tout le moins, ont fait l'objet de controverses de presse. Les excitations et les envois d'argent sont difficiles à prouver, mais les envois d'armes et de munitions peuvent se contrôler. 36

At a much more different level, it was also evident from many of the desperate pleadings of Baron Blanc to the German Chancellor that Italy was ardently seeking a Franco-Russian type of alliance with Germany in its war efforts in Ethiopia. Germany, however, despite its sympathetic support of Italy was never willing to be drawn into any such association for, at repeated instances, it was its contention that Italy's war in Ethiopia should not be allowed to drag the rest of Europe into war. In fact, it was the Chancellor's belief that Italy's
37
adventure in Ethiopia was a danger to European peace.

36

GDD., Vol.11, December 20, 1895.

37

A memorandum of February 13, 1896 by Chancellor Hohenlohe stresses this point: "J'ai exposé à l'Ambassadeur les conséquences que pourrait avoir une pénétration plus grande en Abyssinie, et les dangers qui en pourraient résulter pour la paix européenne. Une guerre maritime de

Italian war efforts to weaken Menelik's position on the diplomatic level was not limited to its plea and appeal to secure British and French denials to Menelik of the ports of Zeila and Djibouti respectively for the importation of arms and ammunition into Ethiopia. Italy was also actively engaged in persuading Britain to allow it the use and even partial occupation of Zeila as a military base from where its forces were to launch another offensive so as to squeeze Menelik in the middle in a militarily projected pincer-like movement.

Zeila was both strategically and morally essential to Italy. It was Baratieri's conviction that if Menelik was to be engaged on both fronts, namely from Eritrea in the north and Zeila from the south, such a military undertaking would have the important effect of first, putting Menelik's military forces in disarray, and second, spreading his military capability too thin over a vast Empire by dividing his war efforts on two sides. Very important still,

L'Italie avec la Russie et la France, a cause de l'Abyssinie, ne constituerait pas pour la Triplice un 'casus foederis.'" GDD., Vol.11, February 13, 1896, p.153. In a dispatch of February 15 to the German Ambassador, he also said: "La Triplice est un 'pacte conservatoire' et non une societe d'acquisition. La pénétration des Italiens dans cette partie de l'Abyssinie qui est masquée sous le vieux nom d'Erythée, constitue un acte d'agression et par conséquent ne rentre pas positivement dans les cas prévus par traité de la Triplice." Ibid., Chancellor Hohenlohe to Bernard de Bulow, p.154. (Emphasis is mine.)

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See map next page.

38

"During this period...the scheme, long before suggested by Baratieri, of creating a diversion by invading Harrar from the port of Zeila (opposite Aden) took a tangible form. The idea was undoubtedly a good one. It would have utilized the Italian men-of-war in the Red Sea, and also the various

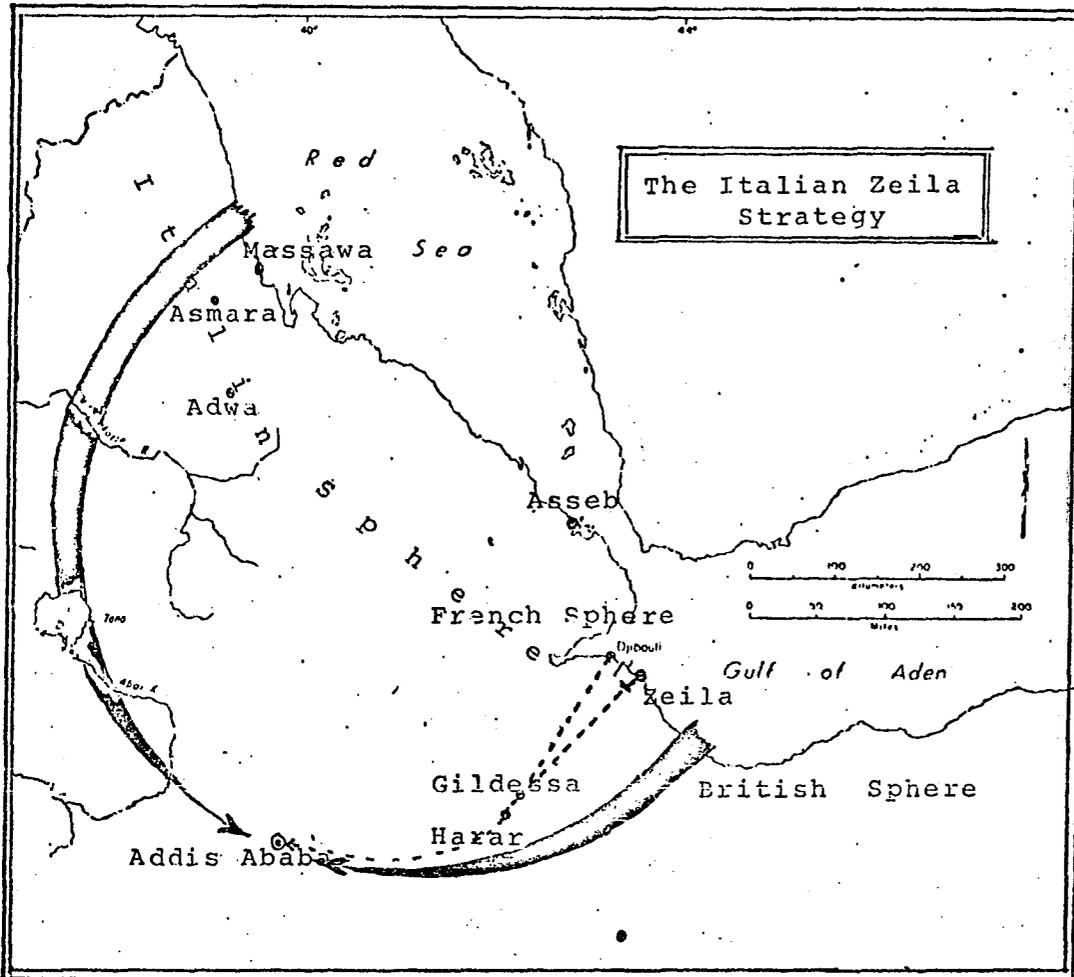


Fig. 5

Baratieri's advancing forces in the north had already successively met crushing defeats at the hands of Ras Mekonnen at Amba Alagé and Mekellé in December 1895 and to alleviate the spirit and morale of both the fighting men in the battle field and their superiors at command posts, a feeling that the enemy would be engaged from the south was thought to be of great help.

Soon after the denunciation of the Treaty of Wichalle by Menelik and the setting up of a war machinery by the Eritrean military high command, the question of Zeila was seriously considered. By the end of 1894, Italy had approached Britain repeatedly on Zeila and at several instances it had appealed to Germany to request London to be flexible on its demand. In a dispatch to the German Chancellor, Bulow, the Ambassador in Rome, feared that the crisis Italy faced in Ethiopia had rocked the Government of Crispi to the bottom and that Britain should be approached for leniency on the Italian request over Zeila. Bullow, commenting ("de la facon la plus strictement confidentielle") on the desperation acquiring in Rome made known to his Chancellor that because of the difficult situation both within and outside

regiments that were ready to embark, but for whom no food could be found in Erythrea. It would probably have detached Maconnen from the Shoan army, for his capital is only about twenty days march from the coast; and a general feeling of unrest would have been caused among the Abyssinian chiefs by this southern invasion of their homes." Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.230. See also Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, pp.274-276; Work, Ethiopia, a Pawn in European Diplomacy, pp.142-143; 230 ff. See map on page 376.

the country the Italian Foreign Minister, unbecomingly to his³⁹ habitual temperament, was visibly shaken and agitated.

The Italian Foreign Minister had earlier imparted Rome's fears to Bulow that Baratieri's army might be defeated unless Ethiopian forces from Shoa and Harar were somehow engaged from the south and thus neutralized effectively. On December 9, 1895, the Foreign Minister pointed out that if Shoa and Harar were to be prevented from "crushing" Baratieri's forces England "should accept, without delay, an Italian garrison at Zeila so as to weaken Harar, Shoa and the Abyssinians and to leave no doubt in Paris regarding British sentiments for Italy."⁴⁰ In fact, as already mentioned, Baratieri's forces had suffered serious setbacks by December at the battles of Amba Alage and Mekellé. The British Ambassador in Rome sent a note to the Foreign Minister regretting Italian losses and conveying his Government's sympathy on the unfortunate military defeat. To this, Baron Blanc replied in a very diplomatic but telling manner putting the blame on the short-sightedness of those who have doubted Italy's appeals on the importance of Zeila to neutralize Ethiopian forces in the south. He wrote back to the British Ambassador: "I thank you for your letter of today. What has happened to our troops, in

39

GDD., Vol.9, Bulow to the Chancellor, January 4, 1895, pp.282-283.

40

Ibid., Vol.11, Bulow to the Chancellor, December 9, 1895, p.311.

consequence of the junction of the Harrar forces with those of Shoa, is the result, which has for a long time been foreseen, of the access to the southern portion of our Protectorate being closed to us on the sea side. We shall face the events with calmness and fortitude, and I am particularly sensible of your⁴¹ expression of sympathy."

Germany's role in securing Zeila for Italy was a sustained but nevertheless cautious one. It was Germany's wish that London will acquiesce to Rome's requests. However, Germany had also made it clear at repeated instances that such a moral support must not be construed to mean an encouragement to enlarge the hostilities⁴² in a way that will affect the peace in Europe. Britain, on the other hand, while seeming to be willing to accommodate Italy on Zeila, was very hesitant to commit itself to the extent requested by Rome because it was fearful that such a step might jeopardize its own interest in the area. It was not therefore easy for Berlin to persuade London on the issue at hand.

On December 13, Baron de Marschall, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, sent a telegramme to the German Ambassador in London briefing him on the latest Italian request. He told the Ambassador: "Votre Excellence est bien placée pour apprécier si

41

F.O.403/221, Sir Clare Ford to Salisbury, Rome, December 12, 1895.

42

See for example the Chancellor's letter to Bulow, February 15, 1896, in GDD., Vol. 11, pp. 153-156.

Elle peut parler en faveur de l'Italie a Lord Salisbury avec
⁴³
quelque chance de succes." The request, as transmitted by
Baratieri from the battle field, was that he would be able to
effectively contain the situation if he were permitted by
Britain to disembark a few hundred soldiers at Zeila and this
⁴⁴
only for a few days. The reply from London was an expected one.
The German Ambassador in London, after representing the Italian
case with Lord Salisbury, telegraphed his Foreign Minister the
same day on the reply he was able to get. He reported that
Lord Salisbury did not deny the importance of Zeila to Italy and
that he was favourably disposed towards Italy, but under one
condition. The condition was that the request did not involve
any thought of ceding land at Zeila. Even this, he told the
Ambassador, was to be considered after he had consulted the
⁴⁵
matter with the India Office and the obtention of its consent.

The same day the German representation was made in London
India Office was consulted on the Italian request. Lord

43

Ibid., Baron de Marschall to Comte de Hatzfeldt, Berlin, December
13,1895, p.6.

44

Ibid., pp.5-6. On December 21 the German Ambassador in Vienna also
reported to his Foreign Minister this very same Italian request. "Le
Baron Blanc a ajouté: 'Baratieri nous dit que si l'Angleterre accorde le
passage de troupes, elle pourrait également accorder une chose plus
simple et seule opportune, c'est-a-dire le débarquement pour deux ou
trois jours de 200 ou 300 marins a Zeila." Ibid., Bulow to the Ministry
of Foreign Affairs, December 21,1895, pp.35-36.

45

Ibid., Comte de Hatzfeldt to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
London, December 13,1895, p.6; December 18,1895, pp.23-24.

Hamilton telegraphed the Viceroy of India and informed him that "General Baratieri asks permission for troops, munitions, and provisions to pass through Zeila into Abyssinia. Lord Salisbury proposes that the permission be given, with due engagements the troops shall not stay at Zeila more than, say, a fortnight. Have you any objection? Speedy answer wanted." ⁴⁶ The recommendation of ⁴⁷ the India Office was not encouraging.

Obviously, Italian reaction to British rejection of its request was, as expected, very strong. The Baron Blanc felt that despite Italian setbacks in Ethiopia it was still possible to obtain a moral satisfaction against Mekonnen and the tribes from Harar if England "sans délai ni fausse honte ou mauvais vouloir" ⁴⁸ were to accord Italy the right of passage via Zeila. The Minister

46

F.O.403/221, Lord G. Hamilton to the Viceroy of India, December 13, 1895.

47

"I am desired by Lord G. Hamilton to transmit herewith a copy of a reply, dated 15th. December, received from the Viceroy of India in reference to the request of General Baratieri to land troops at Zeila. The preservation of tranquility on the Somali Coast with a view to commerce with Aden is the chief concern of the Government of India in its dealing with Somaliland. The permission to a foreign nation to make use of Zeila would provoke the hostility of Abyssinia, whose power at Harrar is both feared and disliked by the tribes protected by us. It would, more over, create a spirit of unrest amongst the tribes within and beyond the border of the British Protectorate, especially amongst the tribes on both sides of the Harrar-Zeila route as settled with France in 1888." Ibid., India Office to Foreign Office, December 16, 1895.

48

GDD., Vol.11, Bulow to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 24, 1895, p.46.

added:

L'Angleterre ne comprend pas que la fin de ses tergiversations vis-a-vis de nous sera le protectorat de la France sur le Harrar et de la Russie sur le Choa, et ainsi la France et la Russie en Afrique, entre la mer Rouge, le golfe d'Aden et le Nil. Mais les Anglais ont la tete dans un sac, il ne voient rien. 49

At the beginning of 1896, Baron Blanc, disgusted and made bitter by British reluctance on Zeila remarked: "Lord Salisbury makes me die." His reaction was even much more stronger when he accused Lord Salisbury by saying that he had never thought he would lack courage and discretion to hold to his promise he gave to Lord Kimberley on May 5, 1894 in the treaty of Harar (British-Italian Protocol on their respective spheres of influence in East Africa). For fear of France, he added, the English people have abandoned us on Harar by rejecting Italy's "modest wishes" on Zeila. He concluded: "Ils le regretteront le jour ou la France, qui a deja mis la main sur Madagascar, tiendra l'entree de la Mer Rouge, et de la menacera a la fois l'Egypte et les Indes." 50

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On the report Emperor Guillaume's annotations read: "It is not impossible."

49

Ibid

50

Ibid., Bernard de Bulow to the Chancellor, Rome, January 30, 1896, pp.118-119.

British rejection of Italian requests on Zeila, it could be said, basically depended on four inter-related reasons. (a) Britain's contention that it was agreement bound with France on Zeila and Harar and that Italy should also approach the French Government on the subject if it were to get satisfaction on Zeila. It is to be remembered that Britain and France had entered into an agreement in February 1888 regarding their respective spheres of influence in the gulf of Tadjoura and the Somali Coast in which it was stipulated that (i) the two governments would engage not to annex Harar, not to place it under their protectorate, and that in taking this engagement, the two governments were not renouncing the right of opposing attempts by any other power to acquire or assert any rights over Harar (Article 4); (ii) the caravan road from Zeila to Harar, by way of Gildessa, should remain open in its entire extent to the commerce of the two nations as well as to that of the natives;⁵¹ (b) British fear that such a concession to Italy might⁵² provoke hostilities with Ethiopia; (c) importance of Zeila to Britain's own interests in the gulf of Tadjoura, Aden, India and the Far East, and (d) fear of Italian intentions over Zeila. It was evident that the British Government was not at all favourably

51

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.35-39. See also pp.173-175.

52

F.O.403/221, "The permission of a foreign nation to make use of Zeila would provoke the hostility of Abyssinia, whose power at Harar is both feared and disliked by the tribes protected by us." See also 'La Politique Exterieur de l'Allemagne' (Documents Officiels), Vol.11, "L'etat de guerre n'existait pas entre l'Angleterre et l'Abyssinie, et le gouvernement anglais ne desirait nullement amener cet etat de guerre."p.44.

disposed to Italy's request, and Italy, given the staunch opposition it encountered from France in its advances in East Africa, was convinced that France would not permit Italy's forces to use Zeila. Bulow, reporting to his Minister of Foreign Affairs on January 23, 1896, had to communicate this revealing statement from Crispi:

J'ai parlé aujourd'hui avec M. Crispi et amené la conversation sur la question de Zeila et du Harrar; le President du Conseil a dit qu'il n'avait pas l'intention d'entrer a ce sujet en pourparlers avec la France, bien qu'on le lui eut conseillé du coté anglais. Il avait fait dire a Lord Salisbury, par le Général Ferrero, que l'Italie n'avait pas besoin pour des négociations avec la France d'une permission de l'Angleterre. En outre, ajouta M. Crispi, il avait l'impression que l'Italie, dans les petites comme dans les grandes question, n'obtiendrait jamais de concessions sérieuses de la France, aussi longtemps qu'elle resterait dans la Triple. 53

It was in the midst of this interplay of various European national interests in Africa and the intensive preparations of Italy that Menelik, after the failure of his extensive diplomatic dialogue, took the decision of safeguarding Ethiopia's independence and sovereignty through the instrumentality of war. On September 17, 1895 Menelik issued his famous war proclamation evoking, among others, the need to unite among Ethiopians in order to preserve the fatherland. A very forceful proclamation full of patriotic fervour, it read in part:

53 GDD., Vol.11, Bulow to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome, January 23, 1896, p.106.

Hitherto God has graciously preserved our native land. He has permitted us to conquer our enemies and reconstitute our Ethiopia.... An enemy is come across the sea. He has broken through our frontiers in order to destroy our fatherland and our faith. I allowed him to seize my possession, and I entered upon lengthy negotiations with him in hopes of obtaining justice without bloodshed. But the enemy refuses to listen. He continues to advance: he undermines our territories and our peoples like a mole. Enough! With the help of God I will defend the inheritance of my forefathers and drive back the invader by force of arms. 54

In December 1895 Italy had, as already indicated, suffered reverses at Amba Alage and Mekellé. As a result, the Crispi Government was further weakened and its downfall was imminent. On December 19, some days after the Italian disaster in the initial confrontation with Menelik's forces Crispi made an impassioned speech in the Italian Chamber denouncing General Baratieri for the Italian defeat and tried to absolve himself of any wrong doings as regards Italy's campaign in Ethiopia.

55

54

Guebre-Selassie, Tarike Zemene Dagmawi Menelik, Artistic Printing Press, Addis Ababa, 1959 (Ethiopian Calender) p.225; Guebre-Selassie, Chronique du Regne de Menelik II, Tome I, pp.373-374; Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, pp.126-127; Skinner, Abyssinia of Today, p.145-146; Le Roux, Menelik et Nous, p.231. The English version quoted above is a translation supplied by Berkeley from the French in Le Roux's Menelik et Nous. Both, however, do not give exact translations of the Amharic as furnished in Guebre-Selassie. For an Italian version, see Conti Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia, pp.175-176.

55

"My adversaries have thrown upon me the responsibility of the defeat of Amba-Alagi, with which I have had nothing to do. I should have liked our African policy to have been conducted otherwise. At the moment we were going to Assab and Massowah there was no clearly established object. I should have preferred to have seen more definite plans made in advance, and I expressed this view in 1882 with regard

In fact, this was not the case. A few months back Crispi was asserting the need to expand Italy's empire in Africa and was also eulogizing Baratieri on his achievements. In the sessions of the Chamber of Deputies held between July 19 and 22 Crispi, while revising the turn of events in Ethiopia, said: "L'Italie peut désormais disposer d'un territoire deux fois et demi grand comme ⁵⁶ la péninsule italienne," and addressing himself to the brilliant deeds of Baratieri he told him, "J'exulte d'avoir compte sur vous dans la sereine certitude de maintenir, toujours, partout, avec vos solides vertus militaire, l'intégrité des possession coloniales

to the invitation we received from England to help them in subduing Arabi Pasha. Since 1885 I have recognized the necessity of staying at Assab and Massowah, and of ameliorating our position there. I am accused of desiring the possession of an immense African Empire, but no one can prove that I have thought of embarking on such a an enterprise. When I came into office I changed none of the arrangements of my predecessor. It was not I who appointed General Baratieri, or who created him Governor of Erythrea. The battles of summer were not of my making. I confined myself to rejoicing with you over our victories. We asked General Baratieri what was necessary to assure the results of these victories. We gave him the greatest latitude. He alone knew the number of the enemy and their designs, and therefore he alone could state what sacrifices the situation required. You must not, therefore, condemn the Government, but the Generals. When I saw Baratieri and spoke to him, I imposed no plan upon him. I did not ask him to conquer Shoa, which would have been folly. He knew what he ought to confine himself, and, on this account, he limited his demands. In this the Government has been in no way responsible. The unfortunate occurrence at Amba-Alagi was not the fault of the Government, and I only heard of it at the same time as the Chamber. We will undertake no policy of expansion, and, for the moment, I will only ask for what is necessary to face events and to save the honour of our flag. In one word - neither cowardice nor imprudence ('...ne viltà ne imprudenza.')." F.O.403/221, *Precis of Signor Crispi's Speech in the Italian Chamber, December 19, 1895* (regarding the defeat of Baratieri at Amba Alage.)

56

Bourgin, "Francesco Crispi," in Les Politique d'Expansion Impérialiste, p.143.

de l'Italie en Afrique." ⁵⁷ As a shrewed politician, it was natural for Crispi not to have sided with a defeated Baratieri. According to Bourgin, only the deputy Torraca had some kind and encouraging words in the Chamber when the news of the defeat of Baratieri's ⁵⁸ forces at Amba Alage arrived in Rome two days later.

Strongly reprimanded by Parliament and the honour and dignity of Italy at stake Crispi was very wary lest the Generals in the field would bring about still much more humiliation if left unchecked. ⁵⁹ He therefore sent a telegramme to Baratieri advising prudence. However, there is every evidence that Crispi took this approach as a result of German pressure and not because he did not believe in the colonial war he was launching in Ethiopia. In a series of diplomatic correspondences between the German Ambassador and the Italian Foreign Minister we find, for instance, that Italy was too much worried about the deteriorating situation in Ethiopia and that as a result it was desperate in seeking Germany's support to counterbalance Franco-Russian efforts in Ethiopia. Because of its experience over the question of Zeila, Italy was also suspicious the the British Government might support the Franco-Russian alliance in Ethiopia.

57
Ibid

58
Ibid

59
Ibid

On January 3, 1895 Bulow wrote from Rome to his Foreign Minister: "Le Baron Blanc m'écrit aujourd'hui, jeudi matin: 'cher ami, Baratieri est en présence de la menace persistante d'une invasion abessinienne [sic], préparée comme nous le savons depuis plusieurs mois a Obock et a Djibouti, ou on attend maintenant le renfort de la mission russe, et ou l'alliance franco-russe semble avoir trouvé un terrain d'action faute de mieux.'" ⁶⁰ The same day the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs answered Bulow by saying that the rapprochement between England and Russia will not contribute to consolidate the relations between France and Russia for there are, he said, many questions over which Russia, France and England could not see each other eye to eye. What is more, he suggested, a change of Government was imminent in England and that in conformity with the rules of decent politics the other powers must abstain from making any trouble now. If, under the circumstances, "Baron Blanc finds the time opportune to enlarge the base of Italian operations in Eritrea, the Government of His Imperial Majesty would not, unfortunately, rally to this outlook." ⁶¹ This was enough indication to Italy that it was expected to exercise caution and prudence in its Ethiopian colonial adventure and that if it persisted in pursuing its own course, Germany was not prepared to be a partner in any contemplated alliance. It was the same day again that Bulow communicated his Government's views on the "Italian

60

GDD., Vol.9, Bulow to Foreign Office, Rome, January 3, 1895, p.280.

61

Ibid., The Secretary of State to Bulow, Berlin, January 3, 1895, p.281.

operations" in Eritrea to Blanc and obtained Italy's accession to German wishes. Blanc hastily responded: "...le General Baratieri avait recu l'ordre d'abstenir de toute action et de se borner a une défensive prudente." However, this was only a goodwill gesture of assuring Germany. Italy was strongly committed to achieve her objective of colonizing Ethiopia through war.

The Italian aggression, already unleashed some years back, was officially announced to the world at the beginning of 1896. On January 26, a royal decree proclaimed the state of war in Eritrea and the dependent territories. In the meantime, perhaps to buy time or to desuade Menelik from embarking on an all out war, Italy proposed renewed peace negotiations with him. Earlier, Baratieri was conducting separate negotiations with other Rases such as Mengesha of Tigre in the hope that their divided loyalty would weaken Menelik's position. However, when Menelik successfully rallied the support of almost every important leader in Ethiopia to his cause, Italy again sought to negotiate with him directly. The first of these attempts was undertaken through the intermediary of Ras Mekonnen. The last one was proposed directly to Menelik. The basis of the negotiations, as outlined to Baratieri on January 18, included that (a) Italy was still abiding by the interpretation of the Treaty of Wichalle, (b) that Menelik should recognize the

62

Ibid., Blanc to Bulow, January 3, 1895, pp. 281-282.

treaty, (c) that Menelik should agree not to cede territory to other European powers and (d) that Italy should be allowed to present Ethiopia at the Brussels Conference. ⁶³ Even though Crispi had pressed Baratieri for "un 'azione risolutiva" we find no instance indicating that these terms were offered to Menelik. In fact, we find that Baratieri's appraisal of the situation was correct. He wrote Crispi that he had no illusions that the Italian terms would be acceptable to Menelik even if he were defeated. He reiterated that to realize the Italian terms Italy must first occupy Addis Ababa, Menelik's ⁶⁴ capital city.

In the ensuing war Menelik's forces were gaining the upper hand in most fronts. On January 24, on the morrow of the Italian disaster at Amba Alage and Mekellé, General Ellena was ordered to join Baratieri's forces in order to reinforce his military ⁶⁵ capabilities. A month later, on February 20, the Italian War Ministry telegraphed Baratieri to enquire as to his war plans and to assure him that every necessary reinforcement would be given ⁶⁶ to him to fulfill such a plan. In fact, the next day - February

63

Doc.Dipl., No.XXIII, p.141; Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Avenimenti d'Africa*, Gennaio 1895-Marzo 1896, No.49.

64

Ibid., Nos.52, 78.

65

Baratieri, *Memorie d'Africa*, "...all'indomani di Amba Alagi... annunziando (24 gennaio) l'invio del generale Ellena...." pp.336-337.

66

Bourgin, "Francesco Crispi," in *Les Politiques d'Expansion Imperialiste*, p.149.

21 - the Council of Ministers had decided to send to Baratieri
⁶⁷
 12 additional battalions. Crispi was getting very impatient as
 a result of what he thought was footdragging by Baratieri in the
 war front. Baratieri's own arguments on how he wished to handle
 the war situation in Ethiopia lend credibility to what Crispi was
⁶⁸
 repeatedly alluding. In the face of mounting and successful
 assaults from the Ethiopian side and the drop in morale among
 Italian soldiers, the time factor was of the essence if Italy was
 to be on the winning side.

It was perhaps with this in mind that the same day, February
⁶⁹
 21, Baratieri was recalled and replaced by the more aggressive
⁷⁰
 Baldissera as Commander in Chief of the armed forces in Africa.
 At this point in time, Baratieri was a physically exhausted and
 morally battered general. Berkeley reveals Baratieri's frame of
 mind when he wrote: "It is probably owing to deficiency of reliable
 information as much as to several other causes, that during the
 last eight or ten days of February General Baratieri's orders are

 67

Ibid

68

See Baratieri's Memorie d'Africa.

69

Ibid., p.353.

70

Baratieri, however, was still in command and in the war front until
 Italy lost the war at Adwa on the 6th. of March. Baratieri says that
 nobody had an inkling of the instruction at the General Headquarters
 before March 5. Ibid., p.353.

those of a man who does not know his own mind; or we should perhaps say, of a man who knows his own mind but distrusts it, and has no longer the strength of character to follow, in the face of universal opposition, the course that he believes to be best." Bourgin says:⁷¹

"Le moral de ses troupes n'est pas bon, les vivres commencent a manquer, il est physiquement malade, et moralement frappé, il reste inerte des heures sous sa tente."⁷² Baratieri, it was felt in Rome, and especially by Crispi, should be urged to move fast and gain the war for Italy. Perhaps the most decisive instruction dispatched to Baratieri, and the one unanimously held by authorities in the field to have pressured him to advance prematurely towards his disaster, was the one he received from Crispi on February 25. Baratieri says that despite his recall of February 21 and replacement by Baldissera, he had received the following telegramme:

Codesta e una tisi militare non una guerra:
piccole scaramucce nelle quali ci troviamo
sempre inferiore di numero dinanzi il nemico;
sciupio di eroismo senza successo. Non ho
consigli da dare perché non sono sul luogo,
ma constato che la campagna e senza un
preconcetto e vorrei fosse stabilato. Siamo
pronti a qualunque sacrificio per salvare
l'onore dell'esercito ed il prestigio della
monarchia. 73

71
Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.254.

72
Bourgin, "Francesco Crispi," Les Politiques d'Expansion, p.149.

73
Baratieri, Memorie d'Africa, "This is a military phthisis not a war; small skirmishes in which we are always facing the enemy with

Berkeley, who generally is most inclined to justify the colonial war, also feels - like most writers in the field - that "this reproof ought not to have been sent off." He believes that it was not appropriate for Crispi to have interfered in such a manner at a critical point in the campaign. He said: "There was nothing definite in the telegram beyond the demand for a 'plan of campaign,' but its meaning was obvious. It meant 'I want you to do something active;' 'a military phthisis' was obviously directed at the inactivity of the army." Bourgin also affirms: "C'est ce telegramme, en tout cas, qui est la cause déterminante du désastre d'Adoua."

The content of the 'phthisis' telegramme of the 25th., Baratieri wrote, had for a moment upset his mind and awakened indignation and bitterness in his heart. On the night of the 28th.

inferior numbers; a waste of heroism, without any corresponding success. I have no advice to give you because I am not on the spot, but it is clear to me that there is no fundamental plan in this campaign, and I should like one to be formulated. We are ready for any sacrifice in order to save the honour of the army and the prestige of the monarchy." p.353.

74

Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.256.

75

"The reasons for his advance and the questions of responsibility for the great defeat at Adua are matters that have been and still are hotly debated by the protagonists of Crispi and Baratieri. Into the details we need not enter here, excepting to say that recent researchers have been favourable to Baratieri rather than to the Prime Minister. It seems not unlikely that the commander on the spot was goaded into action by the impatient and sarcastic telegrams that reached him from Rome." Bourgin, "Francesco Crispi," Les Politiques d'Expansion Impérialiste, p.149.

he convened in his tent a war council with his generals and all four, he reminisced in his memoir, reasoned in serene composure ("ragionando con calma serena") and expressed their opinion on the war operations.⁷⁷

The analysis offered by Baratieri regarding the discussions of the night of the 28th. inside the war council reveals the anguish and distress of a weakened and undecided commander. According to Baratieri, General Dabormida, a sensible and prudent man ("uomo assennato e prudente"), who only some days earlier was inclined to prefer retreat - when it was predicted that the outflanks of the Mereb river were threatend by Menelik - now suggested decisive action on the war front.⁷⁸ Albertone, Baratieri says, elaborated on how the enemy should be tackled from different fronts. In the final analysis, however, he too - Baratieri holds - associated himself with the general suggestions outlined by Dabormida.⁷⁹ General Arimondi, on the other hand, was - again according to Baratieri's account - very resolute and more determined than these other two generals. Baratieri wrote that

⁷⁶

Baratieri, Memorie d'Africa, "Ma il telegramma, se per un momento conturbo l'animo mio e mi desto in cuore sdegno ed amarezza...." p.354.

⁷⁷

Ibid., The date is mistakenly put as the 27th. in Baratieri's Memorie. Elsewhere it is correctly referred to as the 28th. p.363.

⁷⁸

Ibid., p.470. (General Ellena reports Dabormida to have said: "Retire never!")

⁷⁹

Ibid., p.364.

Arimondi strongly suggested that it was better to advance once the Italian units were effectively organized and coordinated for action. His reasons were, Baratieri said, that first, the number of the Ethiopian forces was exaggerated by the Information Service and secondly, the enemy was in discord and therefore hesitant and irresolute. He felt, as a result, it was unnecessary to wait for the enemy to attack first. General Ellena, it is to be remembered, was sent to the war front on January 24 at a time when Baratieri was thought by Rome to be too slow and indecisive to act. Baratieri chooses to show Ellena's stand through the latter's own sworn deposition to the tribunal at the time of Baratieri's court marshal in Asmara after his defeat at Adwa. Ellena, in accordance with the sworn statement he gave at the time, said he had urged Baratieri to "rally to the maximum the available force and then advance to seek the enemy." Baratieri adds another section of the sworn deposition by which Ellena sought to allude to Baratieri's indecisiveness: "General Baratieri closed the meeting with these words: 'the council is full of spirit, the enemy is brave (valiant) and contemptible of death. How is the morale of our soldiers?' 'Excellent,' replied all the commanders of the brigades." Ellena concluded that the meeting was closed with these words from Baratieri: "I am awaiting further

information from spies who ought to arrive from the enemy camp;
 when I have it I will take a decision."⁸¹

On the 29th. Baratieri decided to attack. Accordingly, at five
 in the afternoon he called the four brigade generals to give them
 oral and written instructions on the order of the forward advance
 and the plan of the attack.⁸²

As we are little concerned with the war itself than with the
 result of the war, the battle of March 1, although very important in
 the study of doctrines of strategy will not be discussed here in
 full. Only a very skeletal summary of what actually happened will
 be given in the following paragraphs.⁸³

⁸¹
 Ibid., "Radunare il massimo delle forze disponibili e poi andare
 a cercare il nemico." "Il generale Baratieri chiuse la riunione con
 queste parole: 'il consiglio e animoso, il nemico e valoroso e disprezza
 la morte; come'e il morale dei nostri soldati?' 'Eccellente' risposero
 tutti i comandanti di brigata. Allora fummo congedati con queste parole:
 'Attendo ulteriori informazioni da informatori che devono arrivare dal
 campo nemico: avutele, predero una decisione," p.365. Ellena's complete
 deposition is to be found pp.469-471.

⁸²
 In his most usual manner of commenting, Berkely said of the fateful
 decisions: "Had he been able to remain in his fortified position for
 another week, - perhaps even for another day, - Menelik might have been
 compelled to retire; possibly to disband his army; and in the course
 of years we should have seen the ancient empire of Ethiopia, ruled over
 by a set of vasaal Ras, gradually succumbing to the domination, and
 becoming imbued with the Latin civilization, of Italy. The warriors who
 fought at Adowa won a fresh lease of independence for their race, -
 whether this is a gain to the world and whether they or their descendants
 will take advantage of the chance thus obtained is a problem of the
 future. It may of course be possible, as a French writer has suggested,
 that they, with their Semitic blood, are destined to be the first of the
 African nations to make a successful revolt against domineering Europe;
 but if so, there still remains an enormous amount for them to learn."

⁸³
 Ibid., p.376; 471. For further insight into the meetings of February

The time span between the convening of the meeting with the four generals at five in the afternoon and the order to commence the march off the same evening was so decisive that it was kept secret from the army itself. Baratieri was fearful that the news of the Italian mobilization might reach Menelik. At 3.00 A.M. on the 29th., the Italian forces, their weapons gleaming against the beams of the early morning African moon and scenting the brisk freshness of the earth that was dampened by a storm a day earlier, were quietly and stealthily advancing towards Adwa - Menelik's war camp - a few miles away from Sauria, Baratieri's own war headquarters.

In the first hour of day break the Italian army was in position surrounding the environs of Adwa. At about the same time

28 and 29 refer also to Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia, pp.316-339.

84

An extensive literature is available concerning the Battle of Adwa. The following serve as useful references. Baratieri, Memorie d'Africa; Bellavita, Adua; Battaglia, Roberto, La Prima Guerra d'Africa; Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa and the Rise of Menelik; Caviglia, Field Marshall, "La Battaglia di Adua," Echi e Commenti; Corselli, General R., "La Battaglia di Adua secondo gli ultimi accertamenti," Rivista Militare Italiana, IV, March, 1930, pp.327-374; Ferrero, Guglielmo, "La Bataille d'Adoua." Europe, June 15, 1930, pp.163-210; Gaibi, A., La Guerra d'Africa, 1895-1896; Giglio, Vittorio, Le Guerre Coloniali d'Italia; Luzeux, General, Etudes Critiques sur la Guerre entre l'Italie et l'Abyssinie; Mondaini, Gennaro, "La Battaglia di Adua," Nuova Rivista Storia, [Special Issue on the Battle of Adwa], I, 2, December, 1897; Pellenc, Capitaine, Les Italiens en Afrique, 1880-1896; Pinci, Iginio, Francesco Crispi e la Campagna d'Africa; Pini, Cesare, G., Adua; Pollera, Alberto, La Battaglia di Adua; Rossini, Carlo Conti, Italia ed Etiopia dal Trattato d'Ucciali alla Battaglia di Adua; La Battaglia di Adua; Wylde, Abyssinia.

the Ethiopian army was alerted by night posts that the enemy was
 85
 now here.

How extraordinary must the scene have appeared during those grey hours before dawn amongst the irregular and crowded tents! Thousands of lean fierce-looking Ethiopians in the cloak of brilliant colours that they wear on a day of battle; riflemen, spearsmen from the hills, swordsmen buckling the curved blade on to their right side...; wild riders from the plains, azmari [ministrel], priests giving absolution, women and children even, and here and there some great feudal chief with black-leopard or lion skin on his horse, with gold embossed shield, silver bracelets and all the magnificence of barbarian war. The sun had not yet risen when they moved out across the fertile plain of Adowa. 86

In analyzing the strategy adopted by Menelik we realize the following salient points in his formulation of the pertinent decisions for the war with Italy.

1. Preliminary data for decision:

- (a) The Italian army was superior in arms;
- (b) The Italian army was relatively mobile;
- (c) The Italian army had food and medical supplies enough for a relatively longer period of time;
- (d) Morale was low in the Italian army command;
- (e) Italian army was unfamiliar with the terrain;
- (f) Italian anticipated strategy for attack was to direct the war from three or four different formations and possibly following the contours of valleys and or river terrains (see figures 6 & 7);
- (g) Ethiopian army morale was, at least initially, high;
- (h) The Ethiopian army was weary because of long preparations and march;

85

Wylde, Abyssinia, p.204.

86

Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.280.

- (i) Food provisions of the Ethiopian army were exhausted;
- (j) Diarrhea had broken among Ethiopian soldiers;
- (k) The rainy season was approaching.

2. Decisions on strategy:

- (a) Decisiveness on all fronts in the battlefield;
- (b) Minimize all possibilities of a long and detracted war;
- (c) Deploy army units on all strategically located mountains and hilltops overlooking the valleys and river terrains;
- (d) Especially, control all entrances from the valley and river terrains leading into Adwa;
- (e) Make maximum use of the numbers superiority over the Italian army.

The battle, as would be evidenced from the few books on the history of this confrontation, was marked for its total disorder, confusion and disorganization on the Italian side and relatively remarkable competence in military prowess on the Ethiopian front. General Baratieri was conducting the war from his base at Mount Eshasho (W on the map in figure 6). The four Italian brigades of Dabormida (right wing), Albertone (left wing), Arimondi (advance) and Ellena (reserve) were to converge at a point at Rebbi Arienni (X on the map) and make the forward thrust from there in their respective directions, presumably after appropriate instructions. Baratieri was at the command post by six. Albertone, however, for reasons yet fully unexplained by most critics of the battle, missed the point of rendezvous (X) and headed directly for his point of attack at Mount Enda Kidane Meheret (Z on the map), overlooking the valley and the entrance to Adwa (O on the map). The fact that Albertone had missed his point of contact at Rebbi Arienni had brought him far in advance

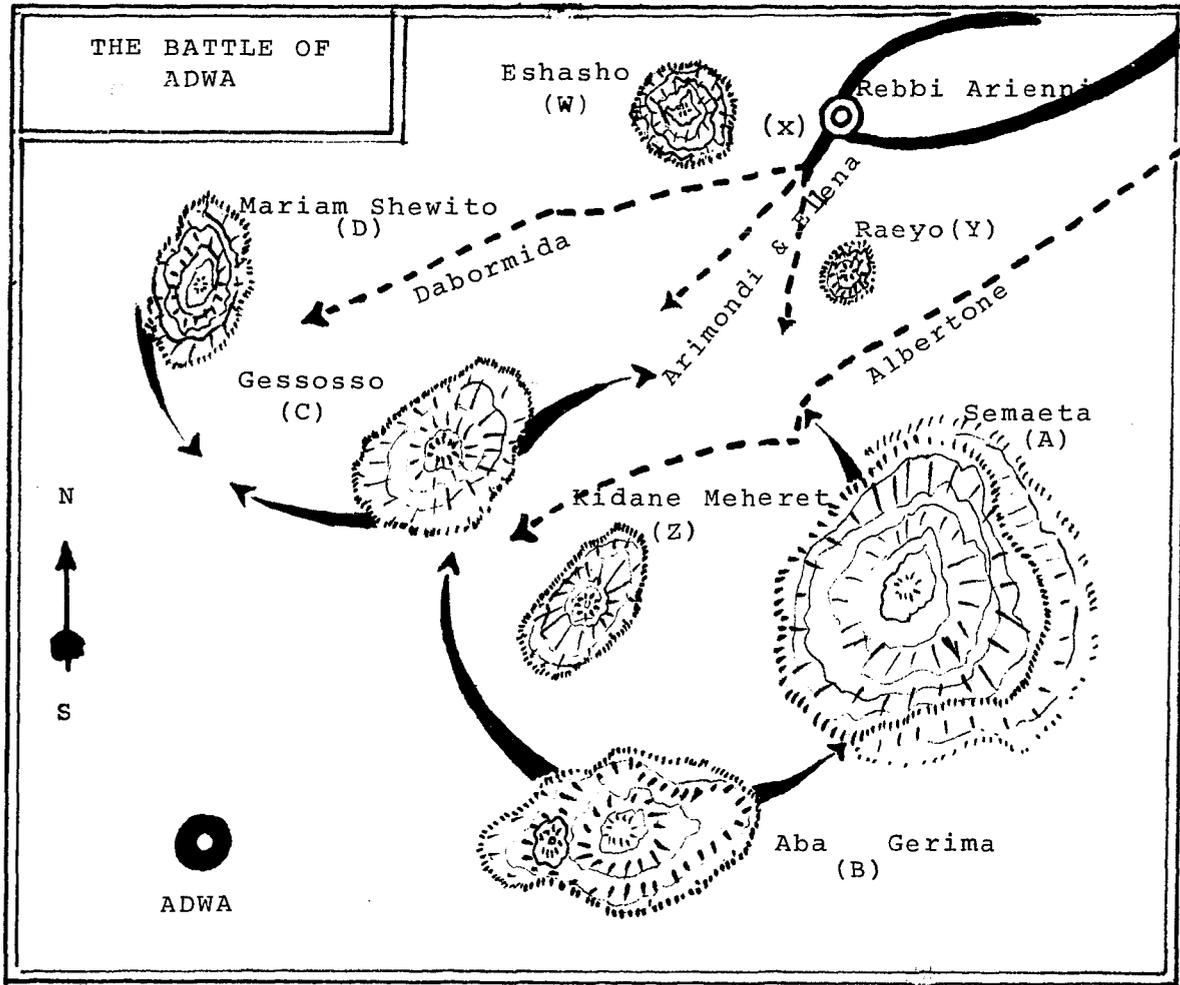


Fig. 6

of the rest of the three brigades and therefore found him totally isolated. We note from his memoirs that Baratieri was much worried for Dabormida than Albertone for he said he knew Dabormida was being faced with the ten to fifteen thousand strong army of Ras Mekonnen from Harar encamped at Mariam Shewito on the right (D on the map). For one full hour since the start of the battle he was therefore projecting his field glass to the right observing Dabormida's movements. Berkeley comments that Baratieri "appears to have imagined that Albertone had perhaps advanced a little beyond the line of defence, but he was confident of being able to find him when necessary." His assumption, however, was wrong. Albertone, already far out into the field was immediately engaged by the Ethiopian forces and encircled and trapped on all sides by the crescent military formation usually adopted by the Ethiopian war command in

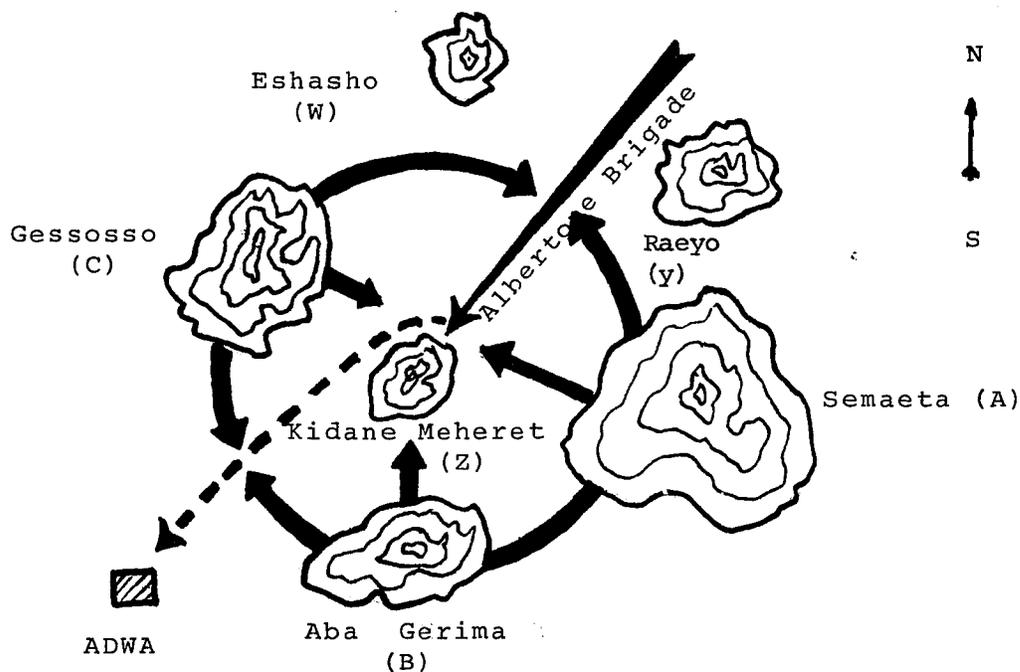


Fig. 7

87

similar battle confrontations.

Albertone's force, now at Enda Kidane Meheret (Z on the map in figure 7, page 400) to make the initial advance towards Adwa, was fired upon from the west on Mount Gessosso (C on the map), from the south on Mount Aba Gerima (B on the map) and from the east on Mount Semaeta (A on the map). At about eight, Baratieri was scanning the horizon from Mount Eshasho (W) with his telescope in search of Albertone's army, and to his surprise and disappointment he found that Albertone was fully engaged by the Ethiopian army in a position that was too difficult to defend and disastrous for a military combat. Knowing too well the situation he was now in, Albertone requested reinforcements from Baratieri in order to strengthen his position. However, this was rendered difficult by the earlier capture of the strategically placed Mount Gessosso (C) by the Ethiopian forces. This important Ethiopian move had at once circumvented both Dabormida's and Arimondi's movements on the west and north respectively thereby effectively cutting away support that could have reached from these two brigades to Albertone. At the same time, this Ethiopian move also reinforced the Ethiopian forces lodged at Mount Semaeta (A) in the east and Mount Aba Gerima (B) in the south thus making it possible to hammer at Albertone's own formation in unison. By the time Baratieri rushed south to observe the situation closely from a nearer post at Mount Raeyo (Y) "a sight met him which, he tells us, went to his heart, - namely, a long line of wounded and fugitives streaming back from Enda Kidane

88

Meret." Thus, isolated from the very beginning and completely cut off from the other brigades by the Ethiopian forces, Albertone lost a large part of his soldiers and was finally captured prisoner

89

together with his remaining men.

Led by General Dabormida, the Italian western wing was met with a similar fate. At Mariam Shewito (D on the map, p.399) he was similarly separately engaged by the forces of Ras Mekonnen and totally overwhelmed. His force was annihilated and he himself was killed in the battle field. The Ethiopian forces which had earlier encircled and defeated Albertone's wing in the east had advanced further north to meet Arimonde's brigade which was pushing its way to the south from a central position. "General Arimondi, with his brave Italian brigade, tried all he could to prevent the Abyssinians from making

88

Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.286.

89

Wylde, an authoritative writer on the battle records the following: "The battle was at first an artillery duel, the Italians doing great havoc with their mountain guns on the dense masses of Abyssinians before they deployed in skirmishing order to the attack. The Abyssinian quick-firing Hotchkiss guns soon arrived and took up a position on one of the lower slopes of Garima, from which point they were enabled to pour a plunging fire on the Italians. The moment they were into action they soon silenced Albertone's artillery, which was now short of ammunition, gun after gun becoming useless in succession, either by the death of the gunners or for want of more material to load them with. The enemy had now nearly encircled Albertone's position....At last the final rush was made and further resistance would have been madness, and could only have resulted in a butchery of the survivors and the wounded; so there was nothing left to do but surrendered, and save what few men that there were left alive. Thus at eleven o'clock, after expending all their artillery and nearly all their small-arm ammunition, and fighting for nearly five hours, the remnants of the left wing of the Italian force surrendered to the Abyssinian King." Wylde, Modern Abyssinia, p.207.

their onward advance, but he was shortly outnumbered and had to retire fighting every yard of ground. He fell at the head of his troops.⁹⁰"

By eleven o'clock General Baratieri had left the battle field to retreat to the north knowing very well that what had already happened to Albertone, Dabormida and Albertone could also certainly hold true to General Ellena, head of the remaining reserve brigade. A part of Ellen's forces made it to safety without being captured. Wyld's picture of the final phase of the Italian disaster is perhaps the most telling and descriptive than most have attempted to portray the closing stages of the battle.

In the midst of this general disaster, or whatever one could call it, there was now no semblance of real order left, there were many instances of individual gallantry. At many points on the line of retreat officers and men turned and attempted to hold on the road, freely sacrificing themselves with splendid courage in the attempt to cover the retreat of their comrades. On these human barriers the Abyssinians came down like the spates in their own mountain rivers, sweeping all before them....On getting over the pass the Italians lost all formation, and the army melted away in a fan-shaped formation extending in a half circle from the Adigrat to Hausen road, followed by the Abyssinians who chased the fugitives to Entiscio Camp, which also fell into their hands....So ended the day's fight, which was spread over a very large area of the country, all favouring the tactics of the defenders of their country and ending so disastrously for Italy....The disaster was a terrible one, but it might have been greater. 91

90

Ibid., p.208.

91

Ibid., pp.208-211.

Baratier lost about six to seven thousand men in the field, about two thousand others were wounded and some four thousand, including many officers and a general, were captured prisoners, bringing the total number of the defeated Italian army 12 to 13,000. If Baratier's own figure of 17,700 was to be accepted as the actual number of fighting men Italy deployed in the battlefield, then the casualties and reverses, which amount from 70 to 73 percent, are tremendous indeed. The Ethiopian gain in war matériels also included "the whole of the Italian artillery, some sixty-five cannon, about 11,000 rifles (nearly all the Italians had thrown their arms away in the flight), all the commissariat and transport that was on the field...." On the Ethiopian side, there were roughly 5 to 6,000 killed and about 8,000 to 10,000 wounded. If the commonly referred to figure of 80,000 was to be accepted as having constituted Menelik's army at Adwa, we will find that 15 to 17 percent of the Ethiopian fighting men were actually affected.

In Rome, the outbreak of the story of the defeat of Italy at Adwa was received with great shock and indignation. The very first

92

Ibid., p.212.

93

Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.348; Wylde, Abyssinia, p.212.

94

For the numbers on the dead, those taken prisoners: consult, Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa; Conti Rossini, Italia ed Etiopia; Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik; Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism; Luzeux, Etudes Critiques; Wylde, Abyssinia.

sketchy news of the Italian debacle in Ethiopia arrived in Rome at 2.00 in the afternoon on the 2nd. of March. It was made public in a form of a communique the next day. For Crispi, the whole panorama was unmistakably clear. He had immediately proposed to resign. On March 5 the Italian Parliament convened to consider the crisis and it was amidst this national uproar and depression that the Italian legislature accepted with cheers Crispi's submission of his resignation.

In order to avoid confrontation with the huge and surging crowd in the streets and piazzas Crispi and his cabinet members had earlier made their way to the Parliament surreptitiously by way of unsuspected routes.

...the huge crowds that thronged the streets shout[ed] "Abbasso Crispi" "Viva dall'Africa" and occasionally even "Viva Menelik." The Quirinal and the foreign embassies as well as government buildings were guarded by troops and shops closed down, because the restless mob was in an ominous frame of mind. Despite the pouring rain the police were unable to clear the most important squares and thoroughfares. 96

Crispi was never to see his dream come true. Remorseful but still unrepentant, morally low and defeated but yet obsessed with strong feelings of vengeance and proud of his past achievements, pleaded before his colleagues and successors to save the grave

situation under which Italy found herself. On June 18 he took the rostrum to ask of the deeply divided parliament for compassion and courage to work ever more for the unity of Italy. He said:

Dans les trente-huit années de ma vie parlementaire, jamais je ne me suis trouvé dans une condition morale aussi triste qu'a l'heure présente. L'Italie est en deuil. Elle aurait besoin d'hommes qui sauraient la relever de l'humiliation dans laquelle elle est tombée. ...Faisons en sorte que les passions ne troublent plus jamais les conditions de choses présentes. Le moment est grave, ne le rendons pas plus grave par notre faute. Cherchons au contraire à faire tout en sorte que l'Italie puisse sortir de la difficulté présente et que cette triste période de l'histoire nationale puisse être oubliée. 96

Crispi spent five more years in obscurity and died on August 11, 1901. Among his papers was a draft of an interesting letter which he had addressed to King Humbert. Full of bitterness and remorse for an unaccomplished past, Crispi forcefully advised the King:

Sire, Vengez l'armée dont vous êtes le Chef. Si l'outrage abyssin restait sans vengeance, le courage et l'héroïsme seraient morts pour nous, et vous auriez sous vos ordres des troupeaux de moutons, et non des légions de soldats, des animaux qui se laissent égorger, et non des preux qui savent combattre et vaincre... Ménelik n'est pas invincible. Il se croit invincible parce qu'on a proclamé dans les journaux et au Parlement que le Gouvernement de V.M. ne veut pas le combattre. ...Changez de politique, Majesté. Il y a remède à tout, et, à condition que vous le vouliez, des millions de bras se lèveront autour de vous, pour punir une barbarie qui n'a pas le droit d'exister

et qui est une véritable insulte a la civilisation.
 J'espere que ma lettre agira sur votre Voer. De
 toute facon, si mes paroles ne sont pas écoutées,
 j'ai conscience d'avoir fait mon devoir en rappelant
 a V.M. ce que je crois etre le devoir d'un Roi et
 d'un Soldat. 97

Baratieri's end was much more bitter. Having disastrously failed to accomplish Italy's colonial dream and Crispi's brain child, he was now held accountable for the shame and indignity of Italy. On March 21, a mandate was issued out for his arrest and on June 14 was brought before a military tribunal in Asmara which was presided by Lieutenant-General Del Maino. To Wylde, "there was nothing of interest at Asmara during General Baratieri's trial" for , he says, everyone knew that the court of inquiry set up by Rome would in any case end up without giving any solution to the Italian dilemma for the defeat at Adwa. "It was useless," he wrote, "thinking that the details of the reason why the forward march to Adowa from Entisico was made, would be given to the public. If the truth had been wanted to be known, the trial ought to have taken place in Italy, and not in Erithrea." 98

All told, the causes of defeat by Italy were several. Some were political and some others economic. The main causes, however, were military. Here are two views as supplied by two prominent critics of the battle. According to Berkeley, "the causes that led to the future disasters of Italy may be comprehensively summed up

97

Bourgin, "Francesco Crispi, in Les Politiques d'Expansion Impérialiste, p.152. (Emphasis is mine.)

98

Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.122.

99

under the following headings:"

1. Lack of money;
2. The universal failure to understand the power of Menelik;
3. Too great reliance on the negotiations with Ras Mekonnen and through him with Menelik;
4. The over-confidence of Baratieri.

Later on, however, Baratieri himself was to concede, according to Berkeley, that his assumptions were wrong. Berkeley quotes an opinion expressed by Baratieri in his memoirs wherein he says: "Nobody then (i.e. about January 29th., 1896) thought it probable (and to those who know Abyssinia even superficially it is still a miracle) that so great a mass of men, such a number of different contingents, and such a mixture of hotblooded feudal spirits could maintain themselves together for so long, and in territories like those they occupied." Berkeley's own observation of Menelik's capability as a military leader, however, best explains, to some extent, the factors which contributed to Baratieri's defeat. Berkeley affirmed: "Never, probably, in the history of the world has there been so curious an instance of a commander successfully concealing the numbers of his army, and masking his advance behind a complete network of insinuation, false information and circumstantial deceptions."

99

Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.122.

100

Ibid., p.228; Baratieri, Memorie d'Africa, p.319.

101

Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, p.124.

According to Wylde the defeat of General Baratieri is attributable to the lack of military tactics and strategy. He cites the following crucial points for the Italian disaster at Adwa:

1. Baratieri's artillery was not powerful;
2. Baratieri did not have long range guns;
3. Baratieri did not have enough machine and quick-firing guns;
4. Baratieri advanced without proper depots;
5. Mountain passes on the road were not properly guarded;
6. There was shortage of ammunition; *
7. Conflict between civilian and military commands. *
8. Faults in strategic advances. **
9. Defective intelligence.

To Wylde, the principal cause for the defeat of Italian forces at Adwa, however, revolved around the final hasty withdrawal of the

102

Wylde, Abyssinia, see for points 1 to 6 in pp.120-121. Points 7 to 9 are discussed in pp.217-219.

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Ibid., "The real cause of the Italian defeat was, that General Baratieri was tied to the telegraph station and sacrificed his military duty, and most likely his better judgment for what might be called an electioneering cry to please his superiors in Italy, and foolishly obeyed what they telegraphed him." p.217.

**

Ibid., "I think that all the Abyssinian leaders were unanimous in the opinion that the Italians would have been perfectly safe had they remained at their position round Entiscio...." p.218. For a detailed study of the causes of Italian defeat, which he attributes to a special weakness in military tactics see pp.196-225. Even to this day, elderly people who recount the stories told at the time about the battle say that it was God's will which urged the Italians to descend on to the plains of Adwa to meet their utter collapse. The fact that the battle was won on the day commemorating St. George is mentioned as being a sign of divine good will in support of Ethiopia.

103

forces of Generals Ellena and Baratieri from the battle front.

It is also true that the economic factor had contributed to Italy's defeat at Adwa. By the close of 1900 Italy's economy was so weak that several governments were not able to cope up with the situation effectively. ¹⁰⁴ Wylde strongly believes that the extension of the war far beyond the River Mereb by Italy after the capture of Asmara and Keren by General Baldissera in December 1889 and of Adwa by General Orero in 1890 was the commencement of "the troubles of Italy in Abyssinia." He maintains that "they [Italians] were perfectly capable of warding off any attack made by the rulers of Tigré, but not strong enough as regard finances to cope with a united Abyssinia." ¹⁰⁵ This economic incapability was also made amply clear when Rudini, following his succession to the Crispi Cabinet,

103

Given the military balance on the battle ground at the time the researches for this paper have not revealed any other alternative than the one Baratieri chose to undertake. "So ended the day's fight," Wylde writes, "which was spread over a large area of the country, all favouring the tactics of the defenders of their country and ending so disastrously for Italy. Nearly half of her troops were never in proper battle array, and the three hours halt of reserves with General Ellena and General Baratieri will always be to me the principal cause of the disaster. I rode over the ground so many times and I know the country so well that I have a right to speak on the subject, and I have no hesitation in saying that the Italians owed the magnitude of their defeat entirely to the fault of General Baratieri." Wylde, Abyssinia, p.210.

104

Glanville, Italy's Relations with England, 1896-1905, p.21 ff; Castonnet des Fosses, in L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, advances a grim and perhaps somewhat biased view of the economic, political and over all situation in Italy after Adwa, pp.376-383.

105

Wylde, Abyssinia, p.50.

strongly emphasized that this was not a war into which Italy should first of all have been drawn into. In a letter dated November 3, 1896, the German Ambassador in Rome reported to his Government:

"Mr. di Rudini has confidentially told me that he prefers to
 *
 completely retreat from Africa. Italy was very poor and very weak
 106
 to embark on a colonial war." Castonnet des Fosses, the French
 historian, sums up the situation this way: "Ils feraient bien de
 se rappeler ce que disait, en 1882, M. Visconti-Venosta, lorsqu'il
 était question de la Tunisie: 'L'Italie est trop pauvre pour se
 payer le luxe d'une colonie.' Ce conseil est plus vrai que jamais."
 107

The reaction both in Italy and Europe to Baratieri's defeat was, at once, one of shock and disbelief. What exacerbated the magnitude of this sense of shock and disbelief was the fact that, primarily, the scene where this greatest of humiliations that befell Italy was staged inside Africa. In his last letter to his defeated King, Crispi's remorseful advice was, "there is remedy to everything, and if you should wish it, millions of hands will rise around you to punish a barbarism which has no right to exist and which is a real
 108
 insult to civilization."

*
 Wilhelm II, on reading the report, had remarked at this point on the document "Yes."

106
 GDD., Vol.12, No.3009, pp.207-208.

107
 Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, p.388.

108
 Bourgin, "Francesco Crispi," Les Politiques d'Expansion Imperialiste, p.152.

The week Crispi resigned the mood in Italy was one of anger and humiliation. The immediate reaction to the blow received in Africa was displayed in various forms. The most visible and conspicuous form of this reaction was what actually took place in the streets and squares of Italy. In a portrayal descriptive of the situation, Langer writes.

Not only in Rome, but in Naples and especially in the Lombard towns serious disturbances broke out. Ministerial newspapers were burned in great bonfires, railroad tracks were torn up to prevent the departure of troops for Africa, stones were thrown at the police and in some instances it became necessary for the cavalry to charge the mob. Italy had clearly entered upon a great and serious crisis. All the pent-up discontent with the government, with the dictatorial methods of Crispi, with the policy of colonial adventure found an outlet in the hour of national grief. It was to be years before the situation in Italy became stabilized, years before Italy was prepared once more to play a really independent role in international affairs. 109

Apart from the political setback and the national economic collapse after Adwa the other important element which most aggravated the situation was the human factor. According to Wylde the "African colonisation [was] most unpopular in Italy, by the reason of so many thousands of families having to mourn the loss of their relations and friends killed in the country."¹¹⁰

Rudini's own point of view, after taking over from Crispi, was clear. He had considered Crispi's bold adventures in Ethiopia inimical

109

Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.281.

110

Wylde, Abyssinia, p.60.

to Italy's interest. In a report of March 13, 1896 to his Foreign Minister, the French Ambassador in Rome conveyed this same attitude as having been espoused by Rudini in a meeting a day earlier. The French Ambassador remarked in his report that the new Italian Prime Minister emphasized to him during their conversation that he (the Italian Premier) had always been against the "African conquest" and that he had always considered such conquests as being without interest for the future and representing danger to Italy.¹¹¹

In Europe, reactions were more or less unanimous. The Italian defeat was accepted grimly. It had heralded to those powers involved in Africa that their interest was now at stake. Immediately after the defeat of Italy its role as a balancer in European affairs was so diminished that some of its intimate political allies were now willing to reconsider their ties of yesteryears. Glanville, in his critical study of British-Italian relations between 1896 and 1905, found British opinion "pessimistic in the extreme, both with respect to Italy's future and to her value as an ally. Such impressions tended to be deepened by the disorder and tumult that disturbed Italian life from 1896-1900."¹¹² Glanville's statement becomes even more telling of British attitude when he dwells on the official British reactions to Italy's new found posture of weakness. He wrote: "Lord Salisbury reflected the natural impressions of an observer of these events and of his experience with Italy's statesmen. He had no confidence in

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DDF., Billot to Berthelot, Rome, March 13, 1896, Vol. 12, 1st. ser., No. 321, p. 491.

¹¹²

Glanville, Italy's Relations with England, 1896-1905, p. 30.

Crispi....He thought the Italians were 'sturdy beggars' and regretted that Austria-Hungary had been weakened by the creation of united Italy. [Italy] to him was a 'quantité négligeable.'¹¹³ British opinion about domestic conditions in Italy at the time is best summarized by a remark in the Saturday Review [London]: "Italy has been bled to death by a corrupt bureaucracy, and the heavy expenses of an utterly unnecessary army and navy are wrung from the half-starved masses....She was better off in the old days of ~~Papa~~ rule or even of King Bamba. At least men then had bread."¹¹⁴

Disturbed and shaken by Italy's defeat in Ethiopia, Germany was pressing hard on Britain asking it to lend moral support to Rome instead of embarking on a deliberate policy of drifting away from its support as a result of Italy's misfortunes in Africa.¹¹⁵ The nervous mood in Berlin was beautifully captured by the French Ambassador's report of March 5, 1896 to his Foreign Minister. After his formal statement that Wilhelm II had been to the Italian Embassy to present his condolence to Count Lanza, the French Ambassador inserted this sarcastic anecdote:

He [Wilhelm] was sad and in low spirits. Two hours later he was at the British Embassy, announcedly for tea. Having arrived at nine o'clock, in full humour, he requested to be ushered to the Ambassador's office, made a speech of more than two hours on the policy

113

Ibid., p.31.

114

'Saturday Review,' LXXXV (1898), p.649.

115

For such concerted pressures from Germany and Hungary see DDF., 1st.ser., Vol.12, Nos.317 & 384, p.317 & p.592.

Her Majesty's Government should follow, and it was only around midnight that he learned that Lady Lascelles awaited him for tea. 116

Once installed as Prime Minister, one of the first steps taken by Rudini was the denunciation of Crispi's colonial policy. In a French diplomatic note dispatched at the time from Rome we find the above Italian Government stand clearly stated. The note said, "M. le Marquis de Rudini n'a pas cessé d'être contraire à la conquête africaine, qu'il a toujours considérée comme onéreuse, sans intérêt pour l'avenir et pleine de dangers." In a further analysis of Rudini's immediate preoccupation, the diplomatic note further states: "Il juge avec une extrême sévérité le développement que son prédécesseur a donné à l'entreprise, l'imprévoyance avec laquelle les opérations militaires ont été conduites et dont le désastre d'Adoua devait être la conséquence fatale." 117

For a new administration just taking over the machinery of government from another one whose colonial policy had ended up in defeat and bankruptcy, the reaction is an expected one. In an attempt to embark upon a positive programme which was supposed to pull out the country from its shock and the political quagmire, "Rudini was anxious to discredit Crispi...and end Italy's connection 118

116

Ibid., Montebello to Barthelot, March 9, 1896, No. 317, Note 2, p. 482.

117

Ibid., No. 321, p. 491.

118

Ibid

119
with Africa." He therefore issued four important pamphlets from
official documents dealing with the fiasco of the Adwa campaign.¹²⁰
As a preliminary stage, in order to instill confidence in his cabinet,
he adopted a policy which affirmed that Adwa should be the dividing
line between Italy's past colonial adventures and its future political
vision and realism. His disengagement policy as a colonial power in
Africa was to be tested with the two strongholds at Kessela and some
parts in Tigré.¹²¹ According to Langer, Rudini's position on the whole
issue was clear:

The new cabinet, constituted by Marchese di Rudini on March 10, immediately took up the negotiations for peace with Menelik which had already been opened at Crispi's behest. Rudini had always been an opponent of the Abyssinian enterprise. Looking back years later he confessed that the Italians had, in his opinion, gone to Massowa with no serious purpose and without realizing the difficulties. They had simply gone in order to keep up with the expansion of the other powers, 'in a spirit of imitation, a desire for sport, and for pure snobism.' He doubted whether even the government at the time knew what it was aiming at. Had he had his own way in 1896 he would probably have withdrawn even from Eritrea....The King himself was anxious to make good the Italian defeat by a new campaign against Menelik. That was out of the question,

119

Glanville, Italy's Relations with England, 1896-1905, p.43.

120

See DD., (i) No.91, 'Avvenimenti d'Africa,' (Gennaio 1895-Marzo 1896), 1896; (ii) No.92, 'Avvenimenti d'Africa,' (Gennaio 1895-Marzo 1896), 1896; (iii) No.93, 'Avvenimenti d'Africa,' (Marzo-Aprile 1896), 1896; (iv) No.94, 'Amba Alagi' (Macallé), 1896.

121

For a detailed analysis of the Rudini disengagement policy see Glanville, Italy's Relations with England, 1896-1905, pp.41-50.

but the government decided to hold Eritrea, while offering to Menelik the abandonment of all claims to Tigré and the abrogation of the whole Uccialli Treaty. 122

Many Italian families were affected by the defeat at Adwa. any peace negotiations for Rudini, therefore, would have to consider the release of prisoners of war if it were to have the support of the Italian people. In order to gain the release of prisoners, Rudini's accomodation to Menelik was such that at times it verged on
123
a desperate plea for moderation.

By all accounts, Menelik's position on the release of prisoners and the over all consideration of a peace treaty was relatively lenient. The price he asked for the attainment of such a negotiated peace was the recognition and the guaranteeing of the independence and sovereignty of Ethiopia. At the time of the commencement of the peace negotiations, Menelik had written a letter to Wilhelm of Germany in which he specified his demands. The German Emperor had passed the letter over to the Italian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister through his Chargé d'Affaires in Rome. Both Ministers were struck by Menelik's firm demand regarding the recognition and guaranteeing of Ethiopia's independence. Commenting afterwards on the content of the letter, Rudini said that it was a

122

Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.291. See also A. di Rudini, 'L'Egitto Moderno,' Nuova Antologia, May 16,1908, pp.193-224; 'Times,' March 4-5.

123

Conte de Puckler to Prince de Hohenlohe, Rome, September 11,1896: "Meme le prétendu désir de Menelik de posséder au bas de l'instrument de paix la signature du roi Humbert ne constituera pas, selon l'opinion du Président du Conseil, un obstacle et le Général Valles, qui doit partir le 23 courant, sera muni de pouvoirs étendus meme dans ce sens." Vol.12, No.2963, p.147.

"historic exposé on which Menelik is very exact!...But my remark about it is that the Negus has no worry other than his independence. He will have it." According to Menelik's proposition, he said, there will be no question that Ethiopia's independence will figure first.¹²⁴ Rudini had clearly understood that the prisoners' issue could not be quickly resolved unless he had first conceded to the recognition of Ethiopia's independence.

It was only in this sense, therefore, that Menelik had in any manner subordinated the question of the release of the Italian prisoners.¹²⁵ Otherwise, as Castonnet des Fosses had to say, instead of indulging in excesses because of his success, Menelik had in fact shown ample leniency and moderation on the issue.¹²⁶

The question of the treatment of prisoners by Menelik is extensively analyzed by many authorities who have closely studied the Battle of Adwa and its aftermath. Many, among these analysts, laud Menelik as a sympathetic monarch who never rejoiced on the misfortunes of the vanquished. In fact, his acts of generosity and compassion have rendered him the image of a sad person than a jubilant warrior who rejoiced over his war exploits.¹²⁷ No doubt, atrocities were unavoidable

¹²⁴

Ibid

¹²⁵

Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, p.385.

¹²⁶

Ibid., "Il faut reconnaître que Menelik, au lieu de se laisser grisser par ses succès, a montré la plus grande modération." p.386.

¹²⁷

Mèrab, Impressions d'Ethiopie, Tome II, "Menelik les traita comme des héros frappés par l'infortune." p.39.

when emotion laden armies marched over the corps of thousands dead and dying compatriots. The scene at the battle field, by all standards, was overwhelming. Nevertheless, Menelik had neither permitted or tolerated the slaughter of prisoners of war in cold blood nor had he formulated a policy of systematic executions to avenge his dead.

According to Hugues le Roux, the prisoners of Adwa were treated without hatred by these "campagnards Africains."¹²⁸ Wylde, who made an extensive interview of both Italian prisoners and their captors states that "the prisoners had on the whole been treated kindly, much better than they had expected, but some had been struck and beaten by the Abyssinian soldiers, which was not to be wondered at, but I heard of no right down cruelty being perpetrated."¹²⁹ At a different stage in his interview, Wylde comments: "I had a long talk to a good many of the prisoners,¹³⁰ and they were as well treated as they could expect to be." Castonnet des Fosses holds that "contrary to what had been said and written, the Italian prisoners have never been maltreated in Ethiopia. A good number among them had even demanded to stay there. King Menelik, whom Monsieur Crispi and his friends would

128

Hugues le Roux, Menelik et Nous, p.240.

129

Wylde, Abyssinia, p.213.

130

Ibid., p.402.

like to represent as a barbarian, has given a lesson to the
civilized world on being humane." ¹³¹ Gleichen, member of the Rodd
mission which visited Ethiopia after Adwa and an eyewitness who
had met some of the prisoners, repeats the same impression imparted
by other eyewitnesses on the subject. He wrote: "On arrival at
Addis Ababa the Italians appear to have been wonderfully well treated,
and the attitude of the king afforded no grounds of complaint for
future recriminations on this score. He wished to treat them as
would a civilized monarch, and he appears to have succeeded very
well." ¹³² Gleichen, as does Mérab, says that Menelik "even gave them
money...and held all the inhabitants in whose houses they were
billeted responsible for the safety and well-being of their guests-
of-war." ¹³³

One of the captive prisoners of war, General Albertone,
testified after release to the good treatment he and his soldiers
were accorded in Ethiopia and spoke glowingly about the magnanimous
generosity of Menelik. In a report gathered from General Albertone
and other Italian prisoners of war after their release at Zeila, we
observe the following: "Of King Menelik himself and his treatment

131

Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, p.387.

132

Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, pp.25-26; 207-208.

133

Ibid.; See also 'General Report on Abyssinia,' 1896, p.34. Mérab
writes. "Il leur payait un thaler par jour quand ils voulaient bien
travailler a la maconnerie," p.39.

of the prisoners who were more immediately within his observation, General Albertone spoke very highly." The report adds, "General Albertone was particularly struck with the courteous way he was treated by the King whilst in captivity, and the respect the King paid to the feelings of his prisoners."¹³⁴

Morié recounts an episode which touches upon the humane aspect of the prisoner question. He says that someone had told Emperor Menelik of a letter a mother had written to an Italian prisoner of war. The mother had lamented in the letter: "They tell me of your death, but I do not believe it. Every day I light a candle in front of the Madonna who will some day bring you back to my embrace. I cry to her every day while awaiting your return." Menelik gave orders to seek the prisoner in the fields and to fetch him to the palace. When the prisoner was brought before him, he told him: "As of the moment your mother invoked the name of the Virgin Mary, I would not wish her prayer to rest unanswered. As of now you are a free man. You will return to Italy with the first travellers who will embark for the sea coast." After verifying the story in Addis Ababa in 1909, Mérab says, he had found the story¹³⁵ to be true and authentic.

¹³⁴

F.O.403/255, Lt. Colonel Sadler to Brigadier General Cunningham, May 8, 1897.

¹³⁵

Mérab, Impressions d'Ethiopie, p.39. For details regarding the prisoners' question see, among others, Berkeley, The Campaign of Adowa, pp.217-220; 346-351; 355-357; Vitalien, Pour l'Indépendance de l'Ethiopie, p.11; 17-18; Work, Ethiopia, a Pawn in European Diplomacy, pp.275-279; 282; Rodd, Memories, 2nd.

The conduct and overall behaviour of the Italian prisoners, on the contrary, was a topic of controversy among the critics who dwelt on the issue. The contention was that some of the prisoners were misbehaving in a most crude manner in return for leniency by Menelik. Some writers felt that the contrast between this European impropriety and the largesse displayed by a country some Europeans chose to consider "barbarian" was indeed an insult to Italy in particular and Western civilization in general. Partly as a result of this misbehaviour by the Italian prisoners, some of the critics and politicians of the time contend, Europe's prestige in Ethiopia had suffered greatly.

For instance, the fact that he was not initially well-received on his arrival in Addis Ababa was attributed by Rodd, the envoy who led the first British mission to Menelik in 1897, to the decline in prestige of the European countries in the eyes of the Ethiopians. Displeased by the simple welcome ceremony Rodd had in fact reported back to London that in addition to the natural pride Ethiopians had acquired from their victory at Adwa the conduct of the Italian prisoners had immensely damaged European image in Ethiopia. In a subsequent report regarding his mission in Ethiopia, Rodd maintained that "the deplorable behaviour of the Italian prisoners [has]

ser., pp.126 ff; 128-129; 134; 158; Pigli, L'Etiopia Nella Politica Europea, p.226; Mérab, Impressions d'Ethiopie, Tome II, p.39; Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, pp.247-248; Wylde, Abyssinia, pp.110; 212-213; 402-403; Castonnet des Fosses, Les Italiens et l'Abyssinie, pp.4-6; Hugues le Roux, Menelik et Nous, p.240.

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represented the Europeans here in the most unfortunate light."

Rodd himself was instructed to "do everything in his power" to hasten the release of the few remaining Italian prisoners while conducting discussions with Menelik. In gratitude - as the prisoners' issue was the main preoccupation of the Rudini Government - Signor Visconti Venosta, the Italian Foreign Minister, wrote to the British Ambassador in Rome: "I am really obliged by your courteous letter of the 3rd. inst., and for the kind thought which prompted it." This is in regard to a letter dealing with the above mentioned instruction to Rodd by Salisbury. Signor Venosta remarked: "The King's Government would be grateful to Her Majesty's Government for whatever Mr. Rodd might have occasion to do to the advantage of our soldiers, who, although free from the time of the ratification of the Treaty of Peace with Abyssinia in December last, might still find themselves in Shoa on the arrival of the British Mission."

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"In a previous despatch I have alluded to the decrease of European prestige in this country, which recent events have rendered more or less inevitable. From what I have learned from a fairly impartial authority it would appear that this has been caused not so much by actual defeat of the Italians...as by the deplorable behaviour of the Italian prisoners, who have represented the Europeans here in the most unfortunate light. The men are said to have at once turned on their officers, treating them with every form of contumely. The officers, perforce abandoning any attempt at maintaining discipline, kept aloof from the men, and although General Albertoni made several attempts to reestablish a better state of things his efforts were of no avail. The men lost all sense of dignity, and the irregularity of their conduct became a scandal even in Abyssinia. The Emperor, however, who is extremely sensitive to the opinion of Europe, refused to take any retaliatory steps for fear his action might be misrepresented, and went even further, proclaiming that if any disputes arose between the Italians and the natives, whatever were the rights of the case, the native would be considered in fault and punished accordingly.

Domestically, important as the question of prisoners was to any peace terms Rudini was to come up with, he sought to involve other European powers friendly to Menelik in some form of persuasion and mediation. The difficulties, however, were multiple. France was considered a war ally of Menelik and Russia was suspected of advancing its own pretensions in Ethiopia. Britain, on the other hand, was taken to be without influence in the court of Menelik. That Russia was approached by Rudini we learn from Prince Lobanow who confirmed that his country was in fact asked to mediate. The German Ambassador's note from Rome to his government clearly demonstrates the ambivalence of the Rudini cabinet on this particular point.

Le Gouvernement italien ne savait pas comment liberer les 1500 a 2000 italiens que Menelik trainait avec lui. Il avait songé, declare le Marquis de Rudini de sa propre initiative, a faire appel a la médiation d'une puissance étrangere. Mais l'Italie ne pouvait pas demander l'intervention de la Russie, c'eut été interprété comme une reconnaissance indirecte des prétentions russes de protectorat sur l'Abyssinie.

...This, and the fact that the type of European with whom they have been of recent years familiar has not been always of a character to inspire any particular respect, has produced an unfortunate spirit towards the Western nations in this country." 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' 1897, Rodd to Salisbury, Addis Ababa, April 29, 1897, pp.13-14.

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F.O.403/255. Most of the Italian prisoners of war had already been released at the time of the Rodd mission as a result of the Treaty of Peace signed in Addis Ababa on October 26, 1896.

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Ibid., Signor Visconti Venosta to Sir Clare Ford, March 6, 1897.

139

GDD., Vol.12, October 1896, p.188.

D'autre part, il était douteux que l'Angleterre eut assez d'influence sur l'Abyssinie pour obtenir la libération des prisonniers italiens. 140

Immediately after the disaster at Adwa, Major Tommaso Salsa was sent to Menelik to probe into the possibilities of a peace agreement.¹⁴¹ Among his instructions the most important one was to impress upon Menelik that despite the fact that their two nations had gone to war as a result of disagreements on its contents, the Treaty of Wichalle was still beneficial to both countries and that it should still be maintained and preserved. However, Menelik sent Salsa back within a couple of days with firm counter proposals of (1) to definitely cancel the Treaty of Wichalle, (2) to demarcate the Mereb-Belessa-Muna line as the frontier between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and (3) to dispatch all Italian soldiers who do not constitute the Eritrean military force propre back to the metropolis.¹⁴²

Salsa's mission was definitely not a success because it was not able to extract any favourable agreement for Italy from Menelik. Rudini,

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Ibid., Vol.11, No.2812, Rome, April 22, 1896, p.254. Glanville also writes, "Anxious about the safety of Italian prisoners held by Menelik and sceptical concerning England's ability to aid in peace negotiations Rudini undoubtedly approved of Visconti-Venosta's acceptance of Russian assistance in Italy's relations with Menelik." Italy's Relations With England, 1896-1905, p.45.

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Work, Ethiopia, a Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.274; Bourgin, "Crispi et Menelik," Les Politiques d'Expansions Imperialiste, p.153.

142

DDI., No.XXIII, 1895-1896, p.28.

143

therefore, sent Major Cesar Nerazzini to Ethiopia - an able diplomat who already had ample experience in Ethiopia as an Italian agent and later on as Resident in Harar after 1887 - to negotiate and conclude a peace treaty with Menelik.

During the peace negotiations the pressure that was to bear upon Menelik, especially on the prisoners question, was to come not only from Italy but from other friendly powers in Europe such as Germany and the Holy Sea. Pope Leo XIII, for instance, sent Bishop Macario to Ethiopia with a letter dated May 11, 1896 pleading the release of all Italian prisoners of war. Pleased with the Pope's concern and his intermediary role, Menelik consented to the release, within two or three weeks, of all prisoners, excepting officers, upon receiving the Pope's message from Bishop Macario around the middle of August. Further complications in the following few days ignited by an unfortunate incident in the Red Sea, however, delayed the decision from being carried out.

The 'Doelwijk.' a Dutch boat, was captured by the Italian gunboat 'Etna' off the Red Sea shore not far off from the French port of Djibouti. The Dutch boat was carrying Russian arms and ammunition

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On Nerazzini's activities in Ethiopia see p.260; pp.294-298; p.429.

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GDD., Vol.12, October 23, 1896, No.2988, pp.188-189; Work, Ethiopia, a Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.276; Wylde, Abyssinia, p.61.

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The time needed was to assemble the prisoners from different locations in the Empire where they were staying with different Ethiopian families.

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destined for Menelik. A runner from the coast broke the news to Menelik. The Emperor was so enraged by this newest of Italian aggression that the release of the Italian prisoners was indefinitely postponed. Bishop Macario was summoned to the palace and told by Menelik that he regretted the newest Italian action did not allow him to fulfill the Pope's request and that it was now difficult for him to give away the prisoners as promised without sufficient guarantees for a peace settlement. Through Bishop Macario Menelik sent the Pope an Ethiopian cross and a letter in which he rebuked the Italian government for using the Pope's prestige and international role as a religious leader for the advancement of its own hostile objectives. However, as a token of his good will and his respect to the Pope, he released two prisoners to Bishop Macario.

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The negotiations for the peace agreement were conducted in an atmosphere filled with constraint and suspicion. To start with, the memory of the battle was still fresh in the minds of most of the

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The "Doelwijk" was chartered by the French company 'Carriere Sons & Co.' and was transporting arms and ammunition to Ethiopia from Riga and Reval in Russia. For details see Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.66-90.

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Die Grosse Politik, Vol.XI, p.260.

148

Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica, pp.191-206.

149

Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, p.387. (The prisoners must perhaps have been sick or wounded soldiers. Menelik was so concerned for those who were sick and wounded that, in many instances, he told his people to care for them as Christians should.)

Councilors and Generals of Menelik so as to want a speedy reconciliation. Most of them had needed the time to mourn their dead. Resistance to a speedier agreement was especially forthcoming from the hard core conservative element within the court and the army which strongly maintained that Italy was not to be taken for its word and that if it were it should first prove and pledge without reservations that it meant real peace. This was to be provided by totally disengaging from all war fronts and abstaining from unnecessary military as well as political provocations and interventions. Further more, the same faction within the power structure emphatically emphasized that any peace talks with Italy should be started only on the understanding that Italy should first accept the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia in principle.

In April 1896, Rudini was already complaining that because of this very same resistance within the Ethiopian Government the peace negotiations were not proceeding rapidly. The German Ambassador in Rome, Bernard de Bulow, reported to his Foreign Minister: "Au sujet de la situation en Erythrée le President de Conseil [Rudini] m'a raconté aujourd'hui mercredi que les pourparlers de paix étaient interrompus jusqu'a nouvel ordre, parce que le Négus, pour des raisons de politique intérieure abyssine se refusait a conclure une paix officielle." The necessity to

have prisoners released was so urgent that with the delay in the actual negotiations and the reluctance shown by Menelik to unnecessarily rush towards a peace treaty the Rudini cabinet was stipulating, if need be, to encourage Mengesha of Tigré to revolt against Menelik, the former ¹⁵¹ having shown a willingness to release prisoners still in his hands.

It was a victory to Menelik when the treaty was finally signed in Addis Ababa on October 26, 1896. The treaty, signed between Menelik and Nerazzini contained 9 articles. It recognized two important points which met the essential demands put forward by Menelik since the signing of the Treaty of Wichalle. Article 2 brought the persistent protectorate claims of Italy and the significance of Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle to an end. It affirmed: "The treaty concluded at Wichalle on Miazia 25, 1881, corresponding to May 2, 1889, is definitely ¹⁵² cancelled together with its annexes." Most important of all, article 3 reaffirmed Ethiopia's "absolute independence" and recognized its ¹⁵³ sovereignty and independence "without reservation." The two negotiating parties, however, were not able to come to an agreement regarding the frontier question. Having indicated their inability to arrive at a mutually accepted agreement on this point, the two parties nevertheless decided to observe the 'status quo' obliging both their countries to

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Ibid., Vol. 12, Bernard de Bulow to Prince Hohenlohe, Rome, May 13, 1896, No. 2824, p. 11.

152

Treaty of Peace, October 26, 1896.

153

Pigli, *L'Ethiopia nella Politica Europea*, "L'Italie reconnait l'indépendance absolue et sans réserve de l'empire Ethiopien comme état souverain et indépendant." p. 225.

recognize the provisional Mereb-Belessa-Muna frontier (Article 4). However, the Italian Government pledged not to cede any territory to any other power before the two countries have, by a common consent, definitively demarcated their frontiers. If, of its own free will Italy wished to abandon a part of the territory still under its control it would do so only to Ethiopia (Article 5). The treaty also contained a provision which stipulated that further agreements could be worked out between the two governments if commercial and industrial exchanges were deemed necessary (Article 6).

It is to be remembered that it was the misunderstanding regarding the interpretation of Article 17 of the Treaty of Wichalle that was the main bone of contention between Menelik and Italy. This time, Menelik refused to use the Italian language in the official text of the peace treaty and instead it was signed in Amharic and French. Aware of the interest of the European powers in the present treaty Menelik also had included an article in the treaty which made it possible for the two countries to communicate the document to other powers (Article 7).

The same day, a separate convention was also signed on the release of prisoners. As a result of the treaty of peace, the Italian prisoners of war held in Ethiopia were declared free (Article 1) and the Italian Government, having recognized the considerable expense the prisoners have entailed to the Ethiopian

Government, agreed to compensate it correspondingly (Article 3).¹⁵⁴

It should here be pointed out that with the culmination of Ethiopian-Italian relations with these two agreements Menelik's ability as a diplomat, a soldier and a negotiator was uncontestedly demonstrated. What he fought for was Ethiopia's independence and territorial integrity. With the signature of the Treaty of peace a successful and most important chapter in his foreign policy was closed and a new and challenging one was opened.

The newest phase of his foreign policy stressed on the need for consolidating his Empire. Its emphasis was one of reconciliation with friendly countries and an active resistance to the expansion of the colonialist powers into 'historic Ethiopia.'

His mission accomplished Nerazzini was back in Rome by the end of December 1896 bringing with him the text of the peace treaty signed between Menelik and himself.¹⁵⁵ The treaty was very well received in Italy not only by the official circles but also by the press and the majority of the Italian people. A November 16, 1896 German diplomatic note from Rome to the Foreign Office in Bonn comments on the mood of official Italian circles on the eve of the conclusion of the treaty. The note, after indicating how Rudini strongly desired such a treaty, goes on to say: "This was also the opinion of Count Nigra who is actually here and who has congratulated the Marquis Visconti Venosta [Foreign Minister] on the conclusion of peace in

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See text of convention on prisoners in Annex.

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F.O.403/255, Sir Clare Ford to Salisbury, Rome, January 5, 1897.

these terms: 'And if you have a vacant Embassy, give it to Major
 156
 Nerazzini. He merits it." Castonnet des Fosses, writing on the
 reactions of the Italian people and the press, says: "La nouvelle
 de la conclusion de la paix a été accueillie avec bonheur en Italie
 par la population, depuis longtemps fatiguées des aventures africaines.
 Le 'Messager' a salué la paix avec enthousiasme, en disant: 'Ce
 traite, sans offenser la dignité nationale, met fin aux ignobles
 157
 spéculations des partisans de guerre.'"

The period of reconciliation with Italy commenced with the
 return of Nerazzini to Ethiopia for the second time. Nerazzini
 embarked from Massawa on the first week of March 1897 for renewed
 negotiations with Menelik to finalize outstanding and other pending
 issues. The Rodd mission, going south to Harar after its deliberations
 with Menelik, encountered Nerazzini's party proceeding to Addis Ababa
 158
 from the sea coast. Gleichen recounts: "...We met a largish caravan
 on the way up, and amongst the followers therefore we spied several
 with white helmets. It turned out, as we expected, to be Major
 Nerazzini, whom we knew to be on his way up country, bringing ransom
 money for the prisoners already released, and with further instructions

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GDD., Vol.12, No.3018, pp.219-220.

157

Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, pp.384-387.

158

Rodd himself was a career of a congratulatory letter dated January 8, 1897 to Menelik on the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace. Rodd, however, still had the letter among his documents because, using the discretionary power granted to him as to its presentation, did not hand it to Menelik since he felt that the time was not opportune due to the intense dislike that acquired in Ethiopia towards the Italians. 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' 1897, pp.4; 13.

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for concluding a definitive peace with the Negus." With Nerazzini was Major Ciccodicola who subsequently became the first Italian permanent Resident at Menelik's court.

In the second leg of his mission, Nerazzini's instructions included: (i) the reviving of the unfinished frontier question and the delimitation of the frontiers between Ethiopia and Eritrea; (ii) the remittance of war indemnities; (iii) conducting further negotiations for the release of the few remaining prisoners of war , and (iv) the signing of a treaty
160
of commerce.

From the outset, it was evident that Italy was ready to make frontier concessions to Menelik in return for a favourable accommodation of Italian interests in Ethiopia and for facilitating the release of the few remaining prisoners in Ethiopia. The prisoner question was fairly easy and uncomplicated to resolve. It centred around gathering a maximum of a score or two of prisoners of war scattered throughout the Empire and handing them over to an Italian representative or the International Red Cross at Zeila. The only difficulty was the prisoners themselves. Some of them, already accustomed to the people, the country and its way of life, were unwilling to leave Ethiopia for Italy. Wylde comments that "they were living in a fertile country with a splendid climate, and perhaps with much better prospects of getting on, than in some squalid priest-ridden town in Italy....Several Italian

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Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.266.

160

DDF., 1st. ser., Vol.13, No.195.

soldiers had done [taken native wives] and they professed themselves as being perfectly happy." Rodd also reported to salisbury from Addis Ababa:

...There is at present here a Comte R. de Choiseul, who has been dispatched by some Italian ladies, on behalf of the Red Cross Society, to endeavour to obtain the release of the 9 Italian prisoners still in the country. Of the latter, 2 are now here, 2 are stated to be lying ill in a distant part of the country, and five others are scattered about in the various provinces, in charge of the local Chiefs, who are apparently making efforts to detain them. On the other hand, it is said that some of them prefer to remain permanently in Abyssinia; whatever may be the truth, there is little doubt that Menelik is only too anxious to allow these prisoners to return to Italy should they desire to do so. 162

The frontiers issue was much more complicated. Bent on preserving Ethiopia's territorial integrity at any cost, Menelik was willing to go to any length with Italy in order to wrest the best of conditions in such a course of action. He was in no hurry to conclude a frontier's treaty with Italy because, as with France and Britain in the east and the south of his Empire respectively, he still had many details to study, a lot more points to bargain and more contentions to solve before committing Ethiopia's border lines on paper. In this regard, Nerazzini's task was not an easy one. Once more, he quit

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Wylde, Abyssinia, p.405.

162

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' 1897, Rodd to Salisbury, Addis Ababa, May 10, 1897, p.24.

Menelik's court without achieving much - except perhaps the prisoners' question - and leaving the unfinished job of frontiers to Ciccodicola who was appointed the first Italian Resident at Menelik's court after the signing of the Treaty of Peace.

Certainly, the significance of the Battle of Adwa and its accruing advantages in the field of the development of 19th. and 20th. century Ethiopian foreign policy are great. If Menelik's period was to be remembered for one thing it would be for the finesse, maturity and tenacity with which Ethiopia's foreign affairs were conducted. The imminence of it lies in that it was at this time that Menelik, through Adwa, had restored the image and morale of the Ethiopian nation since the Battle of Mekdella thereby heralding to the rest of Africa the advent of a new era of independence and equality. The Battle of Adwa no doubt has given the Ethiopian people added dignity and led them to treat the outside world - especially that of the 'Ferenji's' [Europeans] - with contempt and a little surprise. It was the shattering of the myth which surrounded the European invincibility which brought about a renewed feeling of equality and a willingness to resort to negotiations on the international political system. This new

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political situation was fully exploited by Menelik.

Castonnet des Fosses considers that because of the magnitude and significance of the Battle of Adwa the news of the victory by Ethiopia was expanding across the African continent like wild fire in dry hay. "The white is no more considered as a superior being," he wrote. "He had lost his prestige....It is an event which will be the commencement of a new era for Africa." ¹⁶⁵ The moral buoyancy in Ethiopia as a result of Adwa was so great that most writers who visited the country after 1896 have come out with identical ¹⁶⁶ impressions on the Ethiopian sense of pride and dignity. At the beginning of his book Gleichen wrote: "Up to this time all Europeans had been looked up to in Abyssinia with respect, if not fear. Adwa, to use a vulgarism, upset the apple-cart, and entirely altered the views of the natives. The body of the Abyssinian people even now imagines that their victory has laid not only Italy, but the whole of Europe, at their feet, and their heads are proportionately elevated." About the middle of his book we find this remarkable rendition of the swollen up Ethiopian

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See, among others, 'Precis of Information Obtained by the British Mission to Abyssinia,' March-June 1897, p.10.

165

Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, pp.391-392.

166

Regarding the moral uplift in Ethiopia the Rodd mission reported: "This [the manner of behaviour of the Italian prisoners], however, is but a small item in comparison with the really serious moral effect on the Abyssinians of their recent successes, their pride and arrogance are, in European eyes almost unbearable, and they have now a vastly exaggerated idea of their own prowess and importance in the world. It was generally supposed by the ignorant classes that the British Mission had come to pay tribute to Menelik, and at times we had to put up with scant courtesy, if not with actual rudeness, on

national ego:

...the mass of the people grows up in the fond belief that Abyssinia is the greatest country in the world. Since their victory over the Italians last year, they have become considerably swollen with pride. They always thought they were the finest nation on earth, and now they are sure of it. In their eyes, political Missions to Menelik from European Powers simply mean the bringing of tribute to the greatest sovereign in the world. The bigger and the richer the presents, the higher does the national self-esteem rise; and we perhaps, who thought we were impressing the natives with the power and magnificence of Great Britain, were in their eyes merely an outward and visible sign of their own superiority! 167

One other positive result of Adwa was, as Margery Perham put it, the neighbours of Menelik and the European powers "were obliged
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to take him very seriously." As a result, his role in international affairs was considerably increased and Addis Ababa, his capital, became the scene of feverish European activities. It is this international role of Menelik that the following chapter will try to examine in some detail.

the part of the lower classes." 'Precis of Information Obtained by the British Mission to Abyssinia,' March-June, p.10.

167

Ibid., p.234.

168

Margery Perham, The Government of Ethiopia, p.59.

PART THREE

MENELIK'S ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

CHAPTER 6

MENELIK AND THE EUROPEAN RIVALRY: THE POLICY OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION VERSUS COLONIAL EXPANSIONISM

After the Battle of Adwa the main thrust of Menelik's foreign policy centred around the prevention of European penetration and expansion into the Ethiopian heartland. In further analyzing this policy, we note that not only it stood as a definite negation to 19th. century European advances into what was then Ethiopia proper, but also claimed to incorporate into the new Empire all ancient territories lost to 'historic Ethiopia' through centuries of administrative neglect and problems related to leadership rivalries. The challenge to the yet undefined and amorphous 'historic Ethiopia' was not there until the advent of European colonialism in Africa, in general, and in particular the Red Sea and Nile regions.

With the moral uplift gained by the Ethiopian victory at Adwa, Menelik formally launched his policy of national reintegration in opposition to the rapidly growing and menacingly progressing European

colonizing efforts. It is this process to reintegrate the peoples of Ethiopia within the confines of its ancient limits and its corollary of opposing the inward advancements of the colonial powers that some political and sociological analysts have selected to label as Ethiopian colonialism or Menelikian expansionism. However, the evaluating criteria one wishes to adopt in the scrutiny of the new policy advanced by Menelik naturally depend upon how one wants to look at the problem.

At the outset, a conceptual framework should first be delimited in order to narrow the problem thus posed. As the element of authority is crucial in the study and explanation of the issues involved, it would be worthwhile to consider certain references of departure. In international relations, for a political entity to enter into any meaningful relations with other existing political entities, it should be able to demonstrate, within the reasonable confines of given domains, a certain degree of cohesiveness under an accepted form of authority. Normally, political entities become willing to interact with other entities when they are satisfied that the entities in question fulfill such a minimum standard. It is also generally assumed that the authority which articulates the foreign policy of the entity also represents the ultimate political desires and aspirations of the peoples thus represented. However, it is also one of the tenets of any foreign policy that it can not satisfy all the people - even among a completely homogenous and cohesive

entity - at one and the same time. Conventional wisdom has often favoured that if the fulfillment of the highest national objectives was to be attained, other minor objectives, as reflected in group or ethnic interests, should be minimized or subordinated to the ultimate national ideal. The maximum or the ultimate of such subordinations is most of the time evidenced in its culmination in the use of coercion, force or the resort to the exercise of power. It would therefore be with this general premise in the background that Menelik's policy of national reintegration versus the policies of colonial expansionism will be examined.

Some scholars have persistently resorted to the application of purely European norms and values of international law in trying to explain the Ethiopian question of statehood and nationhood. This is no reflection on the practicability of such norms and values in the study of Ethiopian and, for that matter, African societies. What is being interjected here is the fact that, up to now, indigenous points of view have either been neglected or totally rejected in the study and analysis of societal behaviours and developments in the area. Enormous as already are the problems pertaining to the concept of nationalism, the explanations furnished by similar approaches have not made the issue any simpler. Especially, the problems become all the more complex when considered in light of the conceptual understandings inherent in the customs and traditions of the Ethiopian body politic.

International law has not yet fully furnished an explanation as to why colonial powers had, during the scramble for Africa, been entitled

to bestow upon themselves the prerogative of occupying lands along its coasts. Was it because these lands were deemed to be no man's land or was it because people who inhabited such lands had no economic, social and cultural ties and affinities with people who inhabited the adjacent lands and that they could therefore be viewed separately without affecting the existing link? For instance, the inhabitants of what are now Djibouti and parts of Somalia had ethnic affinities from time immemorial with Ethiopia, and Menelik, as did past Emperors, had considered Chieftains from these regions as his vassals and exacted taxes from them. Yet, neither Menelik's nor his predecessors' central governments were active in these areas since they were considered, as were also similar areas within the central government, as unhealthy wastelands necessitating no special attention. How would present political science analyze the dilemma thus presented? Were the colonial powers justified in benefiting from such an administrative absence or neglect in the area or was Ethiopia entitled to act as it did in resisting such a colonial incursion? This is why it was earlier maintained that the conclusion as to whether Menelik was a defender of the integrity of Ethiopia or an expansionist monarch would be found to be dependent on the criteria the analyst wishes to consider.

Totally relying on interpretations furnished by 19th. century international law, for instance, some writers tend to portray Menelik as an imperialist and colonizing monarch. We are to realize, however, that such a deduction was made possible from a simple inference which

of necessity has drawn the same parallel as regards the motivations of Menelik and that of his counterparts such as Crispi, Bismarck, Hannotaux and Salisbury. On the contrary, in pursuing a policy of reintegration Menelik was in fact making use of a heritage which for centuries had emphasized and advocated the unity of the people who inhabited the confines of 'historic Ethiopia.'

Menelik, it should be pointed out, never accepted that Ethiopian territory proper ended where European boundary claims began. He believed that the limits of Ethiopia lay even further and beyond the boundaries demarcated by European powers. He was to regain the 'historic' and 'ancient' confines of Ethiopia in order to checkmate the inland drive and penetration of the European powers. This policy was initiated, primarily, as a counter move against the artificial spheres of influence put on paper by the colonizing powers and secondly, to thwart their contemplated move into Ethiopia.

Some contemporary arguments have since alluded that, in the process, Menelik had subjugated, and in fact, colonized sub-groups and sub-nations. The premise for this argument is basically not tenable because it refuses to consider the higher objectives of nation building and rather prefers to view the historical, cultural, social, economic, political and military issues involved only from purely narrow tribal, ethnic and linguistic grounds. It can, however, be said that in Ethiopia, as in France, India or Switzerland, innate values acquired from a long process of aculturation and social and

economic interaction have in many instances been the intrinsic determinants of integration, nation building and national unification.¹ In the process, it is readily recognized, the dominant political entity is bound to resort to coercion if one or more lesser entities stand on the way of integration.

It is a truism that, in any ethnically pluralistic society, a group or groups of people which constitute the central authority have most of the means and prerogatives which enable them to pose as the standard bearers of that society. Because of this advantage they acquire the persuasiveness or power by which they would be able to define and set up the standards and values of the society. In most cases, the effective control of a territory and its people - that is, its pluralistic society - by means of such persuasion and or power, constitutes the legitimizing factor for the existence of a country or of a nation. However painful and irrational this system may appear to be, this had been, and will still be, the inevitable process of nation building.

In analyzing the concept of shared values prevalent among Ethiopians and discussing the ensuing process of reintegration of the

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For further reading in the field see, among others, Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation, Boston, 1960; Robert Ardrey, The Territorial Imperative: a Personal Inquiry into the Animal Origins of Property and Nations, New York, 1966; Karl W. Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication, New York & Cambridge, Mass., 1953; Andrew M. Scott, The Revolution in Statecraft, New York, 1965; Melville J. Herskovits, Cultural Anthropology, New York, 1955; Arnold Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration, 1967; J.L. Brierly, The Law of Nations, New York, 1963.

19th. century, Donald Levine arrives at the conclusion that the experience was in fact one of the "foundations of unity" of the Ethiopian Empire. Having first established the "image of Ethiopia" as constituting a "complex sociocultural system" that has developed through determinate stages and a system that encompasses diverse and "autonomous societies of small scale," he raises one very fundamental question. He wonders if what some writers have termed as imperial expansion " was basically a subjugation of alien peoples or an ingathering of peoples with deep historical affinities."²

In a paper entitled "Aspects of National Integration in Ethiopia" Levine submits:

...I challenge the notion that the imperial expansion under Yohannes and Menelik in the late nineteenth Century was essentially a subjugation of alien peoples....Instead, I argue that this expansion did represent an ingathering of peoples with deep cultural and historical affinities, affinities which stem from a continuous process of interaction of the peoples of Greater Ethiopia with one another through trade, warfare, religious activities, migration, intermarriage, and exchange of special services; and affinities which reflect the existence of a great number of pan-Ethiopian culture traits. ³

Through "prolonged interaction in the past," Levine further maintains in his book, Ethiopians were able to develop customs for relating to each other and to advance a host of pan-Ethiopian culture traits "that one can plausibly refer to Greater Ethiopia as a culture area...."⁴

2

Donald N. Levine, Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society, 1974, pp.25-26.

3

Levine, "Aspects of National Integration in Ethiopia," Unpublished Paper, (n.d.), The University of Chicago, p.7.

4

Levine, Greater Ethiopia, pp.46-47.

Menelik, like most of his predecessors, accepted and understood the age-old affinities among the Ethiopians with an almost innocent naivety and simplicity, and for him, this "ingathering of peoples" was no different than his image of a united Ethiopia. The innocence with which Menelik regarding the Ethiopian right to its ancient limits is reflected in the negotiations he undertook with the European emissaries who came to his capital to discuss about "his" and "their" boundaries. Rodd, in 1897, astonished Menelik as hard bargainer by trying to impress upon him that Britain, somehow and by some historic coincidence, had preceded Ethiopia in establishing itself in the regions south-east of the Ethiopian capital, area which now lay within the claims of Menelik. Menelik, set aback by Rodd's assertion retorted: "But you are advancing right up to the gates of Harar." Rodd mused, "[But] it was Abyssinia which had advanced up to us;...we were the reversionaries of Egypt in these districts, and had established ourselves there by treaties with the native tribes before Abyssinia had come to Harar."

It was this basic contention of ~~who-came-where-before-whom~~ that intrigued and stimulated Menelik to embark on the course he was to follow for the coming two decades. Menelik's policy of reintegration therefore stressed the need to restore all those "historic" lands still neglected by the central government back to the fold of the Empire. As will subsequently be discussed, it was

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F.O.403/255, Rodd to Salisbury, May 13, 1897.

because of such motivations that Menelik was hesitant to enter into any hastily arranged frontier treaties both with Italy and Britain. It was his contention that if he were to sign treaties before he was able to regain most, if not all, of Ethiopia's ancient and historic territories such a position would, of necessity, limit his actions.

In the achievement of this policy, namely, of thwarting European advances into Ethiopia and the re-establishment of "the ancient frontiers of Ethiopia," Menelik, between 1897 and 1898, sent out five expeditions in the five different directions most vulnerable to penetration. All the expeditions were led by five of his most able and trusted lieutenants. Ras Tessema Nadew was sent out north west to the borders of Sudan, particularly the Sobat and Fashoda regions, to occupy the eastern bank of the Nile and plant the Ethiopian flag. Ras Wolde Ghiorgis commanded the military mission dispatched to the Lado and Lake Rudolph regions to the south. Ras Mekonnen, the respected diplomat of the epoch of the Treaty of Wichalle and a hero of Adwa, led the expedition which temporarily secured the lower White Nile region in the Amhara highlands bordering the Sudan. Ras Habte Giorgis, another respected General, advanced further south towards Borena bordering what is

6

See F.O.1/34, Harrington to Colonel Wingate, May 11, 1898; Hanotaux, Le Partage de l'Afrique, Fashoda, 1909, p.134; Sanderson, "Contribution from African Sources to the History of European Competition in the Upper Valley of the Nile," Journal of African History, III, 1, 1962, pp. 86-89; Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.544. Most writers identify only three or at the maximum four expeditions. Actually, these expeditions, as also asserted by Menelik, are five. See map in opposite page.

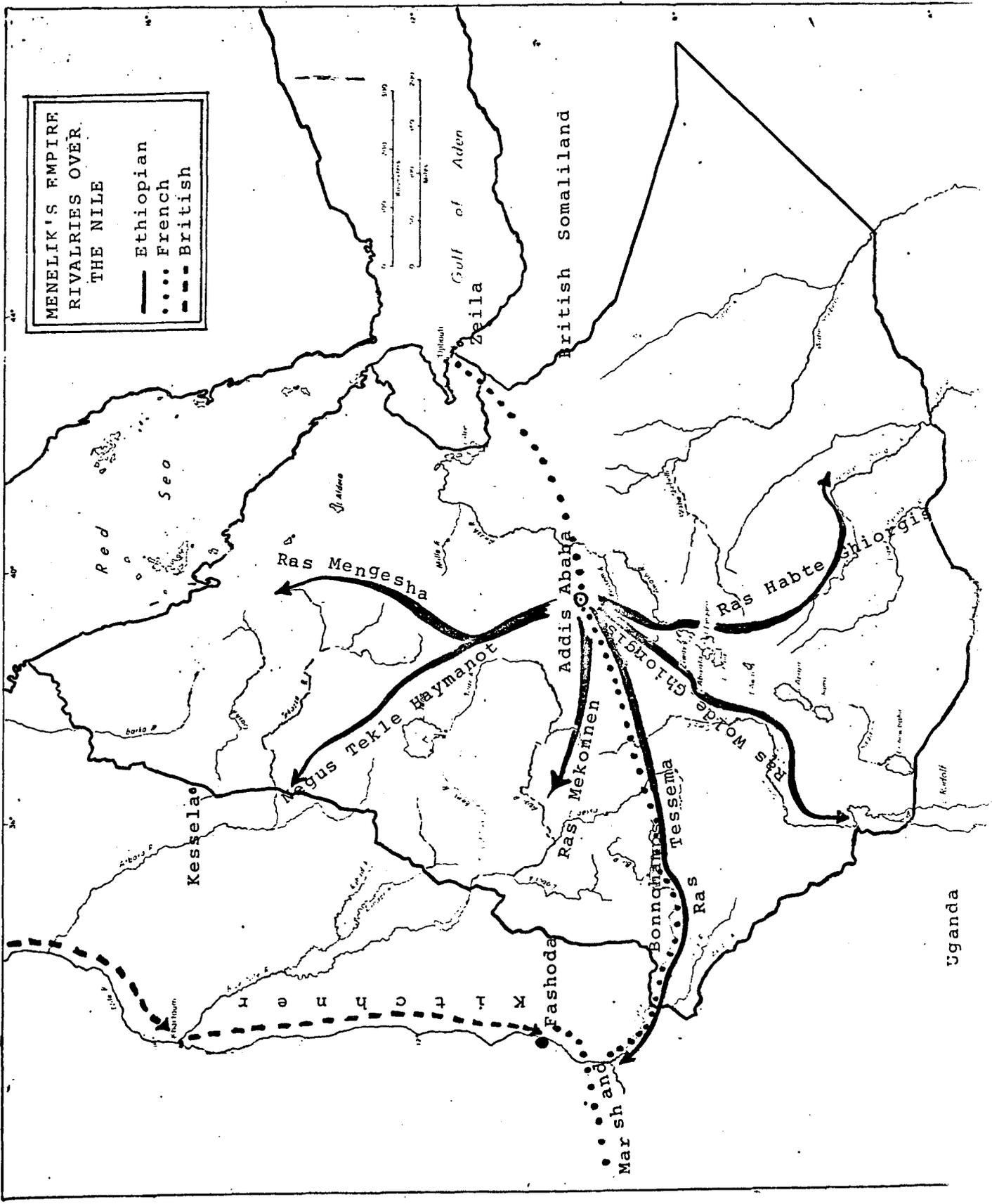


Fig. 8

now present day Kenya. In fact, Menelik had sent out other minor expeditions, one commanded by Negus [King] Tekle Haymanot and another by Ras Mengesha towards the north to reinforce the Ethiopian boundary bordering those of Eritrea.

The objectives of these expeditions are clearly stated by Menelik himself in one of the ten Ethiopian documents - Rodd calls them "these curious documents" - captured by British soldiers at the fall of Omdurman in September 1898. Writing to the Khalifa Menelik said in one of these documents:

This is to inform you that the Europeans who are present in the neighbourhood of the white Nile with the English have come out from the east and west with the intention of penetrating between our two countries and separating us. On hearing of their intentions, I dispatched an expedition in five different directions, more especially in that where the English and French are, and by which the Belgians come before. Remember that when I sent Kantibai [Mayor] Giru to you, you sent me back word by him that men of yours were stationed in the direction from which the Belgians came. Under these circumstances, I gave orders to the leaders of the troops that if they met your men they were to talk with them, and let them know the object in view. I have now ordered my troops to reach the White Nile, and perhaps if news of this reaches you from merchants or others, you may misunderstand this, and so I have written this to you to explain my object. Keep careful watch and be strong, lest the Europeans come between us, for in that case we shall fall into great trouble, and there will be no rest for our children. Should a European traveller come to you, do all you can to send him away amicably. Do not listen to what people may say to you against me, as my sole desire is that our good relations may increase, and that our countries may be protected from the enemy. 7

What this document reveals is Menelik's ability to deal with delicate situations whenever they arose. As will be subsequently discussed, Menelik had labelled the Mahdi his enemy when in 1897 Rodd had ardently sought from the monarch the neutrality of Ethiopia regarding the conflict that existed between Britain and the Sudan at the time. That Menelik should accommodate Britain was necessitated by motivations which dictated that he was in no position then to antagonize the same European power whose movements he was intending to contain through peaceful means. The fact that Menelik later on wrote on to warn the Mahdi to "keep careful watch...least the Europeans come between us" should therefore be looked into with these political dilemmas in mind. "Do not listen to what people may say to you against me," advised Menelik to the Mahdi, "as my sole desire is that our good relations may increase, and that our countries may be protected from the enemy." Menelik had also arranged other letters to be sent out to the Mahdi by some of his important military leaders such as Negus Tekle Haymaot and Ras Mengesha who were then having close watch and surveillance over developments in the area from their northern most positions. No doubt, these letters were meant to demonstrate Menelik's friendship

8

For a discussion of the situation based on correspondences from Mahdist archives, see Sanderson, "Contributions from African Sources to the History of European Competition in the Upper Valley of the Nile," Journal of African History, III, 1, 1962, pp.83-89.

to the Khalifa. Negus Tekle Haymanot, for instance, wrote:

...We are very pleased to hear of your friendship with our King. For we Ethiopians and the Soudanese are countrymen, and we therefore pray Almighty God to prolong peace and love between us for the happiness of our country. Be assured that, so long as we remain on good terms, the enemy cannot enter our country. 9

At about the same time, the great European designs which were to unfold in most parts of Africa were being worked out in London, Paris, Berlin and Brussels. The two main contending powers in this colonial gambit in this part of Africa were Britain and France, with Germany and Belgium playing relatively minor but active roles. The unavoidable problem which confined the two main protagonists, namely Britain and France, was how to make their designs good without infringing upon each other's sphere of influence, for their dilemma was succinctly explained by Hanotaux this way:

La France, complétant son expansion algerienne, avait établi son protectorat sur la Tunisie. L'Angleterre, par des initiatives hardies, avait étendu son autorité sur l'Afrique Orientale en prenant pour directive la fameuse formule: 'du Cap au Caire.' La France, pénétrant par les trois portes de l'Algerie, du Sénégal et de la Cote de Guinée, s'était imposé a l'Afrique Occidentale; en outre, par le Congo, elle s'enforçait ou loin dans l'interieur des terre et prenait de flanc l'Afrique Orientale. Les situations étant telles, en quel point devaient se faire le démarcation et le partage des influence? C'est le probleme qui fut posé au temps de la Mission Marchand. 10

9

F.O.403/275, Negus Tekle Haymanot to Khalifa-el-Mahdi, Yakit [Yekatit] 20,1889, [About the 27th. February 1897].

10

Hanotaux, Le Partage de l'Afrique: Fachoda, p.65.

The most central and crucial problem which accentuated the European rivalry in this part of Africa, however, was the Nile question. Lying as it did on the approximate axis where the French and British Dakar-to-Djibouti and Cape-to-Cairo designs respectively crossed each other the advantages that were to be gained by the power which effectively controlled this waterway were naturally enormous. Hence, not only were Britain and France actively engaged in fostering their own plans to control the Nile and the Nile Valley but their respective foreign offices were working on every conceivable strategy in order to thwart or undermine the studied advances of the other side. According to Hanotaux the "partage de l'Afrique" had already been set by its exploration.¹¹ What remained was to be achieved through arms and diplomacy.

Intricate and extended as it is, the British-French rivalry over the Nile found concrete expression in the attitude each party had on the acquisition of territories adjoining the banks or lying within the peripheries of the Nile river and its tributaries. Being "the reversionaries of Egypt," as Rodd had to claim, the British took it upon themselves to be the guardians of Egyptian interests in and around the Nile. Britain, therefore, was vigilant and keeping watch along all the avenues of approach to the Nile Valley. One of these gateways to the valley was through Ethiopia. Raphael writes that "this country, like the lake region and the

11

Ibid

Upper Sudan, furnished strategic ground which could be used by the rival powers to weaken British control in Egypt." It is important to note that three of the most important tributaries feeding the Nile, namely the Sobat, the Blue Nile and the Atbera, start from the massive Ethiopian highlands. These tributaries were important in that they carried the annual floods to the Nile which of course supplied the life line to Egypt. Raphael also maintains:

Ethiopia offered a tempting base for expeditions from the east coast into the Nile Valley. It was this danger which caused British statesmen and politicians much anxiety in the period of 1890 to 1902. They were afraid that the country might become a hotbed of intrigue hostile to their Egyptian interests and a starting ground for expeditions into the Upper Nile region.¹³

France was also no less vigilant in its attempt to acquire a fair share of the cake in the region. Initially, France sought to pursue such a policy by trying to settle its many African problems through diplomacy and, to a certain extent, by resorting to actual occupations. At a later stage, the occupation of the Nile Valley by direct action was gradually developed as part of the British strategy. However, at about the time France was actually initiating this strategy for the occupation of the valley from Ubagi in West Africa, the British Government sent out proposals to negotiate on their mutual African problems. In the autumn of 1894 many conferences were convened at the Quai d'Orsay to consider the proposals. Out of these

¹²

Raphael, The Cape-to-Cairo Dream, p.325.

¹³

Ibid

conferences there evolved a general consensus on the African issues and particularly on the question of the Nile Valley. As a consequence of this consensus France was able to extract from Britain a definition and limitation of its claims in the area. It was accepted in principle that any disputed territory within this area was to be neutralized to some extent and put under the surveillance of the two powers. The arrangement, however, was not to succeed. In France, Hanotaux was regarded as being too lenient and the Liberal Government in England was taken to be too conciliatory and accomodating in meeting French demands. What remained for both countries was to resort to non-diploamtic actions.

By the middle of 1895, French occupation activities increased tremendously. Not only were people who supported France's colonial ventures encouraging the new trend, but unlike the past few decades, the French Government itself embarked upon a policy of sending out contingents and explorers who were to implement the French plan of conquest. Towards the end of 1895, France commenced its preparations for sending out an expedition - under Captain Marchand - to the Bahr-el-Ghazel and the Nile.

The British-French occupation plans were dependant upon the spheres of influence each had already alloted to itself not only in this region, but also in other parts of Africa. The Nile Valley, it should be remembered, was not the only area where Britain and France found themselves at loggerheads. In West Africa they were also

14

Hanotaux, Le Partage de l'Afrique, pp.80ff. See also Raphael, The-Cape-To-Cairo Dream, p.339.

faced with conflicting interests in places like Liberia, Gambia, Sierral Leone and Nigeria.

As regards the Nile Valley in particular, and the East African region in general, Britain, for instance, had already entered into six major and separate treaties and agreements with the rest of the European powers, including France, between 1888 and 1894. These were (i) the Anglo-Italian treaty of Harar of 1888, (ii) the Anglo-German treaty of 1890, (iii) the Anglo-Italian Protocol of March 1891, (iv) the Anglo-German Agreement of November 15, 1893, (v) the Anglo-Italian Agreement of May 5, 1894 and (vi) the Anglo--Congolese Agreement of May 12, 1894.

These treaties, agreements and protocols were Great Britain's paper titles to the region. However, that they should not be totally relied upon was indicated by Salisbury to the British Parliament in this fashion:

It is not safe in these days to establish your title to large territory...and then to leave it there without any effort to assert your title in a more practical and more effective fashion. The whole doctrine of paper annexation is in a very fluid and uncertain condition....I believe that, in order to make your claim over these vast regions a genuine one, and one which the public opinion of Europe will respect,...you ought to show that you are gradually assimilating it, gradually making good your possession of it....¹⁵

The British title to territories covering between Cairo and the Cape was at once complex and entangled in its planning and execution. What is more, the opposition and challenge that was

15

Parliamentary Papers, The Marquis of Salisbury, June 1, 1894, Series 4, Vol. 25, pp. 150-152.

forthcoming both from France and Germany was a stumbling block to the realization of this title. As already mentioned, as of the end of 1894, French activities were increasingly noticed at some strategic locations in around the upper reaches of the Nile. In order to counter this French thrust from the west Britain needed the friendly disposition of the Congo State. Britain needed it as a buffer zone. For the advancement of this strategy, therefore, Britain needed to approach King Leopold by fulfilling one of his own fondest dreams in the area. Accordingly, Britain proposed to lease to Leopold a territory west of the Bahr-el-Jebel which he had for long been coveting to bring under his domain (see figure 9). By so doing, Britain was trying to achieve three objectives. Primarily, by leasing this territory to Leopold, Britain calculated that it will retain the title to this part of the Nile Valley, and secondly, by so doing, it will obtain Leopold's recognition of a British sphere of influence in the region. Finally, it was envisaged that the main responsibility to ward off any French incursions into the Nile Valley now rested with the Congo State. It was to Rennel Rodd, the same emissary who was to be sent to Menelik's court in 1897 to negotiate the securing of British interests in Ethiopia and the Nile Valley, that the mission was now entrusted. In March 1894 he was in Brussels to conclude an agreement. The agreement was signed
16
on May 12, 1894.

Lord Kimberley telegraphed to the British agent in Zanzibar: "Write to Colonel Colvile by mail that we have made a friendly arrangement under which Belgians will hold left bank of Nile from Lake Albert to Fashoda

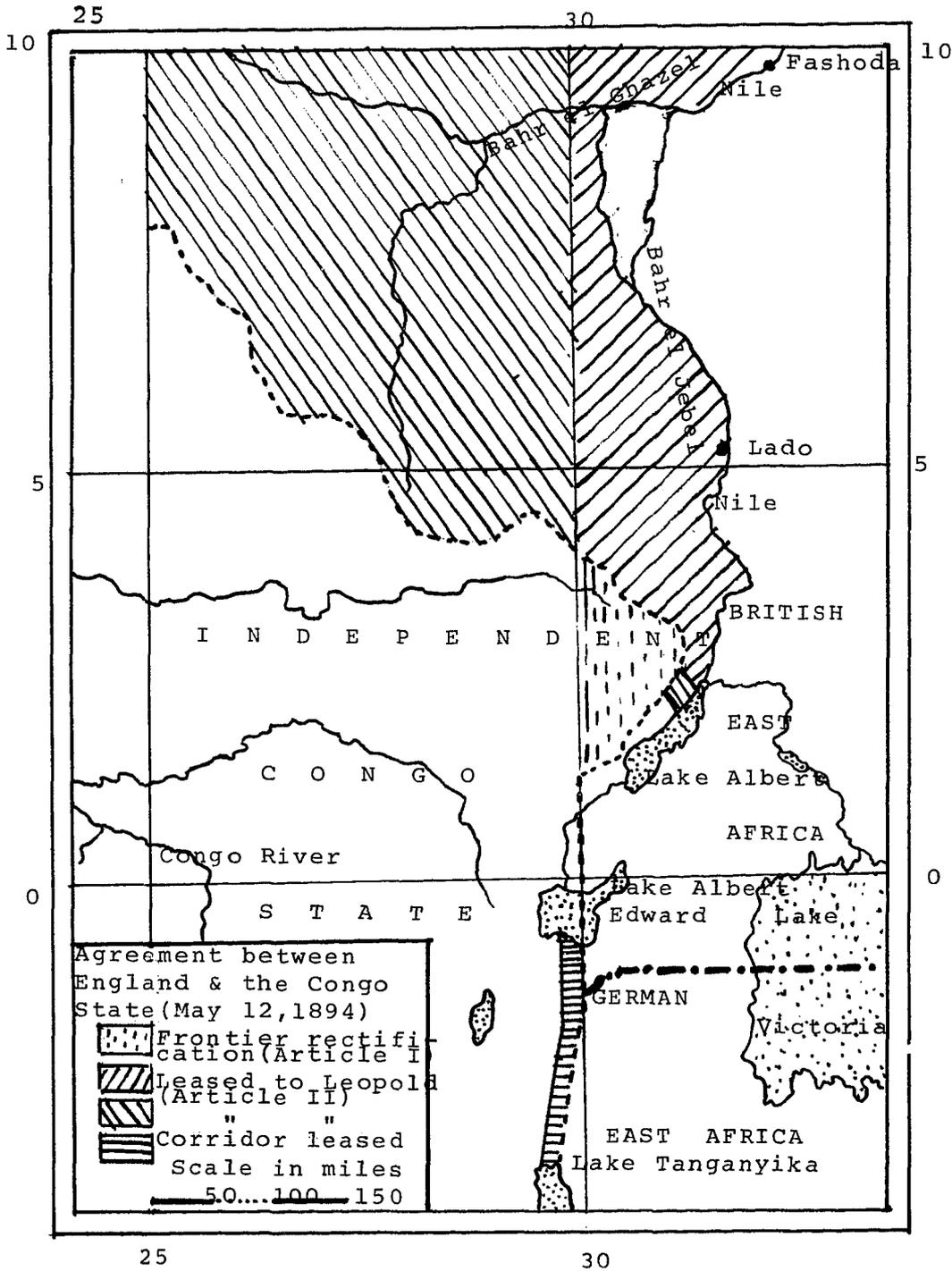


Fig. 9

There was yet another objective Britain was trying to achieve by entering into this agreement. In 1890, the IBEA company, a British association which was chartered in 1888 as the Imperial British East Africa Company, had negotiated an arrangement with Leopold - which the British Government did not recognize officially - to acquire a strip of land from Lake Tanganyika to Lakes Albert Edward and Albert in order to realize the Cape-to-Cairo railway and the envisaged telegraph connections. The arrangement, however, had stayed in limbo because of other considerations on which the British Government had no say. The Congo State was already treaty bound with various other European governments on questions which involved both economic and political considerations. What is more, the Congo State had also declared its neutrality on August 1, 1885. "It would hardly be consistent with these treaty engagements or with the neutrality of the state," writes Raphael, "if the Congolese granted the British an outright cession of territory for the Cape-to-Cairo railway and telegraph line." The best solution both the Congo State and the British Government were able to agree on was the incorporation of the acquisition of the Cape-to-Cairo corridor to their May 12, 1894

as leaseholders under Great Britain. If he comes in contact with them, he should maintain amicable relations." Africa, No.7 (1895), No.5; Rodd, Memories, 1884-1893, pp.345-348.

17

Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, Vol.2, No.145, p.552.

18

Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream, p.309.

agreement as a lease offered for a limited duration. Thus, article 3 of the agreement read:

The independent Congo State grants under lease to Great Britain, to be administered when occupied, under the conditions and for a period hereafter determined, a strip of territory 25 kilometers in breadth, extending from the most northerly port on Lake Tanganyika, which is included in it, to the most southerly point of Lake Albert Edward. 19

According to Sir Grey, the object of the agreement to the corridor by the British Government "was not to acquire a right of occupation or administration in the territory, but simply to acquire a right of way." Article 3, however, was a triumph to the perseverance of Cecil Rhodes and those other British pioneers enamoured with and wedded the colonization spirit of the times. To Rhodes, the two most important instruments to open the heart of Africa were the railway and the telegraph. This "big brother who eats up countries for his breakfast" was drunken with the idea that the British flag was the salvation of the universe. This salvation would be forthcoming, he believed, by "the perfection of the species attained by the elimination of the unfit,..the conferring upon the perfected species or race the title-deeds of the future." It is no wonder, therefore, that "applying

19

Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, Vol.2, No.163, pp.579-580.

20

Parliamentary Debates, Sir Grey, ser., 4, Vol.25, p.183.

21

See J.A. Macdonald, Rhodes, a Life, London, 1927, p.8.

22

W.T.Stead, "Character Sketch: Cecil Rhodes of Africa," Review of Reviews, 1899, Vol.XX, p.462; F.E.Garrwtt, "The Character of Cecil Rhodes," Contemporary Review, January-June,1902, Vol.81, p.769.

this standard to the peoples of the world, he decided that the white race, and particularly the Anglo-Saxon, was indisputably the nearest perfection. It was the race, he claimed, most likely to universalize certain broad general principles - justice, fair play to all, liberty and peace.²³ Rhodes himself concluded: "If there be a God, I think that what He would like me to do is to paint as much of the map of Africa British red as possible and to do what I can elsewhere to promote the unity and extend the influence of the English-speaking race."²⁴

Cecil Rhodes was the prime mover of an organized group called the British South Africa Company registered in the autumn of 1889 to occupy Rhodesia, a territory later on named after him, before he was strongly identified with the Cape-to-Cairo dream. There was also Sir Harry Johnston, the well known African explorer, who in 1888 impressed upon Lord Salisbury the need to involve the British Government in the support of British commercial and missionary enterprises in the Lake region so that British "possessions in South Africa may be linked some day to our spheres of influence in Eastern Africa and the Egyptian Sudan by a continuous band of British dominions."²⁵ It was Sir Edwin

23

Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream, p.67.

24

Sidney Low, "Personal Recollections of Cecil Rhodes," The Living Age, 1902, Vol.XV, p.582.

25

See Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.117.

Arnold, however, who - perhaps for the first time - brought about
 26
 the idea in 1876. The next year, Gladstone recognized its implications:

Our first site in Egypt, be it by larceny or
 be it by emption, will be the almost certain
 egg of a North African Empire, that will grow
 and grow...until we finally join hands across
 the Equator with Natal and Cape Town, to say
 nothing of the Transvaal and the Orange River
 on the south, or of Abyssinia or Zanzibar to
 be swallowed by way of viaticum on our journey. 27

The Anglo-Congolese agreement regarding the Nile Valley and the adjoining regions, naturally, gave pleasure to no European power. Especially France was determined to oppose it. Its initial reaction, therefore, was to protest officially against the Anglo-Congolese agreement. On June 7, 1894, Hanotaux, the French Foreign Minister, specified the objections of the French Government in the Chamber of Deputies. He strongly attacked and denounced article 2 of the agreement which leased the strategic regions of Lado and Bahr-el-Ghazel to King Leopold. He indicated that, in the first instance, the stipulations of this article greatly undermined the rights and sovereignty of the Khedive of Egypt and that secondly, the Congo, as a neutral state, was not to extend its territories beyond those fixed by conventions with the bordering powers. Hanotaux was in fact reiterating in his speech the same old arguments espoused by the French Government regarding
 28
 Belgian ambitions over the Bahr-el-Ghazel. In accordance with the newly

26

Ibid

27

William E. Gladstone, "Agrsion on Egypt and Freedom in the East," Nineteenth Century, August 1877, pp.149-166.

28

Hanotaux, Le Partage de l'Afrique, pp.75-76.

established international law for the dismemberment of the continents of Africa and Asia, Hanotaux argued, "real occupation" was "the only practical means of preventing difficulties and conflicts." The implication was evident, namely, that Great Britain had not "effectively occupied" these territories and that it could not lease over territory which it had not owned. To France, the Anglo-Congolese agreement was therefore a phony one.

Hanotaux also denounced articles 3 of the same agreement. He maintained that the lease of the corridor between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Albert Edward was contrary to the concept of equal treatment espoused in article 5 of the General Act of Berlin and, what is more, incompatible with the preferential rights of France obtained through the agreements of 1884 and 1887 with the Congo State itself. As France had its own interests in the region it was intent not to be indifferent to other agreements to which it was not signatory and which could abolish its preferential rights.

The Earl of Kimberly refuted Hanotaux point by point in trying to protect the newly found British gains in the Nile Valley. He contended that even though the Congo State proclaimed its neutrality in August 1885, it was bound by it to an extent which limited its capacity to extend or modify its frontiers. As to the lease which Hanotaux objected, Lord Kimberly reiterated that "occupation by mutual agreement

29

Parliamentary Papers, 1899, Vol.112, p.9054. See figure 9, p.456.

30

Ibid

for a fixed or uncertain period" was "by no means unknown to European international law."³¹ It was also Lord Kimberly's contention that Britain was entitled to these territories because he said Britain had, through the Anglo-German treaty of 1890 and the Anglo-Italian treaty of March 1891, delimited, and which was not contested, its sphere of influence in the Nile Valley. Finally, Lord Kimberly stated that Britain had already brought some of the territory in question under its occupation before France had appeared in the area. Actually, what was then unfolding in this area was a British-French struggle for the conquest of the much coveted Nile Valley and its adjoining regions. France, in opposition to the British paper claims, was itself set to physically occupy the regions in question.

Germany was not also pleased with the new British strategy in the area. Therefore, it temporarily joined hands with France to oppose the British plan which was being introduced so systematically. The German Government, to start with, was displeased with Britain for entering into such an agreement without consulting with it.³² The German irritation was obviously understandable because the Anglo-Congolese agreement, especially article 3 which leased the corridor, was giving Britain a 'carte blanche' to cut across regions which bordered German East Africa. Had it not been for this corridor, Britain would have found it difficult³³ to gain access to its northern and southern spheres of influence.

31

Ibid

32

Die Grosse Politik, Vol.VIII, No.2048.

33

See figure 9.

Germany considered the British action unfriendly because already in 1890, at the time of the Anglo-German treaty, Britain had requested and Germany refused the strip of land in question which connected Lake Tanganyika with Lake Edward. Von Marschall had then replied to Britain that Germany "would have to consider such an 'English belt' around our East African possessions as a political and commercial danger...."³⁴ Britain had then dropped its request and Germany had considered the affair closed. That Britain would revive it with a third country and enter into an agreement to secure it was taken by the German Government to be morally improper and politically unacceptable. According to Von Marschall, German consent would only be available when it felt that its rights and interests were respected and recognized by Britain. Germany will not tolerate, he made clear, an encirclement of its East African territories by Britain or any other power without first acquiring³⁵ mutually arranged guarantees and agreements.

Germany was determined to bring an end to the Anglo-Congolese agreement by any means. It continually threatened that it will call an international conference of the European powers to reconsider the agreement, in which case, it emphasized, it would bring forth for discussion not only the present agreement but also other outstanding colonial issues in Africa. The implication of course was that the occasion would give France an opportunity to submit the Egyptian

34

Die Grosse Politik, Vol.VIII, No.2043, p.443.

35

Ibid., pp.440-441; No.2048, p.448. See also Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.119.

36

question for consideration by the powers. It was a clear indication by Germany that it was ready to make the international situation very difficult to Britain.

Germany also forewarned Leopold that his agreement with Britain was "incompatible with the neutrality of the Congo State. The Government of this state should not force Germany to go to extremes." To all these, British reaction was - initially at least - firm and resolute. It was only at a subsequent stage that Britain gave in and resorted to more conciliatory moves. Despite the fact that it still professed that article 3 did not "threaten either the progress or security of the German colonial possessions" the British Government decided to abandon its agreement on the corridor in face of mounting diplomatic antagonism within Europe. The Congo State was also willing to come out of the binding article 3 lest it would clash with Germany. The article was therefore officially revoked on June 22, 1894.

Now that Germany was temporarily out of the scene, France was left alone to settle its differences both with Britain and the Congo

36

Ibid., No.2042, p.442.

37

Ibid., No.2048, pp.449-450; No.2052, pp.453-454.

38

Parliamentary Papers, 1894, Vol.96, Africa, No.5, p.7390.

39

Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, Vol.2, No.164, p.584.

State. France's lot with the Congo State was of course an easier one. It had negotiated with Leopold fairly easily and acquired his consent to considerably modify article 2 of the Anglo-Congolese agreement. On August 14, 1894 France and the Congo State signed a new boundary agreement which gave France a free hand in the contested Ubangi-Shari and Bahr-el-Ghazel regions which were partly leased to Leopold under Article 2 of the Anglo-Congolese agreement.⁴⁰

Germany and France had, at least, shown Great Britain that the British people could not spread, unchallenged, all the way across Africa from the Cape to Cairo. Germany would not allow the British the little narrow strip between the Southern and Northern spheres of British influence, 'the wasp waist' which advocates of a Cape to Cairo policy coveted so much. 41

In a curious but yet accustomed 'modus operandi' Britain also disavowed of having harboured any intention to use the leased corridor for the furtherance of the Cape to Cairo policy. Lord Kimberly stated in Parliament, as he also assured the French Ambassador in London, that "the royal government did not propose at all to establish English dominion from the Cape to Alexandria. 'That is a policy,' he said, 'which must be relegated among absurd chimeras.'" The British Government⁴² insisted that any such strip of land it had acquired between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Albert Edward was not meant to advance political objectives. It was rather, it explained, envisaged to meet commercial

40

Ibid., No.157, pp.569-570.

41

Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream, p.323; Parliamentary Papers, Sir E.Ashmead-Bartlett, ser.4, Vol.32, p.396.

42

Die Grosse Politik, Vol.VIII, No.2061, p.461.

43

and communication objectives during the term of the lease. "In other words," comments Raphael, "Her Majesty's Government avowed no intention of trying to obtain an 'all-red' strip of territory throughout Africa." He further maintains that article 3 of the Anglo-Congolese Agreement "obviously, and specifically, was designed to establish a line of communication between the British spheres of influence in the south and in the north."⁴⁴

One aspect of the British-French rivalry in the Nile Valley was temporarily solved. However, both countries proceeded with their grand designs of the actual occupation of the Nile Valley.

In early 1894, the French Government was actively engaged in planning expeditions which will bring about the contested areas of the Bahr-el-Ghazel and the Nile Valley under its control. A meticulously studied pincer movement from the east and west was thus being coordinated to bring about the envisaged seizure of these zones. On June 5, the French Government had voted 1,800,000 Francs to finance the two east-west expeditions which would enable France to approach the Nile both from Ethiopia and the African west coast.⁴⁵ Monteil was instructed to lead the expedition from the west. After the Congo State-France agreement, however, Monteil was placed in command at the Ivory Coast and instead Liotard took his place in

43

Parliamentary Papers, 1899, Vol.112, p.7390.

44

Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream. p.323.

45

DDF., 1st. ser., Vol.11, No.65, pp.96-100; Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.268.

September as Commissioner for the Upper Ubangi with instructions to advance into the Bahr-el-Ghazel and as far inland as the Nile Valley. At about the same time, the expedition from Ethiopia was entrusted to Lieutenant Mizon with instructions to make "un voyage de reconnaissance" to the Nile Valley. Captain Clochette was also ordered to proceed from Djibouti to the Nile basin making his way through Ethiopia. These expeditions did not advance to the desired directions for some time because, as a result of several domestic as well as international problems, France stalled at many instances. Lieutenant Mizon's expedition, for example, was not put into operation - as was that of Monteil - because Mizon himself was recalled.⁴⁶ In this inactive epoch invariably labelled as "cette néfaste période," even Captain Clochette's expedition was idly counting its time in Ethiopia for some⁴⁷ eighteen months.

By mid 1895 the situation in France was dramatically changed. Captain Marchand, a person with great charm and considerable persuasive-⁴⁸ness, was earlier attached to the abortive Monteil mission. Marchand was back in Paris convinced and determined that the French Nile strategy was a workable one and that he should be able to start where

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Michel says Mizon was recalled because of Lagarde, the French Governor at Obock. See Michel, Vers Fachoda, p.12.

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Cocheris, La Situation Internationale de l'Egypte, pp.430-431; Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream, pp.328-329;338-339; Monteil, Souvenir Vecus, pp.110 ff; Work, Ethiopia, a Pawn in European Diplomacy, p.246; Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.268; Michel, Vers Fachoda, pp.93-113.

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Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.268.

his chief left in order to accomplish it. He enthusiastically persuaded the Quai d'Orsay and the Colonial Office to stand wholeheartedly by the French Nile strategy. By January 1895 Felix Faure had come to power replacing Casimir-Périer who as President had little sympathy and understanding to the French colonial adventure. Leopold, an old friend of Faure, had eventually come to Paris in September 1895 to consult with him what the two neighbouring powers could do about their respective plans regarding the Nile Valley. Abandoned by the British Government, Leopold was now more than ready to cooperate with France on this score. For some time now, Leopold had also been working on a huge expedition which was to advance towards the Nile and occupy, under Baron Dhanis, the Lado enclave leased to the Congo State in the August 1894 Franco-Congolese agreement. The outcome of the discussions between Faure and Leopold is not clear. It was evident, however, that the Dhanis expedition was to be linked and work in close cooperation with the Marchand mission which was now in the making in Paris.

The first letter instructing Marchand to lead a Nile expedition was given out by Guiyesse, the Colonial Minister, on February 24, 1896. The objective of the Marchand expedition, according to his instructions, was to accomplish the extension of French influence

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A.J.Wauters, Souvenirs de Fachoda et de l'Expédition Dhanis, Brussels, 1910, pp.18-29.

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General Mangin, "Lettres de la Mission Marchand," Revue des Deux Mondes, September 15, 1931, pp.241-283; Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream, p.340; Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.269.

up to the Nile before a similar British mission, headed by Colonel Colville, arrived at the vicinity. To accomplish this task, Marchand was given strict orders to establish friendly relations with Mahdist Sudan.⁵¹ Marchand's mission was also to work in coordination with the other French missions of Liotard and Clochette already dispatched to the Congo and Ethiopia respectively. Marchand's mission, in fact, was an attachment to that of Liotard's.⁵²

France had communicated the proposed Marchand and Clochette missions to Russia and Menelik, the two allies who were closely watching and following developments in the area.⁵³ The reason for this, of course, was obvious. France had considered Germany and Italy as being inimical to its interest in the Nile Valley because of the mutual agreements existing between them regarding the same area. Britain, of course, was not notified. What intrigued London, however, was not so much the fact that it was not notified about the Marchand mission but the knowledge that the mission was being carried out somewhat surreptitiously. Hanotaux replied to the accusation indignantly denying that the mission was ever launched under such circumstances. He reiterated that it was no more secret and surreptitious than the British expedition which, at the time, was being sent out to the Nile from Uganda.

51

Hanotaux, Le Partage de l'Afrique, pp.106-107.

52

Michel, Vers Fachoda, p.8.

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Hanotaux, Le Partage de l'Afrique, p.106.

The whole situation was alarming to Britain. Throughout, London had also been suspicious of Russian activities in Ethiopia.⁵⁴ An agreement of January 1895 concluded between France and Russia was therefore regarded as an ominous threat to British interest in the Nile region in particular and the East African area in general. What is more important, vague rumours circulating in Parliament and within staunchly colonialist circles, brought reactions to the French strategy on an official level. On March 28, 1895 Sir E. Ashmead-Bartlett, an ardent exponent of the Cape-to-Cairo policy, warned the House:

It was a significant fact that while the French were threatening the Nile waterway to the west, a very remarkable mission from another Great Power, also our rival, was working on the eastern side of the Upper Nile waters. There was a coincidence about this action which was not accidental. A large and influential and well equipped Russian mission went, about six weeks ago, into Abyssinia, bearing costly presents and large sums of money, for distribution among the chieftains and the people.⁵⁵

Sir Ashmead-Bartlett had earlier remarked in the same address that "of all the questions abroad of political rivalry and power which were likely to arise in the next few years, with the exception, perhaps, only of the future of Asia Minor and the passage of the straits - the security of the Upper Nile waterway was undoubtedly the principal."⁵⁶

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For Ethiopian Russian relations see pp.197-210.

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Parliamentary Debates, Sir E. Ashmead-Bartlett, March 28, 1895, Ser.4, Vol.32, p.395.

⁵⁶

Ibid., p.390-392.

He further suggested that his "government ought to have gunboats on the upper waters of the Nile" to "patrol the river as far as Lado and even Fashoda and ought to take steps to find out where this French force really was at the present time."⁵⁷

The strongest reaction came from Sir Edward Grey. In his now famous declaration, the then Under Secretary of State warned France in the most stringent way ever pronounced by a senior British diplomat.⁵⁸ As was expected, the reaction from Paris to the Grey statement was immediate and equally vigorous. On April 5 Hanotaux addressed the French senate in no uncertain terms. He stated that the regions in question were under the high sovereignty of the Sultan with the Khedive as lawful master. The allusions made by the British Under Secretary as regards the Anglo-German agreement of 1890 were nothing more than "one of those annexations on paper which an enterprising diplomacy

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Ibid., 392.

⁵⁸

"There was an agreement made in 1890 with Germany and another with Italy defining the British sphere of influence, and obtaining from those two great countries a recognition of the British sphere of influence.... Besides this, there is the question of the claim of Egypt. Towards Egypt this country stands in a special position of trust, as regards the maintenance of the interests of Egypt, and the claims of Egypt have not only been admitted by us, but they have been admitted and emphasized lately by the Government of France....In consequence of these claims of ours, and in consequence of the claims of Egypt in the Nile Valley, the British and Egyptian spheres of influence covered the whole of the Nile waterway.... I am asked whether or not it is the case that a French expedition is coming from the West of Africa with the intention of entering the Nile Valley and occupying up to the Nile....I cannot think it is possible that those rumours deserve credence because the advance of a French expedition under secret instructions right from the other side of Africa, into a territory over which our claims have been known for so long, would be not merely an inconsistent and unexpected act, but it must be perfectly well known to the French government that it would be an unfriendly act, and would be so viewed by England." Ibid., Sir Edward Grey, March 28, 1895, pp.404-406.

afterwards cultivates as germs of a future claim title....Germany, not having any right or claim to put forward in those regions, gave her assent to a claim which did not cause her any inconvenience."⁵⁹

The stern reaction and ensuing agitation from Paris had somewhat excited British official circles and there was a clearly softened stance towards France over the Grey speech. This attitude, however, did not last long for by August 1895 Salisbury was in power. The new conservative government had no intention to give in to French pressures because it was essentially committed to a colonial policy in Africa. Things in fact worsened with the appointment of Joseph Chamberlain as Colonial Minister. Chamberlain, it is to be remembered, was an ardent proponent of Britain's imperialist policy and was, in many respects, sympathizing with Rhodes' designs in South Africa. "As far as rival colonial interests, especially those of the French, were concerned," writes Raphael, "Chamberlain was a dangerous man to place at the head

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Parliamentary Papers, Hanotaux, April 5, 1895, Vol. 112, 1899, p. 9054.
 (The pertinent parts of Hanotaux's remarks read: "Quoi qu'il en soit, la position prise par la France est la suivante: Les régions dont il s'agit sont sous la haute souveraineté du Sultan. Elles ont un maître légitime, c'est le Khédive. Ceci posé, nous disons au gouvernement anglais: vous déclarez qu'en vertu de la convention de 1890, l'Angleterre a placé une partie de ces territoires dans sa sphère d'influence. Eh bien, faites-nous savoir du moins à quels territoires s'appliquent vos revendications; dites-nous jusqu'où s'étend cette sphère d'influence qui, d'après vous, s'ouvrirait sur la rive gauche du Nil et se prolongerait on ne sait où, vers le nord. En un mot, vous nous présentez une réclamation vague, incertaine, formulée dans des termes qui pretent à des interprétations diverses; vous réunissez dans une seule phrase la sphère d'influence de l'Égypte et la sphère d'influence de l'Angleterre. Dites-nous alors où s'arrête l'Égypte, où commence la sphère que vous réclamez. Vous desirez qu'à l'heure présente - et prématurément, à mon avis - nous réglions l'avenir de ces régions. Vous voulez obtenir notre adhésion sans même nous expliquer à quoi nous devons adhérer. - Dans de telles conditions, ne vous étonnez pas que nous refusions notre acquiescement et que nous réservions notre entière liberté.")
 Michel, Vers Fachoda, p. 6.

60

of the British Colonial Office."

From its very installment, the Salisbury Cabinet was actively considering the reconquest of the Sudan. Salisbury had confided this desire, especially Britain's readiness to send an expedition to Dongola, to the French Ambassador in London not too long after his assumption of the leadership of the new government. ⁶¹ He had a proposal to France that any expedition which would be undertaken by Britain on Egyptian territory - with arms and financial help acquired from the Khedive - "would not go beyond Dongola."

In October 1895, Leopold had gone to London to confer with Salisbury in order to mediate between Britain and France. He was again in London in mid January of the following year. This time, he came to promote his own interest in that part of Africa. He still wanted to lease a portion of the Nile within the Sudan and tried to substantiate his request by saying that Britain would be guaranteed of its control because he possessed the military capability to subdue and contain the Mahdists. However, Salisbury had in mind the failure of the Anglo-Congolese agreement. He brushed Leopold's request aside and reported to his Queen that he "hastened to give the conversation another turn" before it bordered "into some disrespectful commentary."

60
Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream, p.351. See also Parliamentary Papers, Ser.4, Vol.32, pp.407-408 on his reviews on the colonial issue.

61
Hanotaux, Le Partage de l'Afrique, p.101.

He added, "it really seems as if he had taken leave of his senses."⁶²

Even though Leopold's aggressive approach regarding the Mahdists was found to be laughable in London, Salisbury's own intentions were not far removed, or for that matter any different, from those suggested by the former.⁶³ In some respect, the Salisbury Government was in fact trying to level up with the wishes and aspirations of the British public. For some time now, there was in the air the desire to revenge Gordon and the British dead at Khartoum.

In March 1896, Britain decided to march on Dongola. The immediate pretext for such a march was the defeat of Italy at Adwa. In January, when Italy was decisively defeated at the battle of Amba Alage, it is to be remembered that the Dervishes had simultaneously advanced towards Kessela. Italy had appealed to Britain for help but in vain. Even an offer by Italy for Britain to take control of Kessela was met with outright unresponsiveness on the part of Salisbury.⁶⁴ No doubt,⁶⁵

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Buckle, Letters of Queen Victoria, III, pp.24-25.

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In a remark Salisbury made on June 12, 1896, we find the following uncompromising stand on Mahdist Sudan: "We have been for long time of opinion that sooner or later it would be necessary to take a step in the direction of reclaiming for Egypt the territory that was lost to her in the years 1882 and 1884....It was not a satisfactory state of things, and I freely admit that I did not consider that Egypt would be safe, under whatever guidance, if Khartoum was left permanently in the hands of a hostile Power. That is the general policy which impressed itself upon my mind....For myself, I repeat the opinion that we shall not have restored Egypt in that position of safety in which she deserves to stand, until the Egyptian flag floats over Khartoum." Parliamentary Debates, Salisbury, June 12, 1896, Ser.4, Vol.41, p.938.

64

For a discussion of this particular episode and for further readings see DDF., 1st.Ser., Vol.11, No.353, pp.550-551; No.199, p.291; No.204, p.298; GDD., Vol.9, pp.194-195; Vol.11, pp.199-200; pp.203-248; Castonnet des Fosses, L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, p.36; Glanville, Italy's Relations with England, pp.12-13; 41-50.

Kessela was strategically very important both for Britain and Italy (see figure 8) and the initial British reluctance to strengthen Kessela is indeed very inigmatic. By March, however, things were very different. The victory of Menelik over the Italians had left a power vacuum in the area and British interests were seriously threatened. Hence, the expedition to Dongola was found to be necessary. The First Lord of the Treasury told the House on June 23:

We have been quite clear in our statements that, although the particular moment for the advance was one on which Italian interests had important bearings, the advance towards Dongola itself is, in our opinion, necessitated by Egyptian interests, and by Egyptian interests alone - [cheers] - and that, even if the Italians had never been heard of in that part of Africa, that advance would sooner or later have had to be undertaken. 66

The underlying motives behind the conquest of Mahdist Sudan were many. The most important one, however, was French activities in and around the area. In considering the colonial history of Eastern and Southern Africa, it is true that, in a narrower sense, the fall of the Sudan was one of the major factors which had made possible the occurrence of a series of events which ultimately led to the opening up of Africa from Cape to Cairo.

Lord Herbert Kitchner was the British leader of the military expeditions in the Nile Valley between 1896 and 1898. Kitchner, in a way, was the Rhodes of North Africa. The irony of it is that Kitchner

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See Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.285 ff.

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Parliamentary Debates, The First Lord of the Treasury, June 23, 1896, Ser.4, Vol.41, p.537.

was also a sympathizer and friend of Rhodes. He had admired the southern empire builder and, more often than not, he had consulted with him on his plans concerning the Nile Valley.⁶⁷

It is essential to note at this point that, as matters turned out, Britain did not choose its own time in dealing with the Sudan and the Nile question. On March 1, 1896, the Italian army under General Baratieri was completely routed by Menelik at Adwa. With Italy's defeat, the great European designs which were worked out through meticulously arranged treaties and agreements were given a devastating blow. The collapse of the Italian posture necessitated not only a reassessment and reconsideration of the treaty considerations which the European powers opted to implement in the Nile Valley, but also, some of them, especially Britain, were forced to revise certain of their priorities regarding the region. The ensuing situation was also bound to exacerbate the rivalry of the powers to a certain degree. What is most important to realize at this juncture is the newly gained position of Menelik in the power structure of the area. Now that he had effectively controlled not only the destiny of his own country but also had strengthened his position as regards the approaches to the Nile, he was taken to be a power to seriously reckon with. In view of the newly restructured political dynamics of the area, therefore, Menelik's capital was to become the centre of increased diplomatic activities. It will be these diplomatic activities and the two most important European missions which were sent to Menelik's court following his victory at Adwa that the following chapter will attempt to examine.

67

Edwin S. Grew, *Kitchner*, London, 1916, Vol. 1, p. 46.

CHAPTER 7

THE EUROPEAN 'ENTENTE' AND THE CONDUCT OF DIPLOMACY AT MENELIK'S COURT

1. The Lagarde mission (January-March,1897):

The Lagarde mission was primarily a peace mission. France, having recognized Menelik's important role in East Africa, had sought for some time to establish friendly relations with him and to use such a relationship for the acquisition of his favour and support in the accomplishment of the French design in the Nile Valley.

It is to be remembered that in March 1895, at about the rupture of relations with Italy, Menlik had written to President Faure proposing a 'pacte d'union' renewing the treaty of June 7,1843 entered into between King Sahle-Selassie, his grand father, and Monsieur Rochet¹ d'Héricourt on behalf of King Louis-Philippe. President Faure, however, was not hard pressed to enter into any such agreement at the time and Menelik's proposal was not seriously considered. It was only on June 3,1896, three months after the defeat of Italy at Adwa, that the French President replied to Menelik accepting "bien volontiers ses propositions,

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DDF., Vol.13, No.35, annex, p.63.

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basés sur l'indépendance de son Empire." A French Government note dated September 30 contains the following remarks:

Le moment semble venu de recueillir les fruits de notre politique, en nous attachant par des liens durables le Souverain d'un Empire dont l'avenir, en raison de sa position géographique, intéresse à la fois nos établissements du golfe de Tadjourah et les régions de la vallée du Haut-Nil, à laquelle nous accédons maintenant à l'Ouest par le cours supérieur de l'Oubangui et où peuvent à bref délai, se poser des questions politiques d'une haute importance. 3

On November 24, the French Council of Ministers decided to send Lagarde to Ethiopia heading a special mission to the court of Menelik. Lagarde, a typical French bureaucrat, was also a diplomat well versed in the arts of colonial management and administration. In December 1883, at a time France was actively engaged in the occupation of the Red Sea coasts bordering Ethiopia, Lagarde was named Commissioner Extraordinary in charge of the delimitation of the newly formed territory at Obock. On June 24 he was made Governor of Obock and subsequently in 1888, he was put in charge of consular affairs at Zeila - British Somaliland - and Harar. It was between 1884 and 1885, at a time when Count Antonelli was acquiring territories for Italy in the northern coastal regions of the Red Sea, that Lagarde also obtained recognition for French authority from the Sultans of Gobad and Tadjoura on the coast and from the Danakil and Isa chiefs in the

2

Ibid., Vol.13, No.35, annex, p.63.

3

Ibid

4
 hinterland. Abandoning the original administrative centre of Obock France soon established Djibouti as a port city. It was on February 9, 1888 that France and Britain also concluded a Convention delimiting their respective spheres of influence in the region. The line dividing their spheres was drawn up to Harar assigning the tribes west of this line to France and those to the east to Britain.⁵

Lagarde's instructions regarding his mission dwelt on three important points. The first one involved the renewal of the Ethio-French treaty of 1843 and the establishment of relations compatible with the times. The second one, essential and important in legitimizing the territorial limits of France in the region, focused on the signing of a convention regarding France's frontiers with Ethiopia. In an instruction emanating directly from the meeting of the Council of Ministers of November 24, a French Government note entitled "Instructions pour M. Lagarde" said: "Nous vous signalons tout particulièrement celle qui concerne la détermination précise de notre zone de possession ou de protectorat direct."⁶ The third one, still much more important, centred around the acquisition of the consent of Menelik for the recognition of France's interest in the Nile region and his acquiescence to the use of Ethiopia as a passage towards the region in question. Instructing Lagarde on this particular point,

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Ibid., 2nd. Ser., Vol.9, 1, No.167, Lagarde to Rouvier, February 11, 1906.

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See figure 5 (p.376).

6

DDF., 1st, Ser., Vol.13, No.35, annex, November 30, 1896, p.63.

Lebon - the Minister of Colonies - emphasized: "il faut... presser l'occupation de la rive gauche du Nil par Clochette et Bonvalot."⁷ In another instruction issued out to Lgarde a week later, the Minister warned Lagarde to pass the information to Menelik that the Bonvalot mission was nothing but a purely scientific one which was destined to coordinate its efforts with that of Clochette who was undertaking another peaceful exploration of the right banks of the Nile. A third mission conducted by Prince Henry d'Orleans,⁸ Lebon emphasized, was "absolument privée."

Lagarde left Paris on December 26,1896 for Djibouti. We are told by Michel, a member of the French mission to the Nile which was at the time in Addis Ababa, that Lagarde was "recut a merveille" in Harar by Ras Mekonnen, the Governor of the town. The reception was cordial, he says, simply because the prospects of a gift of 30,000 Gras rifles were helpful in evoking such cordiality. Even though Ras Mekonnen accorded Lagarde an excellent reception this was not to

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Ibid., No.195, Lebon to Lagarde, April 12,1897, p.348.

8

Ibid., No.203, Lebon to Lagarde, April 19,1897, p.357. None of these missions was able to descend the high plateaux of Ethiopia to the plains of the White Nile. Clochette died in August 1897 at Goré and Bonvalot, sick on the way, abandoned the mission. Out of these two unsuccessful missions, a third one led by Bonchamps (who was member of Bonvalot's mission) was entrusted to accomplish the French mission. This one too did not proceed beyond the river Sobat. For details regarding these missions see, among others, Michel, Vers Fachoda; Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism; Hugues le Roux, Menelik et Nous.

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be repeated in Addis Ababa. One reason for this, Michel goes on, was because Menelik never was at ease with new acquaintances. The other reason, he writes, was because of a serious allegation that implicated Lagarde with the Italians at the time of the Battle of Adwa. The Italian Green Book makes mention of links the French emissary have had with General Baratieri in 1896.¹⁰

However, the allegation against Lagarde is very difficult to substantiate. It is true that Menelik and Lagarde had their ups and downs in their working relationship even after the latter was made Minister at his court. Nevertheless, there is no much ground to affirm that Lagarde's stay in Addis Ababa was marked by aloofness either from his side or Menelik's. In fact, his activities with Menelik and within his court indicate that they were indeed held in high esteem and he himself regarded with confidence and cordiality. As if to emphasize this position Lagarde tells us in one of his reports to his Foreign Minister: "Les ratifications du traité anglais sont arrivée. L'Empereur me les a fait remettre confidentiellement par le Ras Makonnen, en me priant du vouloir bien les examiner."¹¹ No doubt, Lagarde had the ear of Menelik and of his Councillors, but arrogant,¹²

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Michel, Vers Fachoda, p.18. See also Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.541.

10

It was alleged that Lagarde had given information to Baratieri detrimental to the formation of the Ethiopian army. Michel, Vers Fachoda, p.18.

11

DDF., 1st. Ser., Vol.13, No.387. Lagarde to Hanotaux, December 28, 1897, p.649. See also DDF., 1st. Ser., Vol.11, No.5, p.6.

12

Vivian, Abyssinia, pp.183-185.

13

nosy and "a vain and unintelligent man" as he was, he was liable to step on people's toes and evoke their anger and wrath - including, at times, that of Menelik. Because he was vain and arrogant he had requested from Menelik, and obtained, the title of Duke of Entoto,¹⁴ and being unintelligent he was prone to provoke the displeasure not only of his diplomatic colleagues but his own countrymen who were in Africa in a mission to promote their country's cause.

During his mission Lagarde discussed, negotiated and made possible the signing of three different agreements and two other conventions with Menelik. The first one, a document dated March 1895,¹⁵ was remitted to Lagarde in Harar on January 26, 1897 by Ras Mekonnen. The document had, as a preamble, the treaty of June 7, 1843 between King Sahle-Selassie of Shoa and King Louis-Philippe followed by the modified articles as proposed by Menelik. Of the eight articles included in the document, two of them - most important to Menelik - recognized (a) the port of Djibouti as the natural outlet of Ethiopia through which Menelik can import "all matériel of war" necessary for his Empire, and (b) reaffirmed Ethiopia's national independence and

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Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.59.

14

Michel, Vers Fachoda, p.90.

15

This is the original date on which Menelik proposed to President Faure to renew the treaty of June 7, 1843 between King Sahle-Selassie and King Louis-Philippe.

16

territorial integrity. The two other agreements signed between Mekonnen and Lagarde at Harar on January 29 and 30 concluded, ~~after~~ reaffirming that Djibouti was the "official outlet" for Ethiopian commerce, that (a) there will be an Ethiopian establishment in Djibouti and (b) the provisions, merchandise, arms and ammunition destined for Emperor ¹⁷ Menelik will pass through it.

On February 12, Lagarde left Harar for Addis Ababa taking with him 1,000 rifles and ammunition, and silken goods to the value of ¹⁸ 20,000Francs as part of the presents to Menelik from his Government. The most important achievement of the Lagarde mission, however, was the signing of the frontiers and White Nile conventions on March 20, 1897 with Menelik in Addis Ababa. The frontiers convention was then considered to be mutually advantageous in that France was able to delimitate her borders adjoining Ethiopia peacefully and in a relatively short period of time. It had also abstained from claiming territories from Ethiopia, possibly up to Harar, which it had recently defined with Britain as lying within its sphere of influence.

The convention on the White Nile, held secret by both governments,

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"Art.1: Le Gouvernement de la République Française, ayant toujours admis l'Empire d'Ethiopie comme un Etat libre et independant, veut encore donner a l'Empereur Menelik une preuve d'amitié et lui venir en aide; il considerera donc le port de Djibouti comme le débouché du commerce Ethiopien, et, conformément a l'article 1er de l'ancien traité, il lui permettra d'introduire, a sa faculté, par le port de Djibouti, tout le matériel de guerre nécessaire a l'Empire Ethiopien." DDF., Vol.13, No.76, pp.133-136.

17

Ibid., No.84 & 85.

18

F.O.403/255, Brigadier General Cuningham to Lord Hamilton, Aden, February 22, 1897.

was perhaps the main success of the Lagarde mission. It was supposed to be instrumental in facilitating France's occupation of the Nile Valley. The convention is so important that it should be quoted in full.

Article 1: Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Ethiopie, établissant son autorité sur la rive droite du Nil Blanc a partir du 14^e degré vers le sud, aidera, autant que possible, les agents du Gouvernement Français qui seront sur la rive gauche entre le 14^e et le 5° 30'. Par réciprocité, le Gouvernement Français aidera, autant que possible, Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Ethiopie pour lui permettre de se maintenir solidement sur le Nil.

Article 2: La pavillon de sa Majesté floterra sur la rive droite et le pavillon Français sur la rive gauche du Nil Blanc. Les gardes, des deux cotés, se rendron service.

Article 3: Sauf le cas de voyage ou de rapatriement de peu d'importance, les agents et soldats Français ne devront point d'établir sur la rive Ethiopienne. Toutefois, en cas de péril pressant, on pourra y passer sous la protection de sa Majesté. En ce cas, le Choum [official] de sa Majesté le plus proche devra etre aussitot prévenu.

Article 4: Pour faciliter leur tache, les deux Gouvernements se communiqueront mutuellement tous les renseignements utiles concernant ces régions et agiront de concert en bonne et loyale amitié. Cet arrangement restera secret pour le moment. 19

Simply put, the French strategy consisted in the occupation of the left bank of the Nile by France and the right one by Ethiopia. In its accomplishment, however, both countries were to proceed as allies and make each other's efforts easier and tenable. Woolf paraphrases the

French approach this way:

The plan which M. Lagarde had to carry out was simple. Marchand from the West, and Clochette and Bonchamps from the East, were to converge upon the Nile; when Marchand arrived at Fashoda he was already to find two permanent fortifications upon the river banks flying the Abyssinian and French flag respectively. These fortifications and the converging expeditions would form the basis of an Abyssinian claim to the Bahr-el-Gazl and left bank. Kitchner and the British army when they arrived from the north, would find three strong French expeditions, supported by their allies the Abyssinians, strongly entrenched in "solid fortress" right across the path of Mr. Rhode's railway and Mittel-Afrika. The French "solid block" of empire from the Congo to Somaliland would already be in existence, and M. Deloncle's policy of "taking forfeits" and turning the British position in Egypt from the rear would have succeeded. 20

Some writers have alluded, somewhat implausibly, that French pressure of the time was responsible for the policy adhered to by Menelik regarding the Nile and the expeditions he sent in that direction. As was pointed out earlier, the efforts undertaken by Menelik in this direction have a direct bearing on his own new foreign policy of the post-Adwa period of regaining territories lost to 'historic Ethiopia.' It should therefore not be assumed that Menelik, in signing the convention on the White Nile, was succumbing to a foreign pressure simply to participate in a collusion course. Sanderson is right when he points out that "the promises and gestures of cooperation which he [Menelik] made to the French were as empty as the repeated declarations of irreconcilable enmity to the Dervishes with which he had regaled the British in May 1897, a few weeks after the entente with Omdurman had been consummated." Sanderson,

in fact, articulates the very policy of Menelik when he states:

The expeditions which the Negus dispatched to the western frontiers of his realm in 1897 and 1898 have sometimes been cited as evidence of French influence; in fact Menelik saw to it that these operations should promote exclusively Ethiopia interests, which he was quite shrewd enough to safeguard without any European prompting. The received account that the Negus had committed himself more or less completely to the support of French policy on the Upper Nile evidently requires drastic revision. 21

Even though Lagarde was given strict instructions to do his utmost to prepare the French advance from Ethiopia to the Nile Valley, both expeditions led by Clochette and Bonvalot never succeeded. This was mainly because of French disorganization to coordinate the two major expeditions advancing from east and west to converge on the Nile and essentially because of Menelik's adherence to a policy which primarily pursued his own interest rather than promoting that of the French. Lagarde's role in the coordination of the task of the two expeditions was disastrous and handled in an incompetent manner. 22

In many instances, Lagarde utterly failed to provide the expedition with the necessary leadership, moral support and logistics and was ill-prepared to forward supplies stocked in Addis Ababa and the Red Sea coast while these expeditions languished amidst marshy swamps and hostile terrains in western Ethiopia. He even gave the leaders of the

21

Sanderson, "Contributions From African Sources to the History of European Competition in the Upper Valley of the Nile," Journal of African History, III, 1. 1962, p.89.

22

Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p.541.

expeditions the impression that their success meant not the glory of France but an instance which should be used to build up his own position and prestige at home. Bonvalot reported to Hanotaux about Lagarde by saying: "He did not seem to me preoccupied with the interests of his country as much as those of his own."²³ Michel, member of the Bonvalot expedition, also maintained that there no doubt existed an incompatibility - "une rivalité trop vive" - between Lagarde and Bonvalot. But he questioned the disposition of the official French representative in Ethiopia. He wrote: "Could we imagine a high civil servant being capable of standing strongly opposed against a mission he should protect?"²⁴ Sanderson believes that "Lagarde's failure to cooperate with de Bonchamps did indeed amount at times to outright sabotage; and his behaviour was frequently, and all too clearly, influenced by personal hostility and professional jealousy. Yet even when the Mission has been placed under his own control...his support remained very lukewarm."²⁵

The Clochette-Bonvalot expedition, it must be remembered, were not military expeditions involving a great number of soldiers. They were kind of errand missions constituting of less than a score of French people whose mission it was to plant the tricolour on the left bank of the Nile before a similar British mission was able to hoist the Union Jack on the

23

"[Il]ne me parait pas se préoccuper autant des interets de son pays que de siens propres." DDF., 1st. Ser., Vol.13, Bonvalot to Hanotaux, No. 281, July 24, 1897, p.469.

24

Michel, Vers Fachoda, p.94.

25

Sanderson, "Contributions from African Sources to the History of European Competition in the Upper Valley of the Nile," Journal of African History, III, 1, 1962, p.88.

same locality. It therefore becomes all the more difficult to comprehend why the French acted the way they did in conducting these important missions from the Ethiopian side. Even though not necessarily true, most French men wanted to hold Lagarde primarily responsible for the failure of the missions.

Members of the Bonvalot expedition, for example, seriously complained that their mission did not succeed because Lagarde was reluctant to provide them, while they were in the interior of the Ethiopian highlands, with the necessary arms and ammunition - meant to be given as gifts or bribes to some of the chieftains of the regions who provided help - and a boat which they contended they could have used on the river to cross some of the difficult and perilous terrains they could possibly have not made on foot. Regarding the failure of the mission, Michel, one of the most outspoken and indignant member of the Bonchamps mission, makes several such references in his book to the Lagarde mischief.

Michel was further intrigued by the consideration that Lagarde could have acted in such a manner when, in fact, Dejazmatch Tessema had volunteered to transport the French boat in question to western Ethiopia

26

"Le Choum [official] envoyé par le Dedjaz Tessema [Governor of Goré Province] pour nous saluer répond a nos questions que l'Empereur a écrit au Dedjaz a notre sujet, mais qu'il n'a pas le plus petit bout de papier a notre adresse: "Il y a deux jours, ajoute-il, 35 mulets portant des carabines Gras sont arrivés d'Addis -Abeba, mais ils appartiennent a Zaouga, l'interprete de M. Lagarde, qui a envoyé ici ces fusils pour les vendre." Le premier interprete de la légation de France peut ainsi expédier ici 35 mulets chargés de carabines, - et le ministre de France qui sait avec quels moyens dérisoires il nous a envoyé au Nil 'fonder deux forteresses,' le Ministre, a qui nous avons adressé de si pressantes demandes de secours, n'a rien pu nous faire parvenir! En cinq mois il n'a trouvé ni le temps ni le moyens de nous faire envoyer un bateau! Pourtant, trois cents chameaux sont

convinced that it was the only means to efficiently tackle the gorges of the Nile. Michel sarcastically concludes: "And we, the French, the ones primarily interested, we could not transport this boat from Djibouti to Shoa." To their surprise, when members of the Bonchamps mission ended their disastrous expedition and returned to the coast, they saw their boat - "une caisse eventrée crache des boulons couverts de rouille" - rotting in the storehouse. Also, the administrator at Djibouti still had in his safe the 25,000 Francs sent to the Bonchamps mission by the Colonial Office.

Both the Clochette and Bonchamps missions were not able to descend the high Ethiopian plateaux to rendez-vous with Marchand on the plains of the White Nile. Tired, exhausted and without medical assistance, Clochette died at Goré in August 1897, and Bonvalot, sick on the way, abandoned the mission and returned to the coast via Addis Ababa. Out of the unsuccessful Clochette-Bonvalot missions, a third one led by Bonchamps - himself a member of Bonvalot's mission - was entrusted to accomplish the French Nile mission. This mission too

entretenus aux frais du gouvernement a Djibouti. Il n'en aurait pas fallu quinze pour transporter notre chaland." Michel; Vers Fachoda, p.391.

27

"Et nous, Français, les premiers intéressés, nous ne pouvons faire monter ce bateau de Djibouti au Choa." Ibid., p.396.

28

Ibid., p.422.

29

Ibid

30

A telegramme dated October 30, 1897 from the Minister of Colonies to Lagarde instructed the latter: "Approuve mesures prises pour fusion missions Clochette et Bonchamps. Usez toutes votre autorité pour assurer succès définitif."

DDF., 1st., Ser., Vol.13, No.347, p.571.

did not proceed beyond the river Sobat.

As will be explained at a subsequent stage when the important question of European colonialism versus Ethiopian resistance will be discussed, the new policy of regaining the territories of historic Ethiopia launched by Menelik after Adwa had also a great deal to do with the failure of the French pincer movement from Ethiopia. It must at the outset be stated that there is no denying that Menelik was very well aware of the objectives of the French missions and that he had in fact tacitly agreed to help these missions when he allowed them safe conduct across his Empire. What was then not clear is the extent to which the French have believed Menelik to be their supporter in the ensuing partnership. What is now clear, however, is the fact that even though Menelik was willing to help the French missions in crossing his country - because he felt there was every possibility for him to gain by it and from such Ethio-French joint efforts - he nevertheless was bent on subordinating French interest to that of his own government. To suggest, as some writers do, and indeed as most of the members of the French mission allege, that Menelik in point of fact did his utmost to sabotage the French drive to the Nile, would be to misunderstand the very substance of Menelik's own policy regarding the Nile and the adjoining regions. Menelik, it is to be remembered, was very suspicious of British activities in the Nile region since the beginning of 1890. Some aspects of these suspicions were amply proved right to him at the time of his conflict with Italy regarding its protectorate ambitions

over Ethiopia. Menelik therefore made the Ethio-French-Russian alliance possible in the hope to use such a power balance as a leverage against not only Italian protectorate aspirations in Ethiopia but also to thwart British designs in the Nile Valley and even, to a certain extent, in Ethiopia itself.

It is very clear that the French had trusted and therefore greatly depended on Menelik to achieve their objective of occupying the west bank of the Nile from Ethiopia. A French Embassy note from Cairo addressed to Hanotaux, like many other french documents from Rome, London, St. Petersburg, Addis Ababa, Bonn and Paris, amplifies this desire. The note in question stated: "...Les relations amicales de Ménelik avec nous peuvent nous donner l'espoir qu'il nous pretera main-forte pour couper la route du Cap a Alexandrie, lorsque nos expéditions du Haut-Congo et du Bahr Ghazal auront atteint le grand fleuve." What the French did not realize, however, was the fact that Menelik was then suspicious of the French as he was of the British, and for that matter, even of all foreigners. Sanderson rightly observes that "Lagarde evidently believed that the entente was directly exclusively against the British; and Menelik did not discourage this belief." The frustration of the members of the French mission - though not of the French Government - at the failure of the mission from the Ethiopian side is understandable.

31

DDF., 1st. Ser., Vol.13, Boutiron to Hanotaux, No.291, August 5,1897, p.486.

32

Sanderson, "Contributions from African Sources to the History of European Competition in the Upper Valley of the Nile," Journal of African History, III, 1962, p.88.

Bonchamps, for example, in regaining Paris, bitterly complained that Ethiopia was, apart from Lagarde's footdraging and incompetence, responsible for the failure of his mission. He reported to Trouillot, the new Foreign Minister replacing Hanotaux, that Menelik's authority in the Nile and Sobat regions was minimal and that Ethiopian officials in the vicinity did not support the departure of his mission to the Nile. He even said he suspected an Ethiopian hand in the desertion of some of the Ethiopian escorts which guided the mission. Michel, reiterating the same point of view wrote: "Les ordres de l'Empereur, en Abyssinie, sont comme une pierre jetée dans un large étang: pres de la pierre, de grosses vagues; plus loin, l'eau se ride a peine." In a long letter of September 2, 1897 addressed to Menelik from Bouré, within the western province of Goré, Bonchamps made known the difficulties he encountered from the authorities of the region. He complained that it was the understanding of these authorities that the region was prohibited for French citizens and that they were adamant in saying that they only recognize the orders of Fitawrari [Commander of advance wing] Haile, Azaj [Lower Commander] Cherinet and Azaj Doubale - evidently lowly administrators - and not his. He therefore pleaded with Menelik to intervene on their behalf.

The French missions of Clochette, Bonvalot and Bonchamps may have been failures. French influence in Ethiopia between 1890 and a little after the Lagarde mission, however, was constantly on the rise.

33

DDF., 1st. Ser., Vol.14, No.246. See also Michel, Vers Fachoda, p.164.

34

Ibid., p.237.

It was mainly due to Lagarde's hard work and tenacity that stronger ties were made possible between Menelik and the French Government. Menelik, of course, had - since his accession to the Shoan throne as a King - been responsible for the strengthening of Ethio-French relations. In stressing Menelik's role in this regard, Castonnet des Fosses remarks:

En mainte occasion, il a montré ses sympathies pour la France. En 1870, alors qu'il n'était que roi du Choa, il a pleuré en apprenant nos malheurs. En 1873, il voulait prendre part a la liberation du territoire, en sousscrivant a l'emprunt des trois milliards. Cette année, le 14 Juillet a été célébré a Addis-Abbada [sic], la capitale officiele de l'Abyssinie. Menélick a voulu s'y associer. Sur son ordre, le canon a tonné, et la Ville était pavoisée de drapeaux francais, russes et ethiopiens.³⁶

With the appointment of Lagarde as head of the French mission to Menelik in January 1897 and Minister at his court in October of the same year, diplomatic contacts were made much more easier, and given the condescending attitude of Lagarde towards Menelik, France was able to gain Menelik's favour at his court. What is more, the counsellings of her diplomats as well as some of the self-appointed emisaries from

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"Les retard causés par les difficultés qui nous ont été crée par les autorités de Goré et de Bouré, en l'absence du Dedjaz-match Tessama, épuisent sensiblement les fonds qui nous ont été confiés et dont nous devons rendre compte a notre gouvernement; l'inaction prolongée décourage progressivement nos hommes; nos vivres d'Europe diminuent enfin dans le larges proportions; notre séjours forcé cause donc de graves préjudices a l'accomplissement de notre mission....J'ai le ferme espoir que Votre Majesté, qui aime la France et ses enfants, voudra bien fair cesser cet état de choses; qu'Elle voudra bien nous autoriser a nouveau a quitter l'Abyssinie pour nous diriger vers le Nil; qu'Elle nous permettra enfin de passer par les routes et les contrees, soit en Abyssinie, soit en dehors de l'Abyssinie, qui pourront nous mener a notre but le plus rapidement possible." Ibid., pp.217-218. For other complaints regarding the Bonchamps mission see pp.137-139; 164-167; 216-220; 224; 237-256; 262.

36

Castonnet des Fosses; L'Abyssinie et les Italiens, pp.299-300.

Paris were not falling on deaf ears.

Lagarde succeeded in contributing to Ethio-French relations by responding somewhat understandingly to Ethiopian interests. He gained the confidence of Menelik by carrying through the Ethiopian-French arms deal initiated by the Emperor. He also was responsible, to some extent, in encouraging the entente that developed between Menelik and his country against Britain's colonialist designs in the Nile Valley and the region. To make his démarches easier he also developed his ties on the personal level. When he first arrived in Ethiopia in February 1897 he had with him several presents and decorations from his President to Menelik and the Queen. After his successful completion of his mission he went back to Paris and succeeded to bring with him in October 1897 the cross of the 'Legion d'honneur' for distribution among Menelik's Councillors - the Rases³⁷ and the Dejazmatchs. In June 1898 he suggested to the Quai d'Orsay to welcome an official good will mission from Ethiopia. He recommended³⁸ "une reception officielle tres cordiale." The role of Lagarde in Addis Ababa was such that when he recommended to Hanotaux that he will be in Paris with the Ethiopian mission in mid July, the French Foreign Minister's annotation on the recommendation note read: "Ainsi donc³⁹ nous n'avons plus personne aupres de Menelik."

³⁷ Michel, Vers Fachoda, p.246.

³⁸ DDF., 1st. Ser., Vol.14, No.216, p.217.

³⁹ Ibid., No.217. ("Thus, we have no one with Menelik.")

To Lagarde the Ethiopian mission that he arranged to accompany to Paris was symbolic of the newly established Ethio-French relations. Menelik also consented to its dispatch because he felt it demonstrated the trust Ethiopia now confided in France. Because the mission had no other objective to accomplish than foster good will he did not deem it necessary to send neither Mekonnen nor other high officials of his government. The mission consisted of Dejazmatch Wolde, Dejazmatch Biatu and Likemekwas Nadew together with six other retenues. "None of the above," said Harrington, "have the reputation of being influential personages. Monsieur Lagarde endeavoured to include Ras Makunan to visit France with him but failed."

The Ethiopian mission, thanks to Lagarde, had a becoming reception in France. On its way back, the mission, accompanied by M. Mondon, a journalist by profession and an unofficial French representative in Ethiopia, and M. Blanchart, an attaché at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris, arrived in Jerusalem on the 10th. of September 1898. The British Consul in Jerusalem reported on the activities of the Ethiopian mission thus:

The object of these Envoys in coming to Jerusalem is to visit the holy places from religious motives, and to enquire into the status of the Abyssinian monks resident in this city, who number about 130, and who

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Nephew of Ras Mekonnen.

40

F.O.1/34, Harrington to Salisbury, June 17, 1898.

41

DDF., 1st. Ser., Vol.13, No.195, footnote 3, p.348.

possess a considerable amount of landed property. After exchanging visits with the Mutessarif of Jerusalem and the French Consul-General, the Mission left again this morning for Jaffa, in order to embark in the 'Cassard' for Port Said. 42

The British, ever observing on all French movements and activities, did not abstain from trying to undermine Lagarde's efforts in Ethiopia. Most British officials, if not all, exaggerated the failure of the Lagarde mission and his sellout to Menelik. 43

Rodd, for instance, was never sure of the success of Lagarde's mission. He was, however, content to recount about it sceptically. He admitted that "there is yet much more to learn about it." Nevertheless, he concluded by saying that "the singular reluctance of M. Lagarde and of... the French Government to make known the nature of their triumphant successes, and the fact that we could gather nothing about them in the country, would seem to justify some scepticism." 44

42

F.O.403/275, Consul Dickson to de Bunsen, Jerusalem, September 14, 1898.

43

"With regard to two questions, at any rate, which he had come to settle, M. Lagarde was undoubtedly gravely disappointed. In the first place, in defining the boundaries of the French Somali Protectorate on the Gulf of Tadjourrah, instead of enlarging his borders as he had hoped to do so, he had to content himself with the reduction of the Colony to a narrow belt some 100 Kilometers in depth from the sea, and to discover that French pretensions in those regions seemed to excite greater apprehension in Abyssinia than our much more extensive claims. In the second place, he utterly failed to induce Menelik to grant French subjects proprietary rights." 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' 1897, Rodd to Salisbury, June 22, 1897, pp.61-62.

44

Ibid., p.62.

Rodd felt Menelik had exploited the weaknesses inherent in the nature of the Lagarde mission. He wrote: "My own impression is that Menelik has been shrewd enough to use the French, as, in the first instance, he used the Italians, for his own particular ends." His analysis of the mood then prevalent at Menelik's court is both correct and perceptive. He believed that now that Menelik had obtained all what he needed by way of arms and ammunition, "together with a certain moral support of the territorial claims he has advanced," he resorted to referring them "to their former protestations of disinterested friendship with a somewhat pained surprise that they should demand material advantages which he could only concede at the price of offering other Powers whom he desires to conciliate." Lagarde and Rodd led rival missions to Ethiopia. Each genuinely represented his country's interest. By the same token, reminiscent of 19th. century diplomatic practises, each diligently spied and reported on the activities of the other. At the end of the Lagarde mission, the French Minister for Colonies congratulated its leader for "the results obtained" and further instructed to have a watchful eye on the on coming Rodd mission. The Minister telegraphed Lagarde to say: "faites surveiller mission anglaise par Mondon."

45

Ibid

46

DDF., 1st. Ser., Vol.13, Lebon to Lagarde, No.195, April 12,1897, p.348.

2. The Rodd mission (April-June 1897):

The Lagarde mission had preceded Rodd's mission by two months. Three other expeditions, that of Clochette, Prince Henri d'Orleans and Bonvalot were also already in Ethiopia at about the same time Lagarde conducted his mission. By the end of March 1897, when the d'Orleans and Bonvalot missions arrived at Addis Ababa, both the Lagarde and Clochette missions had taken leave of Menelik, the former returning to Djibouti and the latter on its way to the Nile. Rodd reports that his mission should have come across that of Lagarde's on its way south to the Red Sea coast. Rodd wonders, however, that "for some reason which [he] cannot explain, [Lagarde] appeared anxious¹ to avoid us."

French reaction to the Rodd mission was similarly strong. Early in February, when the Quai d'Orsay was informed by reliable sources of an imminent British mission to Ethiopia, it issued a stern instruction to the Minister of Colonies to alert its bureau in Djibouti to approach Menelik and warn him about the nature of the British mission. On February 24 and 28 Hanotaux wrote to Lebon, the Minister of Colonies, that he had been reliably informed by M. Cogordan, the French agent and Consul General in Cairo, that

¹ 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' 1897, Rodd to Salisbury, June 22, 1897, p. 61; Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, pp. 85-86.

Rodd was leading a mission to Ethiopia. He noted in particular that he had been reliably assured that the Khedive was in the dark about the objectives of the mission. Lebon was therefore invited to alert Mr. Lagarde so that the latter will advise Menelik discretely "du caractere purement Britannique de la mission projetée."²

It is to be remembered that the British Government has had no meaningful relations with Ethiopia since the time of Emperor Theodros. The main reason for this, of course, was the alliance of Britain and Italy against Yohannes, and later on Menelik, regarding Italy's protectorate ambitions over Ethiopia. After Adwa, the British Nile Valley policy had also kept Menelik aloof and drawn him much nearer to the French and Russian embrace. However, Britain was willing to establish cordial relations with Menelik not so much because it had seriously wanted it but because it had some urgent and compelling reasons of its own to do so. The two most important reasons were the Nile issue and Menelik's

²
 "Menelik ne doit pas perdre de vue, d'une part, que l'interprise qui tend a rendre l'Angleterre, sous le couvert de l'Egypte, maitresse du Haut-Nil, aura pour conséquence d'entraver l'expansion de l'Abyssinie vers la Vallée du grand fleuve africain....Ménélik ne saurait envisager avec indifférence une éventualité dont la réalisation permettrait a l'Angleterre de se trouver un jour en mesure d'enserrer l'empire abyssin de trois cotés a la fois....Il y a la une situation sur laquelle M. Lagarde doit etre invité 'confidentielement' a appeler l'attention du Négus avec toute la prudence et le tact nécessaire, en lui faisant discrettement comprendre l'interet qu'il faisant discrettement comprendre l'interet qu'il a apporter la plus grande circonspection dans ses rapports avec la mission anglaise, afin d'éviter tout ce qui pourrait engager sa liberté d'action et le développement ultérieur de sa puissance. Je vous serai obligé d'adresser par télégraphe, dans ce sens, a notre agent des instructions precises, dont j'atacherais beaucoup de prix a recevoir préalablement connaissance." DDF., 1st. Ser., Vol.13, Hanotaux to Lebon, No. 126, February 24, 1897, p.227. Ibid., Hanotaux to Lebon, No.133, February 28, 1897, pp.239-240. For French official reaction to the Rodd mission see also Nos.137; 148; 149; 169; 174; 262; 291.

position vis-a-vis Mahdist Sudan. It was therefore necessary for the British Government to establish the grounds for a 'modus vivandi' if its policy in the area was to be workable. Gleichen wrote:

As we had uptill now never entered into political relations with Menelik, - and indeed could not do so as long as he was considered to be under the protectorate of, or was at war with, our friends the Italians, - and the idea is firmly rooted in Abyssinia that it was we who supplied the Italians with money to carry on their campaign, our prestige in the country had somewhat diminished, and may be said to have reached its lowest point by the the beginning of 1897. Hence our Mission. 3

It was to Rennel Rodd that the task was entrusted to stimulate Anglo-Ethiopian relations through the mission he was going to lead. In Cairo, he awaited Menelik's 'agrément' to the proposed British mission. From among his private correspondences we find a letter, written on January 30, which showed his anxiousness and eagerness to accomplish the mission. He wrote: "I expect we ought to get Menelik's answer about the 10th. of February....I shall be ready to start at any moment after the answer comes in."⁴

Later on, Rodd wrote in his memoirs that "the ostensible objects which I was to endeavour to secure were" - and quoted a statement made in the House of Commons by Curzon - "to assure King Menelik of our friendly intentions, to endeavour to promote amicable political and commercial relations, and to settle certain questions which

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Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.4.

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F.O.1/32 & 1/33, Rodd to George, January 30, 1897.

*

An Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the time of his writing.

have arisen between the British Authorities in the Somali Coast Protectorate and the Abyssinian Governor of Harrar." Curzon's statement was made in reply to a question about the intended British mission to Menelik. Rodd himself, however, was being very candid when he elaborated further and said: "There was, however, more⁵ behind the surface than might appear from the official reply."

Rodd's mission, including the instructions from London, were worked out on the basis of suggestions furnished by Lord Cromer from Cairo. The India Office was also closely associated with the mission in that it kept both Rodd and Cairo well abreast of developments in the area. On February 19, Salisbury addressed a cable to Cromer to inform him of the desirability to make Rodd the bearer of the Khedive's letters to Menelik and seeking Cromer's opinion on its advisability. He remarked: "It seems desirable, as Mr. Rodd will have to conduct negotiations, not only on behalf of his Country, but also more or less for Egypt, that he should be the bearer of letters from the Khedive of the nature suggested by you."⁶ Rodd suggested, Cromer also concurred with him in the opinion, that it would be beneficial if the mission carried with it the Khedive's letter which assured Menelik of the former's friendship. "I should, however," emphasized Rodd, "not press this if I found His Highness [the Khedive] reluctant to cooperate in this scheme."⁷ Cromer's concurrence

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Rodd, Memories, 1894-1901, p.112.

6

F.O.403/255, Salisbury to Cromer, February 19, 1897.

7

Ibid., Cromer to Salisbury, February 19, 1897.

to send the letter was based upon one consideration. Prince d'Orleans, "an extreme Anglophobe," may well have been, he wondered, a bearer of messages - "messages of a nature unfriendly to England"⁸ - from the Khedive to Menelik.

Rodd left Egypt for Ethiopia on March 10. Even though the French contended that the reception accorded to the British mission in Ethiopia was a subdued one - Henry d'Orleans says "correct, curt, and cold" - the allegation is unjustified and unfair. It is true^{*} that because of mishaps beyond the control of the court, as many people as were accustomed to go out to welcome foreign dignitaries at the outskirts of the capital on such occasions were not at hand to offer the traditional welcome to Rodd. Even those who came were late. To this, Rodd had officially protested. However, with the exception of insignificant incidents like this, Rodd's reception both at Harar and Addis Ababa was warm and cordial. Rodd, in reporting back to Salisbury on the favourable welcome he was given by Ras Mekonnen at Harar said: "The reception accorded to us has been in every respect a most friendly one, and precisely similar, I am assured, to that which⁹ was accorded to the Mission of M. Lagarde." Writing of the reception

8

Ibid

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"They begged me to believe that what had occurred was not 'par méchanceté,' but only due to the prevailing want of organization and ignorance. All the necessary orders had been given, and, indeed, the King had been asking up to the last moment whether all the preparations were complete. He was greatly upset at what occurred, and would himself express his regrets." 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' 1897, Rodd to Salisbury, April 28, 1897, pp.9-10.

9

Ibid., Rodd to Salisbury, April 4, 1897, p.5.

in Addis Ababa Gleichen, a member of Rodd's mission, says: "In his official reception of the Mission the manner of the Emperor was both courteous and dignified, and the circumstances of our reception left a most favourable impression on us." Of the number of people who came out to welcome the mission, he wrote: "We were informed that, in all, upwards of ten thousand troops took part in the proceedings, and as the ordinary garrison of Addis Ababa is small, numerous troops from the outlying districts had been called in to add 'éclat' to the ceremony.

The day Menelik received the mission in audience "he wore," Rodd writes, "a purple silk cloak, on which were conspicuous the stars of the Legion of Honour [France] and the order of St. Catherine of Russia." Present in the ceremony were Henry d'Orleans, le Vicomte Edmond de Poncins, M.Mourichon, M.Mondon Vidailhet, M. Bonvalot, M.Savouré, Colonel Leontiev, M.Ilg and two Russian non-Commissioned officers, some fifteen Europeans all together. Most of Menelik's Councillors also participated in the ceremony. In presenting his credentials, Rodd's short speech assured Menelik of Britain's friendship towards him and his country:

In presenting to your Majesty the letter with which I have been entrusted by my sovereign, Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, in the year in which

10

Gleichen, With the Mission with Menelik, pp.131-132.

11

Rodd, Memories, 1894-1901, p.150; Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.129.

12

Rodd, Memories, 1894-1901, p.151; Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.129.

Her Majesty has completed sixty years of her happy reign, being at peace and amity with all nations, I am charged to convey to your Majesty also a special message of friendship, together with the most solemn assurances of Her Majesty's peaceful intentions, and of her desire to renew and to strengthen the ancient happy relations which have subsisted between our two countries. 13

Rodd also presented three letters to Menelik, one from Queen Victoria accrediting him as Special Envoy, and two others from the Khedive and the Coptic Patriarch of Egypt.

Rodd's over all instructions from London, as contained in Salisbury's letter of February 24 and some other official documents, centred around four main points.

1. The establishment of friendly relations with Menelik. 14
2. The development of commerce between the two countries and the conclusion of a most-favoured-nation convention. 15

13

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' 1897, Rodd to Salisbury, April 20, 1897, p.12-13.

14

"It will be your duty to assure King Menelik of friendly feelings entertained towards him by Her Majesty's Government, and of their desire to maintain with him the most cordial relations. You will explain to him, further, that the operations which the Egyptian Government have undertaken against the Khalifa are solely for the purpose of regaining provinces which were formerly under Egyptian rule, and that there is no intention whatever of taking any steps which could be considered hostile to Abyssinia, or which would involve any encroachment on Abyssinian territory." F.O.403/255, Salisbury to Rodd, February 24, 1897; 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' pp.1-3.

15

"it should not be difficult to make it clear to the King that the establishment of a civilized Government, desirous of developing peaceful intercourse and commerce in the countries immediately adjacent to his dominions, will be far more advantageous than the continuance of the state

3. The defining of frontiers with respect to the Nile Valley and the Somaliland Protectorate. 16
4. The obtainment of Menelik's neutrality, if not his alliance, against the Dervishes. 17

In the negotiations which followed, Rodd submitted the above four points for consideration by Menelik. With respect to his instructions regarding the most-favoured-nation clause to Great Britain and her Colonies, "I from the first," reported Rodd, "dreaded¹⁸ opposition." The opposition, according to Rodd, emanated from Alfred Ilg, the Emperor's adviser in foreign policy, who, he suspected, was promoting and looking after French railway interests in Ethiopia. The frontier proposals were double pronged. The British move from Egypt south to Mahdist Sudan and the heart of the Nile Valley was not yet underway. Therefore, Britain was not in a hurry to settle the Western

of disorder and depredation which characterizes the rule of the Khalifa." Ibid. "I should wish you to take advantage of the opportunity offered by your approaching visit to Abyssinia to endeavour to conclude a most-favoured-nation Convention with King Menelik." F.O.403/255, Salisbury to Rodd, February 25, 1897; 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' p.4.

16

"In case, as may be expected, King Menelik should ask for some recognition of a definite frontier of his dominions towards the Valley of the Nile, you are authorized to enter a discussion on the subject." F.O.403/255, Salisbury to Rodd, February 24, 1897; 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' pp.1-2. "...One of the principal objects of your mission is to come to arrangements with King Menelik for a definite understanding as to the frontier between Abyssinia and the Protectorate, and for friendly intercourse and relations between the British and Abyssinian authorities and the inhabitants on either side." Ibid.

17

See footnote 14.

18

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' Rodd to Salisbury, May 13, 1897.

frontier with Ethiopia before it had successfully neutralized the
 19
 Mahdi. Rodd made this clear in his dispatch of May 13 to Salisbury.

"Reserving for the present the question of negotiations respecting the western frontier," said Rodd, "I explained the importance which your Lordship attaches to the conclusion of a definite arrangement respecting the frontiers of the Somali Coast Protectorate, and laid down the arguments upon which our claims are based." Writing
 20
 in his 'Memories,' Rodd pointed out the dilemma which brought about this policy. He said:

From M. Ilg I learned that various border governors were engaged in rapidly extending Abyssinian occupation in many directions. Menelik himself had made it clear that his ambition embraced a portion of the Nile. It became evident to me that the more prudent course would be to postpone all question of delimitation on the western side until after we had reached Khartoum and our reoccupation of the old Egyptian provinces on the river had become an accomplished fact. 21

Rodd had expected that he would not be able to define the disputed frontiers between Ethiopia and the Somaliland Protectorate until he had cleared the ground "by thoroughly understanding the basis of our respective claims." As would be readily discussed, the basis for British claims was

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It is also to be remembered that Menelik was not also in a hurry to settle the western frontiers issue because he also had his new frontiers policy launched after April 1891.

20

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' Rodd to Salisbury, May 13, 1897, p.25. Regarding the western frontiers Wingate also concurred that it was unwise to open negotiations with Menelik because the power of the Mahdi in the Sudan was still there and that any British move now would "urge the King to push on with greater energy the progress of his effective occupation." F.O.403/255, Wingate Memorandum, May 9, 1897.

21

Rodd, Memories, 1894-1901, p.168.

soon given a convenient dress up from the pages of 19th. century international law. Rodd also reminded Menelik that he was unable to proceed on the frontiers issue because of his circular letter of April 10,1891 addressed to the European powers which "lays claim to districts which cover more than half of our Protectorate as defined in an Agreement...."²² Britain had concluded treaties with tribes in the Somali region dating from 1884 and 1886. Rodd believed that Britain's claims in the area were "fully established" because he said "we had every reason to believe would, under the Ucciali Treaty, as we at the time understood it, have been brought to [Menelik's] notice.

Menelik, of course, had never acquiesced to these treaties and had not recognized Italy as his official intermediary in the exercise of his foreign policy.²³ Therefore, "looking at the way on which the frontier was traced, he exclaimed: 'But you are advancing right up to the gates of Harar.'" Rodd pointed out that it was Menelik who had advanced up to Britain's possessions because of the existence of these treaties with the native tribes of the area. The argument which followed between Rodd and Menelik was very interesting. In the ensuing heated discussion Menelik referred

22

"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 Esa Somalis, and reaches Ambo." Menelik's circular letter to the European powers, April 10,1891, 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' pp.16-17.

23

See chapter 4.

his claims to the ancient limits of Ethiopia. "I asked him," writes Rodd, "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." This was the way Rodd put the reaction of Menelik: "...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 to pay their tributes of cattle to their masters, and had been coerced when they failed to do so." "I replied," says Rodd, "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 already explained, the reversionaries of Egypt."²⁴

The other most important point for negotiations was the question of Menelik's neutrality against the Dervishes. Consistent with his instructions, Rodd told Menelik that the "warlike operations" initiated against the Sudan by the Egyptian Government were not directed towards Ethiopia. He assured him that they were being undertaken to re-establish the authority of the Khedive in the Sudan, and that any help from him by not allowing arms and ammunition from passing to the Sudan through Ethiopia would be of great help.

His Majesty at once said that the enmity between his Empire and the Dervishes was irreconcilable. They had burned their churches and taken his people prisoners. It was inconceivable that he could ever give them aid or countenance. It might not suit him, at present, to enter into open hostilities; his country needed peace. The

Dervishes had sent Embassies to him twice, and begged him for a pledge that he would not attack them. He had given them no assurances, and sent them back after a few days. They were his enemies, and he would never do anything to assist them. I said that an assurance to that effect was all that we asked for, and handed him a draft Article I had framed. 25

At the time, Menelik's relations with the Mahdi were never so good. When Menelik became King of Shoa, he had increasingly sought the Khalifa's friendship and the latter had consistently rejected his offers basing himself, mainly, on religious grounds. With the increasing threat to his rule from Britain and Egypt in the 1890s, however, the Khalifa had readily recognized the usefulness of an 'entente' with Menelik. Sanderson says that "by 1897 a working²⁶ entente if not a formal alliance, had come into being." When in fact Menelik assured Rodd that "the enmity between his Empire and the Dervishes was irreconcilable" relations between the two countries were, it could be said, at their best, and even, at their climax. Both the Emperor and the Khalifa had recognized the dangers and threats that their countries were faced with from the European powers. We therefore find that when Menelik rejected, obviously for tactical reasons, the friendship of the Khalifa to the Rodd mission, he nevertheless was maintaining close contacts with him warning him of the dangers of concerted European efforts to weaken

25

Ibid., p.26.

26

Sanderson, "Contributions from African Sources to the History of European Competition in the Upper Valley of the Nile," Journal of African History, III, 1, 1962, p.70.

their national sovereignty and territorial integrity. He wrote to the Khalifa: "This is to inform you that the Europeans who are present in the neighbourhood of the White Nile with the English have come out from the east and west with the intention of penetrating between our two countries and separating us.... Keep careful watch and be strong, lest the Europeans come between us, for in that case we shall fall into great trouble, and there will be no rest for our children."²⁷

In reporting to Salisbury from Cairo on some of the above documents which were captured at the fall of Omdurman, Rodd says that "the dates of [some of the documents] are long subsequent to the signature of the Treaty in which Menelik voluntarily described the Dervishes as the enemies of his Empire, and his sentiments, as expressed there and in many conversations, are hardly consistent with the tone of his letters to the Khalifa."²⁸ From Cairo, Cromer also suggested that the spirit of the captured documents must be the basis for officially renouncing Menelik's territorial claims in the Nile region now that the Mahdi was defeated. In a telegraph message of October 6, he advised Salisbury that he had prepared the following instruction to be sent to Harrington, the British representative in Addis Ababa.

27
F.O.403/275, Menelik to Khalifa.

28
Ibid., Rodd to Salisbury, September 16, 1898.

The correspondence between King Menelik and the Khalifa, which was sent to you by Mr. Rodd, has probably reached you by now. If you think it desirable, on general grounds, you can draw the King's attention to the fact that, by acknowledging and making peace with the Khalifa at a date subsequent to Mr. Rodd's Mission, he is debarred from putting forward any claim to the territories which have lately been conquered from the Khalifa by the combined forces of England and Egypt. 29

In the first Menelik-Rodd encounter, the former, while he saw fit to label the Mahdi his enemy, had nevertheless found the time propitious to commit himself on the two remaining important points, namely, the most-favoured-nation clause and the frontiers question still pending between them. Menelik had requested Rodd to put his proposals on paper so that he may study them. Accordingly, Rodd submitted a seven point draft treaty proposal for Menelik's consideration. Surprised at the way Menelik had reduced the contents of his draft proposal to its bare minimum, Rodd commented that "all the Articles were somewhat altered, and reduced to their simplest form. It was explained to me that the King mistrusted elaboration as a possible cloak to obligations which he might have failed to realize, being excessively susceptible since his experiences with the Ucciali Treaty, and preferred the simplest expression of the point it was desired to secure."³⁰

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F.O.1/35, Cromer to Salisbury, October 6, 1898.

30

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' Rodd to Salisbury, May 13, 1897, p.27.

Menelik drastically amended Rodd's draft proposal advisedly. What Menelik returned to Rodd was in fact a proposal of his own. He had very well known that what Rodd had submitted for his consideration was nothing but a document which argued the case of Britain and which wished to advance its interests. Menelik, thus, omitted Article 3 from Rodd's draft proposal which intended to guarantee the caravan route between Zeila and Harar. In his counter-proposal, Menelik explained that "it was unnecessary." He emphasized that "he had no intention to close trade roads." Rodd was also attempting to be as accommodating as possible when he included Article 5 in his proposal which stated that "all goods at Zeila for transmission to Ethiopia destined for the exclusive use of His Majesty the Emperor and his family...be allowed to pass through Zeila free of duty." He was of the opinion that such a concession from him will naturally have the moral force to induce Menelik to accept his proposals contained in Article 4, which stipulated that "Great Britain and her Colonies shall always receive unconditionally in Ethiopia the treatment accorded to the most favoured nation in regard to all matters relating to commerce." Menelik, of course, was never willing to agree to any such concession. He therefore rejected Article 5 outright by pointing out that "he would gratefully accept it as a

31

See figure 5, p.376.

courtesy, but he did not like its being laid down in the Treaty."³²
 Instead, Menelik added his own Article 4 which secured the transit of arms into Ethiopia through the British Protectorate.

Rodd's Article 6 dealt with the appointment of an Ethiopian Representative at Zeila in order to help promote Anglo-Ethiopian relations. Rodd later on reported that "the 6th. Article in my draft was, in the Emperor's opinion, also unnecessary. If he wished to appoint an Agent he would duly forward an application to Her Majesty's Government to that effect; but it did not require Treaty stipulation."³³ Ironically and understandably enough, the sole article of importance which gained Menelik's concurrence was Article 7 respecting the Dervishes. Rodd's article was considerably shortened, but nevertheless, the essential points were retained. "I had His Majesty's assurance that it was absolutely impossible that he should ever contemplate affording his traditional enemies assistance,"³⁴

Rodd wrote. Rodd had also asked much more. He stated: "I asked His Majesty to add to the concluding Article a statement that, mindful of his obligations under the Brussels Act, he would also stop the passage of arms to any districts where the Slave Trade prevailed. This he declined to do, saying that he adhered to the Brussels Act as an honourable man, and his engagement given there

32

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik," Rodd to Salisbury, May 13, 1897, p.28.

33

Ibid

34

Ibid

35

need not be repeated in a Treaty made with us."

The most difficult aspect of the Menelik-Rodd negotiations centred around the frontiers issue. For reasons already explained, Britain did not want to open the western frontier question. Hence, it did not figure in Rodd's draft proposal. This was why Article 2 read "Reserved for future discussion." However, the frontiers bordering the Somali Coast Protectorate and Ethiopia were subject for negotiations. In the discussions Menelik and Rodd were not able to come to an agreement as regards the eastern and western limits of Ethiopia. Rodd reported on Menelik's conviction that "he had gained Harrar by conquest, and looked on all the regions as part and parcel
36 of the Harrar province." Rodd also says that he reiterated and "assured him that this was not so; we were established in these countries long before the expedition which resulted in his annexation of Harrar, and though he had conquered Harrar, he had not conquered
37 us." Rodd also showed Menelik on a map the pastures which were used by the tribes under British Protectorate. But Menelik responded politely that "he could not understand maps sufficiently to judge" the situation and that they should both agree to maintain the 'status quo.' It was Rodd's contention that the 'status quo' should first be defined by mutual agreement, for it was difficult to establish the actual points of occupation by both sides as Ras Mekonnen, the Governor of Harar and of the Eastern territories, had

35

Ibid

36

Ibid., p.27.

37

Ibid

already hoisted the Ethiopian flag in these areas and claimed jurisdiction over them.

This was why Rodd suggested that Menelik should empower Ras Mekonnen to open negotiations with the British mission at Harar to reach an agreement on the eastern frontiers. Although Menelik preferred that Ras Mekonnen should come to his capital to join them in the negotiations Rodd requested the Emperor that he be permitted to travel to Harar to meet Ras Mekonnen because he felt the delay which might result in Mekonnen's travel arrangements would take his mission well into the Ethiopian rainy season. To this Menelik readily concurred and consented to empower Ras Mekonnen to come to an agreement with Rodd at Harar and to annex any such agreement the two might arrive at into the treaty that the Emperor and Rodd might eventually come to sign in a form of an exchange of notes. The final arrangement was to submitted for Menelik's final approval.

With the exception of the question of the eastern frontiers, Menelik had come to a final agreement with Rodd. One more issue, however, was the difficulty over the language in which the Menelik-Rodd treaty was to be written. The Emperor had explained to Rodd that he had no English interpreter. He therefore wanted the treaty to be written in Amharic and French - a language his Ethiopian interpreter and Swiss adviser were conversant with. Rodd sought his Foreign Minister's approval on this. He explained to him: "...I cannot hope to convey to your Lordship a picture of the great difficulties I

had to encounter in getting His Majesty to comprehend the various points involved and in allaying the eternal suspicions, which, after his unfortunate experience with the Italians, lead him to expect a trap or a pitfall in every phrase which departs from childish simplicity." ³⁸ The final treaty was signed on May 14 in ³⁹ Amharic and French.

Even though the western frontiers bordering the Nile Valley and the over all ancient limits of Ethiopia claimed by Menelik were not discussed within the framework of the treaty negotiations, questions related to them were raised more than once. Rodd was surprised to learn during the negotiations that it had in fact been sometime since Menelik had already put official claim to the ancient limits of Ethiopia. He had stated of his ignorance to Salisbury:

I have the honour to report that at the outset of my negotiations with Emperor Menelik, I observed to His Majesty that in correspondence which had passed with Ras Mekunan, the latter had referred, in justification of various demands which had come as a complete surprise to Her Majesty's Government, to some Proclamation or Declaration of the King's; that to the best of my belief we had no knowledge of any such Proclamation or Declaration, and I should be glad to learn on what the reference was based. His Majesty answered that it referred to a Circular letter which he had addressed, on the 10th. April, 1891, to the Sovereigns and Chiefs of the various States of Europe in which he laid down what he

38

Ibid., p.29.

39

See text in Appendices.

considered the actual boundaries of the present Ethiopian Empire to be, and further defined what may, by analogy, be described as a tributary to Ethiopia, and which it was his avowed intention to bring once more within the area of his dominion. 40

Rodd's ignorance about the document was genuine. He himself writes in his 'Memories' "that a circular had been addressed to the powers which I had never seen, putting forward the most extensive claims to a dominion not only covering nearly half of our Somali Protectorate, but also extending westward to the Nile. It claimed⁴¹ to reconstitute the ancient limits of Ethiopia." It is obvious that Rodd's briefings were incomplete. Queen Victoria had in fact acknowledged receipt of the document in question on August 18, 1891. She replied to Menelik: "We have received the letter which Your Majesty addressed to us in the month of April last related to the⁴² limits of the Empire of Ethiopia."

Recognizing that Rodd was indeed unaware of his circular⁴³ of 1891, Menelik made a copy available to him on May 13, 1897.

40

Ibid., Rodd to Salisbury, May 4, 1897, p.15. In the 'General Report of Abyssinia,' the Rodd mission also reported: "Referring again to Menelik's proclamation of 1891, defining the Ethiopian frontiers, it seems that this document was officially communicated to the Powers through Italy; but it appears not to have been taken seriously by Her Majesty's Government." p.8.

41

Rodd, Memories, 1894-1901, p.167.

42

F.O.403/155, Victoria to Menelik, August 18, 1891. That such a letter was sent out, see also DDF, 1st. Ser., Vol.9, No.20, p.30. It is not known, however, if the letter had reached Menelik.

43

"Formerly in 1883 the 14th. Miazia (10th. March [sic], 1891), I had sent to all the European Powers a letter showing the boundary of the Ethiopian

The next day, Rodd was also quick to bring to Menelik's attention an agreement signed between Britain and Germany which defined their respective spheres of influence in the region. Menelik responded the same day in writing by reiterating that "the treaty which the English Government and the German Government have made respecting territory in Africa you have shown me on the map Myself I never heard of it until you told me."⁴⁴

The Rodd mission, even though unconvinced by Menelik's arguments about the limits of his Empire, nevertheless was fully aware of his seriousness and strong determination. In its final report to the British Government, the mission wished to impress this particular point on the British authorities at the Foreign Office:

When it is remembered that at one period an Ethiopian dynasty governed Egypt, and that at another, Ethiopian rule extended as far west as the frontiers of Darfur, it will be understood that Abyssinian ambitions are not inconsiderable, and although the frontiers traced by Menelik in 1891 stop short of the Nile Valley, except at one point, nevertheless, he does not conceal his desire to make the Nile "from Khartum to Nyanza" his eventual frontier. 46

Kingdom; but as you have told me that letter did not reach your Government, I have sent for you here a copy of that letter, which I beg you to lay before the English Government when you arrive in your country." 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' Menelik to Rodd, May 13, 1897, p.37.

44

Ibid., Rodd to Menelik, May 14, 1897, p.37.

45

Ibid., p.38. See also F.O.403/255, Menelik to Rodd, May 14, 1897.

46

'General Report on Abyssinia,' p.11. See also 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' p.36.

After the ceremony marking the signing of the Menelik-Rodd treaty of May 14, Rodd invested Menelik, on behalf of Queen Victoria, with the insignia of the Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George. The Emperor, wearing th Collar and the Cross, signed the treaty and later on requested Rodd to be the bearer of the Royal Class of the Order of the Star of Ethiopia to Her Majesty the Queen. "The Emperor detained me for a short private conversation," says Rodd, "after which we parted, His Majesty renewing all the expressions of good will and satisfaction which he has constantly given utterance to during our stay here." In the "short private conversation" Rodd had with Menelik, he says they "discussed at length, and with perfect frankness, certain African problems which were of interest to his country and came to an understanding on some questions which were also at that time of particular importance to ourselves." Rodd was very impressed with Menelik. The impression he had left on him was very clear when he wrote:

Although the matters dealt with at the concluding interview belong to past history and can no longer affect present or future issues, I do not feel at liberty to disclose their nature here, and I only refer to it because the discussion revealed that Menelik was a man of quick and keen intelligence capable of appreciating political situations with clearness of apprehension which I had hardly anticipated. The future showed that my confidence in this remarkable African potentate was not ill-founded, and I had the satisfaction

of realizing that more had been accomplished by the mission than might appear from any concrete results recorded in a treaty. 48

At the conclusion of the first half of the Anglo-Ethiopian treaty in Addis Ababa, Menelik made Rodd the bearer of two letters, one to the Khedive of Egypt - acknowledging receipt of the letter he had sent to him through Rodd⁴⁹ - and an other one, to Queen Victoria, "helper of Christians, Defender of the faith," congratulating her on the occasion of her diamond jubilee. He wrote to her: "Since we have learned that the accomplishment of your sixty years reign has to come to pass, with friendship and great joy, we shall record a vow to God, praying that he may cause this bright diamond year to bring to yourself all prosperity, and to your people peace and rest, and that he may vouchsafe that health and peace should continue with you to the end."⁵⁰ Queen Taitu also sent "a gift of gold ornaments"⁵¹ to Victoria. Perhaps, to compensate for the unfortunate mishap which had displeased Rodd at his arrival, Menelik provided the mission a huge and impressive farewell ceremony. Rodd felt that the occasion was meant "to remove any lingering impression which might remain in our minds that we had been neglected on our arrival, but I was totally unprepared for such a display as we have just witnessed,

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Rodd, Memories, 1894-1901, p.174.

49

Menelik told the Khedive: "Since it is many years since a message from the Egyptian Government has been sent to me. I was very glad when I received your honoured letter." 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' Menelik to the Khedive, May 14, 1897, p.45.

50

Ibid., Menelik to Victoria, May 13, 1897, p.44.

51

Ibid., Rodd to Salisbury, May 15, 1897, p.47.

which has profoundly impressed every member of the Mission."

In Harar, Rodd's frontier negotiations with Ras Mekonnen were not easy, and at least not to his expectation. These negotiations, wrote Rodd, were "most wearing and trying." Ras Mekonnen was a hard bargainer and shrewd diplomat to negotiate with. Rodd calls him "a perfect Abyssinian gentleman" with "a quick intelligence [which] readily assimilated new impressions and ideas." Rodd was impressed with his personality. Reminiscing in his 'Memories' about his discussions with him in Harar Rodd writes: "His manner was quiet, cordial, and dignified....Though I was never able in after years... to take advantage of his warm invitation to return and stay with him on his country estate, he kept me in kindly memory and, when sent to Englnad to represent Menelik at the coronation of King Edward, he paid a long visit to my mother in London, and gratified her by friendly

Ibid., Rodd to Salisbury, May 15, 1897, p.47. Rodd was so touched that he imparted these memories to Salisbury: "The scene was a most impressive one, and it was evident that another final opportunity had been sought by His Majesty of paying public honours to the British Mission....[At the first camp at Akaki, some 10 miles outside the capital] as if to atone for any shortcomings we might have experienced on our way up, we found our camp stocked with provisions, including a flock of thirty sheep and 1,100 cakes of native bread for our followers. On our arrival, I at once wrote to the Emperor expressing, in the name of the Queen, our thanks for this remarkable demonstration....Of the sincerity of his satisfaction there is no question, and it is only to be hoped that he will retain as pleasant a memory of our visit as we shall do of his kindness and hospitality."

Rodd, Memories, 1894-1901, p.183.

54

references to her son."

The trouble was, Mekonnen, as a true supporter, if not instigator of Menelik's policy regarding the limits of Ethiopia's ancient territories, had firmly stood on the way of Rodd claiming that his sovereign's Empire on the east extended to the sea. ⁵⁵ Some of his other handicaps emanated, Rodd also pointed out, from difficulties which he was to encounter as a result of the Ethio-French treaty which was signed only some weeks back by Lagarde.

"I was practically without the means of exercising any moral pressure" on Menelik, he recounted, because the French had voluntarily accepted "so conspicuous a curttailment of their Protectorate claims on the Somali Coast." ⁵⁶

It was obvious from the very start that Rodd's chances with Mekonnen were very limited, and that by the same trend, his mission with him was not to draw much benefit for his country. Mekonnen had at hand a map which delimited Ethiopia's frontiers up to Hargeisa towards the Indian Ocean. He had, from the outset, made it clear to Rodd that should he wish not to accept his strongly held position it was fruitless to

54

Ibid., p.135. Michel writes of him: "Ce grand seigneur a la mode d'antan, tres froid, tres réfléchi et tres digne, me sembla 'quelqu'un.' C'est quelqu'un en effet; notre opinion du premier moment a été confirmée par les observations auxquelles ont donné lieu les événements écoulés pendant notre voyage....Il est doué d'un esprit remarquablement observateur, sinon d'une tres haute intelligence. Ces rares qualités n'ont pas échappé a l'empereur Menelik; il lui a confié maintes missions délicates et, de plus en plus l'investissant de toute sa confiance, se fait maintenant représenter par lui dans des circonstances importantes. Michel, Vers Fachoda, pp.54-56.

55

Rodd laments that the difficulty arose "most of all on account of the very exorbitant nature of the Abyssinian pretensions and the theory they cling to,

pursue the negotiations further for he would then have to refer the gist of their disagreements to Menelik and thus delay the delimitation of the eastern frontiers. Rodd admitted that "it was here at the very outset that [he] perceived that logic or argument were entirely unprofitable and wasted, for the Ras, after listening patiently " reiterated Ethiopia's claims and said emphatically that it "was what the Emperor Menelik was prepared to accept as [his] boundary."⁵⁷ "He fought desperately for Hargeisa," Rodd reported, and that if the mission was not ready not to give it up "he must refer the whole matter to the Emperor and close the negotiations." Rodd was not also disposed to relinquish Hargeisa. He stuck firmly to his claim that the tribes were now under British protection and that by the rules of the prevailing international law the territories in question lay under British jurisdiction. Subsequently, Mekonnen agreed to accept a settlement less than he originally requested for. He "drew a line about half-way between this line [a sphere about 100 kilometres in depth parallel to the coast similar to that accepted by the French, and starting from the same point on the Zeila-Harar road which he had earlier drawn in red chalk on a map] 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."⁵⁸

that the dependencies of Harrar extended to the sea." 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' June 4, 1897, p.49.

56

Ibid

57

Ibid., p.50.

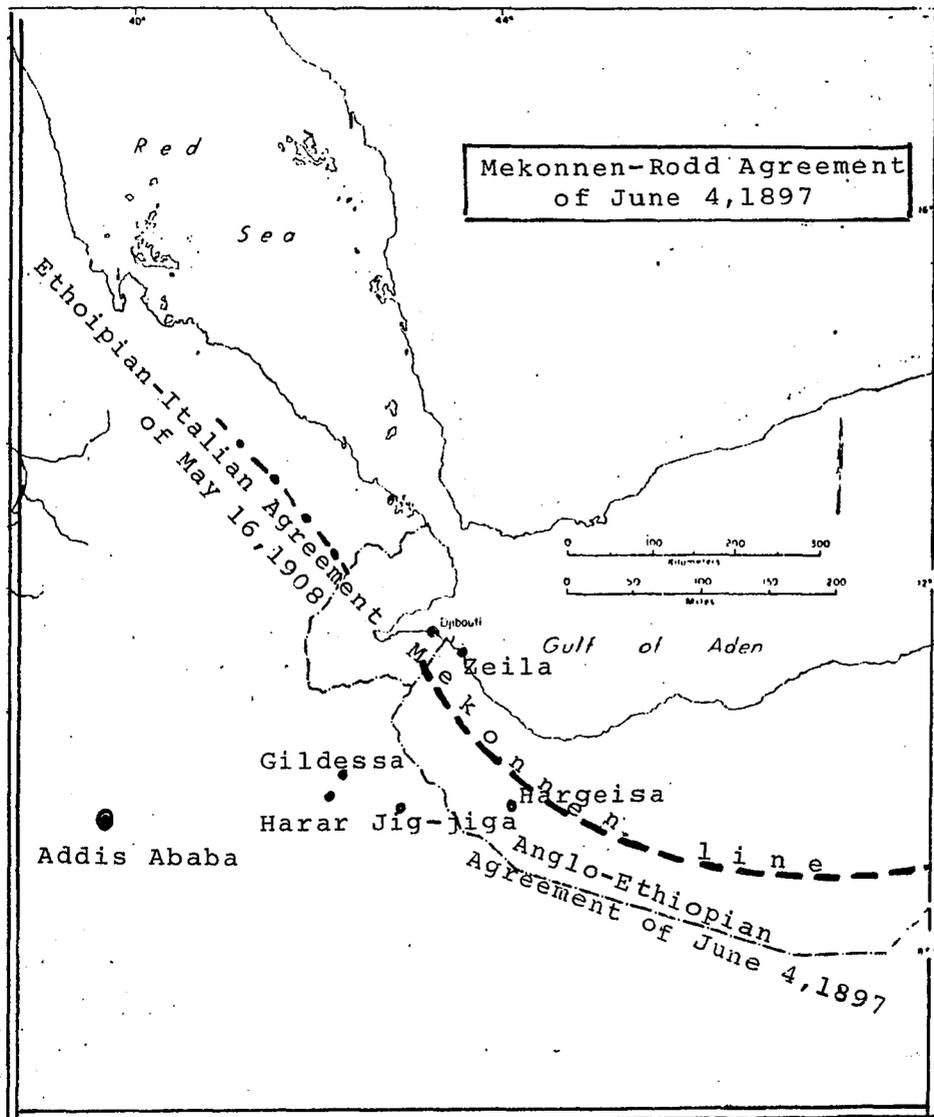


Fig. 10

When the final draft was agreed upon based mainly on Mekonnen's proposals, the Ras came out yet with another demand which was meant to thwart any future British ambitions in Ethiopia and that part of Africa. Mekonnen informed Rodd that before he would be able to consent to the agreed upon draft, Rodd must "give him solemn engagement" that "no railway should be made by [Britain] in the Protectorate without previously consulting the Emperor Menelik."⁵⁹ This Mekonnen requested because he had been informed that Britain was intending to build a railway from Berbera and had therefore believed that as a result of the new agreement they were about to sign, Britain might bring its influence nearer the important Ethiopian post of Jijiga.⁶⁰

The exchange of notes regarding the eastern frontiers - and which were to be annexed to the Menelik -Rodd treaty of May 14 -⁶¹ were finally signed on June 4. The new agreement was much more less than what Britain expected out of the May 1894 Anglo-Italian Protocol which defined their respective spheres of influence. However, the question that both Mekonnen and Menelik deeply pondered upon was: "Were paper titles issued in the European capitals enough to induce them to concede to Britain that it was now the protector of territories to which Ethiopia, as the most viable power in the vicinity, was the

58

Ibid

59

Ibid., p.52.

60

See figure 10.

61

See exchange of notes between Mekonnen and Rodd in the appendices.

immediate claimant?" Rodd, in the final analysis, was very pragmatic. He reported to the Foreign Office: "Although considerable concessions from our original boundary-line, as defined by the Anglo-Italian Protocol of May 1894, have been made, I think that the essential points drawn attention to in my instructions have been carefully safeguarded, and I do not believe that, under the circumstances, it would have been possible to secure more favourable conditions." ⁶² Rodd underscored the most important critics of the colonial mentality, when he dwelt on the achievements of his mission. He said:

In any case, I trust that your Lordship will agree that the advantages of a definite settlement, which after all reserved to us the greater part of the sphere we had claimed, and only abandons a sparsely populated and barren region, will well outweigh any local difficulties which may arise, but for which a solution can easily be found locally. ⁶³

In Europe, the British mission to Menelik was written off as a failure. Especially the French, as also did the British as regards the French mission, did their best to portray the Rodd mission as an utter disaster. Prince Henry d'Orleans, who at the time was in Addis Ababa as a private explorer, indulged in all sorts of fantasies and degrading remarks towards the British mission in interviews and articles he readily and voluntarily dispensed in Parisian lounges and diplomatic circles. The controversies about Rodd's mission centred around two points. Primarily, it was widely held by many that he ceded a large piece of

⁶²

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' Rodd to Salisbury, June 4, 1897, p.49.

⁶³

Ibid., p.53.

territory to Menelik from the Somaliland Protectorate in his attempt to bring about a negotiated settlement of the eastern frontiers. Secondly, it is contended - and not without foundation - that what he was able to secure from Menelik against the Dervishes amounted only to paper neutrality. His commercial "concessions" from the Emperor were discounted as minimal and without significant value.

Vivian, writing about the "failure" of the mission, maintained that Rodd "weakly agreed to...a delimitation of the frontiers, whereby we abandoned to Abyssinia not merely an ancient claim to Harar, but also the greater part of British Somaliland." When all is said about the Rodd mission, however, there is one aspect of it which in contrast was of value to Britain. Vivian, himself a critic of the mission, admits that "the mission was not altogether in vain, seeing that it paved the way for a permanent diplomatic agency, which by the sagacity of Captain Harrington, has raised England to a position equal, if not superior, to that of her rivals in the eyes of Abyssinia." Not only was the newly established friendship important in this respect, but it also put a check to the possible and gradual advance of Menelik towards the sea.

Understandably, Rodd's own evaluation of his mission was not so unbalanced. He believed, and it is partly true, that in view of the

64

Vivian, Abyssinia, pp.323-324. Sanderson also says that "Menelik had fobbed off the British with empty words." See "Contributions from African Sources to the History of European Competition in the Upper Valley of the Nile," Journal of African History, III, 1, 1962, pp.84-87.

65

Vivian, Abyssinia, p.324.

strong intransigence displayed by Menelik he had fared fairly well and that the treaty would definitely improve future Anglo-Ethiopian relations. He therefore reported to Salisbury:

Much of the mistrust engendered by our attitude in the past, has, I hope, been removed by the dispatch of a Mission implying full recognition of his sovereign rights, and the Emperor, I think, signified his appreciation of the advantages of cultivating our friendship when he said that if we had not helped him, we had, at any rate, done him no harm, and that he had no wish to discuss the past but only the future. 66

In the style of his monarch, Mekonnen presented members of the departing Rodd mission with Ethiopian gifts and sent some more to Salisbury through his son who had joined the Rodd mission at a latter
67 stage. Salisbury dispatched a letter to Rodd with haste confirming the Queen's ratification of the treaty he had signed with Menelik and Mekonnen. He praised Rodd lavishly. He said, "...I desire to take this opportunity of putting on record the high sense entertained by Her Majesty's Government of the ability with which you have carried through the Mission entrusted to you, and of the judgment, tact and patience displayed in the conduct of your negotiations, both at
68 Addis Ababa and Harar."

Because of the yet unsettled Sudanese question, Britain had preferred to leave the western and south western frontiers issue in

66

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' June 22, 1897, p.61.

67

F.O.1/33, Salisbury to Mekonnen, August 13, 1897.

68

F.O.1/32, Salisbury to Rodd, August 12, 1897.

limbo. There was also the question of finishing the task began by Rodd in Ethiopia. At the close of his mission Rodd therefore suggested to his government the usefulness of establishing diplomatic relations between Britain and Ethiopia. Salisbury quickly accepted the suggestion and acting upon the recommendation of Lord Cromer from Cairo requested Rodd to inform Menelik that it was the wish of Her Majesty's Government to appoint a diplomatic officer at his court. The task was to be entrusted to John Lane Harrington "as Her [Majesty's] Agent with authority to visit Addis Ababa as occasion may require and when [Emperor Menelik] may desire it." For the next five years, Harrington's most important assignment was the delimitation of the western and south western frontiers with Ethiopia and to make sure that Menelik's policy regarding the "ancient" and "historic" limits of Ethiopia would not be successful. Yet, another task assigned to Harrington was to use the newly acquired atmosphere of trust and friendship with Menelik as a basis to undermine French and Russian influence in Ethiopia.

69

Ibid., Rodd to Salisbury, June 3, 1897.

70

F.O.403/255, Foreign Office to India Office, October 5, 1897.

71

F.O.1/35, Salisbury to Cromer, December 14, 1897. Menelik replied "that, as a means of communication and mutual understanding and settling affairs between the Ethiopic and Britanic Governments, Her Majesty the Queen of England appointed Mr. Harrington as Agent, and is sending him to us. We are very glad." F.O.403/274, Menelik to Cunningham, January 28, 1898.

The question of the limits of ancient Ethiopia versus colonial expansionist schemes:

Harrington was an accomplished soldier who, through determination and perseverance, had made his diplomatic career a success story. His father had died while he was still young and he was not able to attend college. He therefore joined the Dublin Fusiliers and was subsequently assigned to India. He served for some time as a Sergeant, and upon displaying a brilliant capability in his unit, was selected to be commissioned. Having satisfactorily passed the India Political Service Examination he was appointed to hold political and diplomatic responsibilities. By 1894, he was made Assistant Political Officer at Zeila, a post he administered with drive and ability. From his post at Zeila, he established a working relationship with Ras Mekonnen at Harar and in time expanded his knowledge and acquaintanceship about Ethiopia and the Ethiopians. In April 1898 he was in Addis Ababa to ably represent his Government for the following decade.

Wylde writes that "between the time of the English Mission in 1897 and his [Harrington's] arrival, a period of ten months, the French

1

See Vivian, Abyssinia, pp.176-178; F.O.1/35, Cromer to Salisbury, December 10,1897.

2

Along with his letter of appointment Harrington was provided with: Collection of Rodd's mission dispatches, Conf. No.6943; Treaty with Menelik, May 14,1897 (6 copies); Uganda Blue Book, Africa No.2 (1898); Protocol between Britain and Italy, May 5,1894; Agreement between Britain and Germany, July 1,1890; Africa No.6 (1890); Agreement between Britain and France, February 1888, France No.1 (1894); Lord Cromer's Dispatch, No.32, February 11,1898; To Lord Cromer, Dispatch No.26, February 24,1898; With the Mission to Menelik (Gleichen); Map of Africa by Treaty (Hertslet). See for details in F.O.1/34, Salisbury to Harrington, February 28,1898.

and Russians had the whole time to make all their plans for helping Menelik in his annexations towards the Nile Valley and the Equatorial Provinces.³ Vivian also comments more or less on the same vein emphasizing the importance of Harrington's diplomatic mission in the advancement of British interests in Ethiopia. He says that "when he arrived Menelik was virtually under the thumb of the French and Russians, who had had everything their own way, and it is a great triumph that he should so quickly have contrived to oust them from the Emperor's graces. His success is largely due to the fact that His Majesty has taken a strong personal fancy to Captain Harrington."⁴

Harrington's instructions were very explicit. It was made clear to him that he was not to recognize any territorial claims by Menelik in the Sudan and the Nile Valley since it was Britain which represented Egyptian interests in both areas. He was expected to maintain, "until otherwise instructed that the rights of Egypt in the Nile Valley generally are supported by Her Majesty's Government." If pressured by Menelik, he was to "give no answer" to Ethiopian claims⁵ "without referring the matter home."

Harrington was determined to execute his instructions to the letter. A lot can be learned from his initial reactions to statements

³
Wylde, Abyssinia, p.62.

⁴
Vivian, Abyssinia, pp.176-178.

⁵
F.O.1/35, Cromer to Harrington, March 5, 1898.

made by Menelik and his Councillors at the very first meeting Harrington had with with him. On May 11, he wrote to Walker:

Menelik is thoroughly aware of the fact that effective occupation is the card to play in Africa and that he is likely to get the support of other Powers if he can claim effective occupation. He is under the impression that no protests having been made, ...his proclamation of 1891 is accepted and slowly but surely he is seeking to carry out his dreams, and in my opinion will do so until he meets with a check. 6

In another very interesting letter which Harrington addressed to Salisbury, he also expounded the problems involved between Britain and Menelik.⁷

The negotiations between Britain, Ethiopia and Italy regarding the Sudanese-Ethiopian-Eritrean frontiers in the west and south west is at once very intricate and complex in many respects. It is beyond the scope of this paper to indulge into an in-depth discussion of the issues and problems involved therein. Hence, only some of the pertinent aspects of these issues and problems will be indicated in a very general manner to provide a background understanding into its history.

6

F.O.1/34, Harrington to Walker, May 11, 1898.

7

"From remarks made by the King in the course of my interviews with him and by Monsieur Ilg on different occasions there is no doubt that Menelik is playing the game of effective occupation and it is with this object that Abyssinian expeditions are being sent out both west and south west. He is under the impression, that, no protest having been made by any power, his proclamation of 1891 concerning his Empire, gives him, according to international law, a claim to all the territory mentioned therein. Moreover he seems to be fully cognizant of the fact that in territorial questions so far as Africa is concerned effective occupation constitutes ownership according to international law. It is also extremely probable that being thoroughly acquainted with the state of European politics, Menelik hopes for the support of European Powers should he succeed in hoisting his flag first on the Nile. To the West he is

It should at the outset be emphasized that the quest for the delimitation of frontiers was at once a scheme dependent upon and closely related to the Menelikian policy of regaining the ancient territories of Ethiopia. As against this policy, the British and Italian Governments were also advancing their own policy to bring much of Ethiopia and the surrounding territories under their respective spheres of influence. The British Government, having recognized the length to which its earlier support to Italy had damaged its interests in the area and its bilateral relations with Menelik, had, during the frontier negotiations, taken it as a matter of policy not to identify itself with Italy. Italy, it should be remembered, was also discussing its frontier related questions with Menelik at the time. Cromer therefore dispatched a proposal to Salisbury so that the British Government will send it to Harrington after adopting it as a policy regarding the border negotiations with Menelik. The proposal was: "You must exercise your discretion as to how far it is desirable to associate yourself with your Italian colleague in any representation he may make; always bearing in mind that Menelik has been acknowledged as the ruler of Abyssinia by Her

likely to meet with little opposition on the part of the tribes, who are reported as being thoroughly weary of the Khalifa's government and willing to assist abyssinia or England whoever comes first to their assistance. To the south west where Abyssinian expeditions have already entered the British East Africa sphere of influence, as the tribes being only armed with spears cannot contend successfully against rifles, it is probable that they will push on until they come in contact with our outposts or until we arm the tribes....Circumstances however all tend to show that he has every intention of occupying territory which has no visible owner." Ibid., Harrington to Salisbury, May 15, 1898.

Majesty's Government, who do not wish in any way to interfere in the internal disputes of that country."⁸

In the accomplishment of his frontiers policy Menelik had already sent out different missions at different directions. Rodd writes in his 'Memories' that he had learned from Ilg that "the various border governors were engaged in rapidly extending Abyssinian occupation in many directions."⁹ For Menelik, this was a "sacred trust"¹⁰ which he was to fulfill in his life time. The frontiers question comprised of territories bordering, in the north and north west, the Nile and the Sudan, and in the south the British territories of Uganda and Kenya in East Africa. At an earlier stage, Britain was reluctant to open the negotiations especially in regard to the frontiers bordering the Sudan because the anticipated Kitchner advance against the Mahdi and his probable victory were far from being predicted.

Under the circumstances, Menelik was not also willing to start negotiations on the northern and southern frontiers. Despite efforts to lure him into an easy compromise, he proved himself to be much of a tough bargainer than Britain thought of him. Consider, for instance, the following British documents which reveal Menelik's reluctance to be drawn into an easy frontiers treaty and the constant pressure he

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F.O.1/35, Cromer to Salisbury, December 10, 1898.

⁹

Rodd, Memories, 1894-1901, p.168.

¹⁰

Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.69.

was being subjected to so that he would not advance into territories other than those he actually administered under his crown.

Harrington, writing privately to Maxwell:

...At present Menelik is sitting tight, he thought I had come up here ready to ask him for a frontier. Consequently as he finds that it is he who must ask, he does not all like his new position. So far as I can gather at present, he has no interest of speaking first and will do all he can to make us open the ball. 11

Cromer instructing Harrington on the frontiers issue:

Your attitude therefore as far as Egyptian interests are concerned should be that of holding a watching brief, and while avoiding committing yourself to any language which might imply the recognition of Abyssinian claims towards the west and North west which would encroach on territory formerly under Egyptian rule, you should confine yourself to stating, should any definite issue be placed before you, that you understand until otherwise instructed that the rights of Egypt in the Nile Valley generally are supported by Her Majesty's Government and that you can give no answer without referring the matter home. 12

Harrington reporting on Menelik's position:

The reluctance the King has shown towards any discussion of the frontier, inclines me to the belief that the King is trying to occupy effectively such points as are not effectively occupied at present, with a view to pleading that Abyssinian public opinion would never permit his public withdrawal from them. 13

11

F.O.1/34, Harrington to Maxwell, Addis Ababa, November 16, 1898.

12

F.O.1/35, Cromer to Harrington, March 5, 1898.

13

F.O.1/36, Harrington to Cromer, March 21, 1898.

Harrington requesting Menelik not to advance far out to the south:

From information received from my Government, it appears that Dejaz Demisi has advanced to the North of the town of Beni-Schongul. As Your Majesty has assured me that your Majesty's officers have been ordered not to come into collision with the English officers, I have the honour to inquire of Your Majesty whether in the interests of both Governments Your Majesty does not think it advisable that Dejaz Demisi should be ordered to remain where he is, and not to advance. It seems to me that pending the frontier negotiations between Your Majesty and myself, it would be desirable that the officers of both Governments should preserve a similar attitude in every direction where they are in contact, to that now maintained at Gallabat. 14

Menelik's firm stand on the limits of Ethiopian territories, however, was already sent out to the European powers in April 1891 in a form of a circular. The central theme of his circular is clear. It said that if "powers at a distance come forward to partition Africa between them" he did "not intend to be an indifferent spectator." He emphasized that "while tracing today the actual boundaries of my Empire, I shall endeavour, if God gives me life and strength, to re-establish the ancient frontiers of Ethiopia up to Khartoum, and as far as Lake Nyanza¹⁵ with all the Gallas."

On April 15, 1899, in a very frank and informal tet-a-tete between them, Menelik and Harrington had a very interesting discussion, which, in

14

Ibid., Harrington to Menelik, March 18, 1899. In a letter of March 23 from Camp Berberasa, Menelik dismissed any misbehaviour by Demisie as "an Arab report" and assuring Harrington of Demisie's good behaviour.

15

F.O.1/32, April 10, 1891. [Emphasis is mine]. See map opposite page.

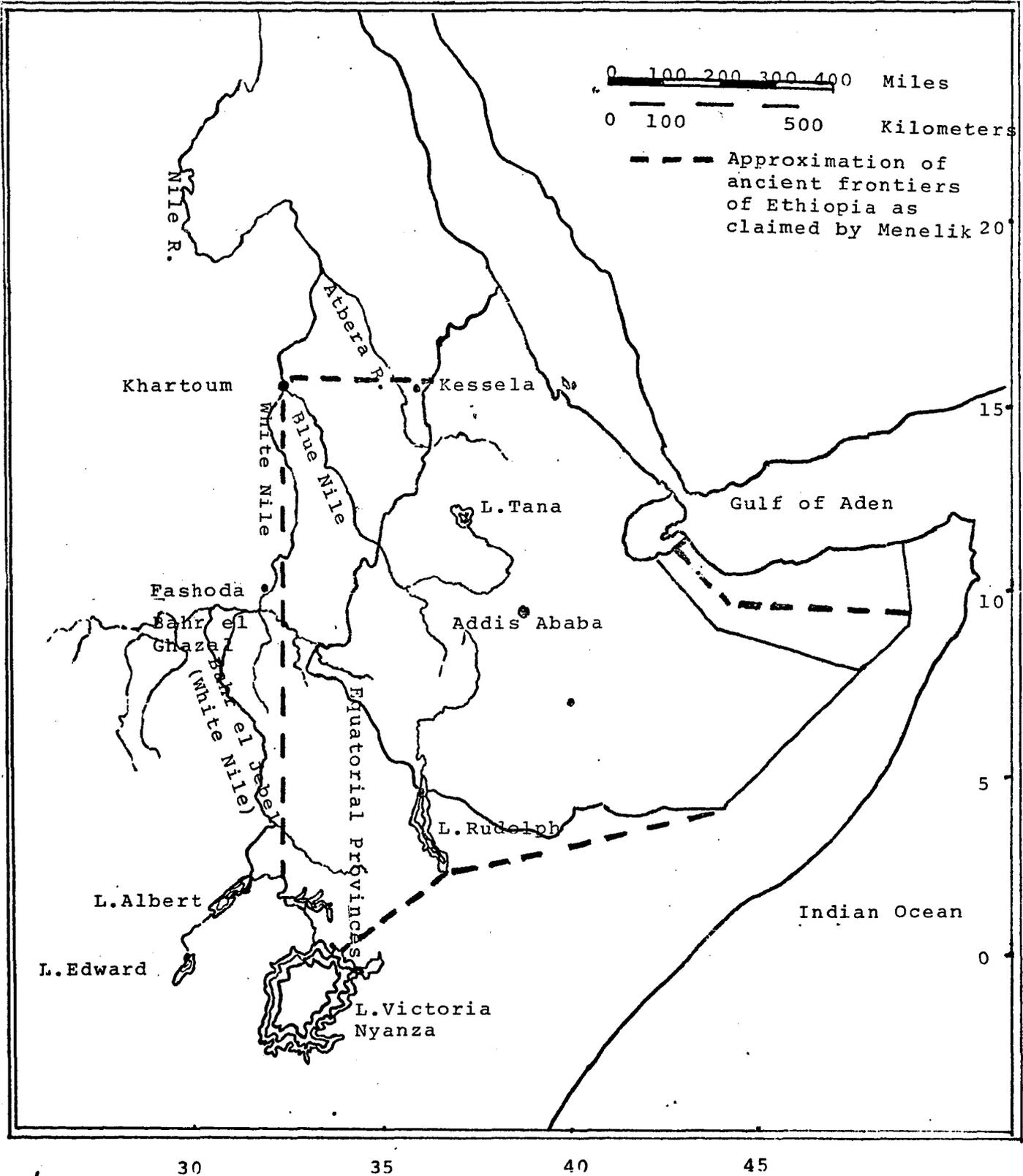


Fig. 11

all its simplicity, reveals the sincerity with which each was holding firm to his country's policy. Chatting about the frontiers, negotiations which as yet were not started, Harrington mused, according to his own reporting:

"We consider everything that formerly belonged to Egypt ours. You know what Egypt owned. If you want any modifications of the old frontier let us know and we we'll see if we can meet your wishes.'

'But,' said the King, 'I told Mr. Rodd what my frontier was. I also wrote some years ago to your Government stating what my Empire was. Your Government has never protested or replied to either of these statements and I consider those limits to have been accepted by your Government - silence gives consent.'

'Generally the other way about with Governments,' said I." 16

Menelik was aware that in order to accomplish his objectives regarding the western and south western frontiers of Ethiopia his military capability was to be organized effectively. He was importing, therefore, large quantities of arms and ammunition through Djibouti. Menelik was also aware that had it not been for its military engagements in the Sudan and Transvaal in southern Africa, Britain would have applied much more pressure, if not waged outright war, against him. Harrington believed at the time that "there is no doubt" that it were the French and the Russians who infused in Menelik the idea that Britain intended "to tackle him when

we have done with Transvaal." Even though Harrington conceded that he had no proof that these European powers had tried to get him to take advantage of the war in Transvaal, he felt he could not help thinking from remarks dropped by prominent members of the Emperor's entourage that "attempts were made to induce the King to adopt a hostile action towards us." 17

Imparting his impressions to Sir Thomas in a private letter, Harrington wrote about Menelik's preparations thus:

You ask me whether my observations confirm the accounts of the vast quantities of arms and ammunition which are still going to Abyssinia. Unfortunately they do. It is impossible to travel between Harar and Addis Ababa without repeatedly meeting caravans of rifles and cartridges. I should think that at present there are more rifles, Gras and Remington in the country than there are men to carry them....These purchases are in the nature of preparations for contingencies, that is, the war they think we will make on them when the Transvaal war is over. Everyone in this country seems convinced that we intend sooner or later to take their country; the French and Russians have told them so for the five years and tell them so every day. Nothing I do or say has the slightest effect in shaking their belief in this idea of theirs. 18

In the same letter, Harrington interjected that Britain must be cautious not to corner Menelik to a position from where he might be obliged to react vigorously and with full force. He suggested that there could be some alternative plans to induce Menelik from advancing towards territories

17

F.O.1/37, Harrington to Sir Thomas, May 1, 1900.

18

Ibid

which are an absolute necessity to Britain. "Even if he is in possession of territory that is absolutely necessary for us to have," wrote Harrington, "it may be possible to buy him out, an infinitely more economic plan than fighting him for it."¹⁹

A most important factor which Menelik deliberately sought to exploit was the concept of "effective occupation." He was repeatedly made aware that Britain's claims to territories adjoining his Empire were based solely on the contention that since the British Government was able to bring these territories in question under its domain without opposition from anybody's part, it was, 'ipso facto,' to be recognized as the legitimate sovereign which exercised jurisdiction over them. Even though Menelik disliked and abhorred the implications of this concept, he nevertheless opted to benefit by and from it in as far as Ethiopia's historical claims were concerned. It should here be emphasized that Menelik intended to adopt this international concept only to the extent that it helped him regain the ancient limits of Ethiopia and no more. In the implementation of this decision, Menelik persisted in dispatching his army in the directions most susceptible to British expansion. There were some hardliners within the British Colonial Office who regarded Menelik's decision as being ominous. They therefore urged that he should be vigorously challenged. Rodd and Harrington, however, felt that, from what they have observed in Ethiopia, this was not a worthy proposition. They both pointed out, however, that

19

Ibid

even though Menelik was less bellicose than some of his advisers, the influential personalities within his Empire would prefer to step up hostilities rather than see part of what they consider Ethiopian territory slip by to a foreign power.

Sir A. Hardinge, in a memorandum prepared to the British Foreign Office, strongly opposed any British appeasement efforts concerning the claims entertained by Menelik and termed the monarch's "expansionist" ideas as "rather audacious." In his memorandum, Sir Hardinge belittled Menelik's claims by saying that "he talks about 'effective occupation,'" but Britain should not be a party to such claims because (a) "Menelik is not a party to the Berlin Conference," and (b) "his effective occupation consists of the establishment of a few posts by raiding parties." Sir Hardinge also attempted to dissuade London from dealing with Menelik seriously by intimating that, if it did, it was bending backwards to a despot who was trading in slavery, mostly to Arabia, in order to make money.

The views of Rodd and Harrington were very identical in opposing Hardinge's allusions. Rodd strongly maintained that "the Berlin Conference, to which Hardinge says [Menelik] is not a party, was drawn up by the European Powers without in Menelik's case, reckoning with their host." Moreover, he stated unequivocally that "such statements as the one that Menelik makes money by shipping slaves in French dhows to

20

F.O.1/44, Memorandum by Sir A. Hardinge, Penshurst, Kent, October 20, 1899.

21

Ibid., Rodd Memorandum, Naples, November 21, 1899.

22

Arabia are quite unwarrantable." Harrington's counter refutations of Hardinge were even much more stronger. He disclaimed Hardinge's assumptions by saying that "I think Sir Hardinge's description of Menelik's proposals as 'rather audacious' a little drastic." He pointed out that "His Majesty might with equal justice apply the same terms to our claims." In an attempt to desuade London from considering any such suggestions which were being increasingly put forward by the adherents of a hardliner policy, Harrington went even much more further than Rodd to suggest a forum which recognized Menelik's interests in the region. He wrote:

I felt that I should be wanting in my duty, did I not point out that insisting on Sir A.Hardinge or Mr. Jenner's proposals when the southern frontier comes up for discussion, might embroil us in a war with Menelik. Sir A.Hardinge seems to me to treat the subject of a frontier as if Menelik were the ordinary squeezable petty African potentate, which those who know the country, I think, will scarcely admit....If we use the argument of effective occupation, Menelik replies that his occupation of the countries which he claims is as effective as ours in some territories which are recognized as indisputably British in consequence. 24

Concerning Sir Hardinge's allusion to the question of slavery, Harrington warned that "although domestic slavery undoubtedly exists here," he could only say that he has "been unable to discover any proof in support of his allegations" and that he is not "aware of

 22

Ibid

23

Ibid., Harrington to Sir Thomas, Addis Ababa, February 17, 1900.

24

Ibid

any case within recent years of Menelik shipping slaves in French dhows to Arabia." Harrington's concern was sincere. He confessed that he could not help but feel very strongly on the subject because he said the situation was really very delicate. He pointed out that Ilg, Menelik's adviser, was "thoroughly imbued with the idea that we intend eating Abyssinia up" and that "this wrong idea on his part might lead to some arrangement between Abyssinia on the one hand and France and Russia on the other, which will be detrimental to our interests." Harrington strongly maintained that his desire had always been to try to disabuse both Menelik and his Councillors of their fixed idea because he was of the opinion that it was necessary for Britain to cultivate much more influence with Menelik than Britain's political opponents. His fears were based on the speculation that should the Emperor become a strong ally of Britain's political opponents, there was always every probability that the Emperor was able to cause Britain "a good deal of anxiety and perhaps expense on some occasion when we are elsewhere engaged." Harrington therefore suggested three proposals in the handling of the southern frontier.

1. To place small armed steamers on Lake Rudolph and the Juba River.
2. A 'quid pro quo,' for instance, in the form of an extension of the British Somaliland Protectorate or a railway

25

Ibid (Perhaps, Hardinge's speculation was based on Rodd's own report to Salisbury of May 4, 1897 from Addis Ababa in which he makes mention of such possible undertakings by Menelik. Rodd, however, makes his reservations for he says in his report that he suspects his source of information).

26

Ibid

concession from the frontier to Harar as the price for British recognition of Menelik's frontier.

3. "Buy out Menelik's claims for a sum of money." 27

Harrington's conciliatory suggestions were prompted by a fair reading of the situation and the mood of the country in the implementation of Menelik's policy of regaining the "ancient" and "historic" territories of the Empire. He therefore doubted if Menelik would voluntarily attempt to minimize the role of his military leaders in their attempt to successfully extend the size of their respective territories. He attempted to draw a precise picture of the political temper which prevailed at the close of the 1890s when he reported:

The Abyssinian chiefs who rule the southern district are so powerful that I doubted his daring to curtail their provinces beyond a certain point. If we push our claims to excess we shall incur a serious risk of war. In this country a war with us would be popular. The general idea among all classes is that Great Britain wishes to absorb the Empire. Filled with recollections of Adoua the army is confident in its power to beat us, and, since they think the conflict inevitable, many of the chiefs are in favour of fighting at once. The fighting strength of the nation amounts to not less than 300,000 riflemen, besides 70 or 80 guns, and a large body of cavalry and spearmen. Although Menelik is anxious for peace, and probably does not share the views of his army as to the result of a war with us, still I think it possible that he may be forced by his chiefs to fight if we press him too much. 28

27

Ibid

28

Ibid

By the end of this turbulent period the British advance towards Fashoda and Khartoum was nearing its objective. Between 1897 and 1898, it is to be remembered, Menelik had sent out several expeditions to accomplish his territorial claims which he had put in some detail in his circular of 1891. Ras Tessema, following the path traced by the Bonchamps mission, had advanced towards Fashoda by way of the River Sobat.²⁹ Another important expedition lead by Ras Mekonnen was securing the gorges of the Blue Nile in the spring of 1898. Two other military expeditions had advanced further north under Negus Tekle Haymanot and Ras Mengesha. To the south, Menelik had also dispatched two highly organized and well provisioned expeditions, one under the direction of Dejazmatch Hapte Ghiorgis in June 1897 - commanding some 15,000 men - and another, some time later, headed by Ras Wolde Ghiorgis.³⁰ These expeditions penetrated as far south as Lake Rudolph and what is now the south-eastern confines of Ethiopia.

Menelik did not deny to Harrington the existence of these expeditions both in the north and the south. When Harrington enquired if it were true Menelik "had expeditions out, with Fashoda and Lado [Lake Rudolph] as their objectives," the latter's "reply was in the affirmative."³¹ And neither did Menelik conceal the reasons which

29

Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream, p.366.

30

The Wolde Ghiorgis expedition was accompanied by a few Frenchmen, several Senegalese sharpshooters and a Russian named Bulatovic who commanded a few Cosacks. See A.K.Bulatovic, S Voiskami Menelik II.

31

F.O.1/34, Harrington to Salisbury, April 30, 1898.

necessitated these expeditions. When , for instance, the British Envoy communicated the news of the British victory over the Dervishes on Atbera, Menelik "expressed his satisfaction at the news being communicated to him" and even though he did not alarm Harrington by telling him all the truth as to why his expeditions were in the vicinity of Fashoda and the Nile Valley region, nevertheless informed him "that he had been obliged to reinforce His garrison to the north as the Dervishes had threatened to raid him from the direction of Matamma."³² However, Harrington was not satisfied with Menelik's explanation. He observed: "...this remark, I regard as a mere blind, his real object being I believe, to take advantage of our forward move against the Dervishes to occupy territories, formerly administered by Egypt, which he claims in his proclamation of 1891."³³

As if to test Menelik's determination as regards his western frontiers, especially at a time when the Kitchner army was advancing on Khartoum with full force, Harrington mentioned to the Emperor that Prince Henry d'Orleans, the French explorer who was in Ethiopia on a private visit, had, in a speech he gave at a public dinner in February [1898] in Paris, thanked the Emperor and made reference to the fact that France was now able - thanks to the Emperor - to hoist the French flag on the Upper Nile. Menelik, rather coldly, assured Harrington that the Prince "had no right nor authority to use his

32

Ibid

33

Ibid

name" and indicated to him that the only business the Prince have had with him was regarding a permission which he had requested to visit Lake Rudolph for the purpose of making a map. When Harrington insisted if this implied that no French expedition would therefore be allowed to pass through his dominions with the object of hoisting the French flag on the Upper Nile, "the Emperor rather forcibly replied that no one would be allowed to pass through his territory to hoist any flag but his, the Abyssinian flag."³⁴

Ultimately, neither the Ethiopian nor the French flags were hoisted on the Nile. With the collapse of the French grand design and success of the British expedition at Fashoda towards the end of 1898, the great British-French rivalry in the region was defused, and together with this international episode of great historical significance, Menelik's proclamation of 1891 to regain Ethiopia's ancient territories lost a great part of its meaning and significance.

Advancing towards the Nile Valley from west Africa, Marchand, leader of the French expedition, had, after a very long and arduous journey through the marshy swamps of the Bahr el Ghazel, arrived at Fashoda on July 10, 1898. At Fashoda, Marchand was not opposed by any British force because he had reached his crucial destination more than two months before Kitchner's troops were able to advance towards Fashoda from Omdurman. Marchand, confident and reassured, had triumphantly written to his friend Paul Boudarie as far back as March that "today,

34

Ibid., Harrington to Salisbury, May 14, 1898.

the entire Bahr-el-Ghazal can no more belong to England except with the wish of France or by an international conference: it is no longer to be taken."³⁵ Marchand had immediately secured French paper claims to the area by entering into a treaty with the Shieluks on September 2 thereby affirming French effective occupation of the region and placing it under French protection.³⁶ Marchand's position, however, could not be defended. His supplies were very limited and his force of one hundred and thirty was exhausted and much more inferior to that of Kitchner's. Omdurman had fallen on September 2 to the Anglo-Egyptian forces and from there Kitchner had proceeded further south and reached Fashoda on the 19th. Once Kitchner was in the vicinity, the Shieluks denied having ever concluded any treaty with Marchand and requested British-Egyptian protection against his army.³⁷

The Kitchner-Marchand encounter at Fashoda took place on September 19. It was a tense moment which brought two protagonists literally eye-ball to eye-ball each vigorously defending the interest and honour of his respective country. Kitchner informed Marchand that "the presence of the French at Fashoda and in the Valley of the Nile was regarded as a direct violation of the rights of Egypt and Great Britain," and accordingly his instructions stipulated "to protest in

³⁵

Paul Bourdarie, Fachoda - La Mission Marchand, Paris, 1899, p.19.

³⁶

Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream, p.370.

³⁷

Parliamentary Papers, Rodd to Salisbury, September 25, 1898, Vol.112, No.13.

the strongest terms against their occupation of Fashoda, and their hoisting of the French flag in the dominions of His Highness the Khedive." Marchand's reply was equally forceful and affirmative.

He contended that "as a soldier he had to obey orders; the instructions of his Government to occupy the Bahr-el-Ghazal and the Mudirieh of Fashoda were precise, and, having carried them out, he must await the orders of his Government as to his subsequent action movements."

Kitchner insisted that, as a soldier, he too had his instructions to abide by. He pointed out to Marchand that he was now in occupation of Fashoda and that, out of courtesy, he would allow him gunboats if he wished to retire and evacuate the area. However, Kitchner was not even authorized to concede this much. We find out, that at about the same time, the British Government had firmly intended to deny Marchand any such military courtesy:

M. Marchand's position should be made as untenable as possible. If he is in want of food supplies, it will be very necessary to use circumspection in helping him to obtain them. Until he expresses his intention of going down the river, no such supplies should be furnished to him except in the case of extreme necessity.

Marchand was also very adamant. He reiterated that, under the circumstances, if Kitchner chose to take action "he could only submit

38

Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream, p.373.

39

Parliamentary Papers, Kitchner to Cromer, September 21, 1898, No.2.

40

G.P.Gooch & H.Temperley, British Documents on the Origins of the War, H.M. Stationery Office, 1926-1934, Salisbury to Rodd, October 1, 1898, No.201, p.173.

to the inevitable, which would mean that he and his companions would die at their posts." Finally, Kitchner and Marchand settled at a gentlemanly agreed upon compromise solution. The former consented to notify the French Government of the intention of the French expedition to remain at Fashoda until further instructions were received while the latter conceded to allow the Egyptian flag to be hoisted over the fortress at Fashoda until such instructions reached him from Paris. In actuality, the whole drama was a face-saving gesture for Marchand. The British-French rivalry over the Nile Valley and the region had practically come to an end.

The Ethiopian expedition led by Ras Tessema did not, after all, reach Fashoda and hoist the Ethiopian flag on the west bank of the Nile. It did on the east, and with it Menelik's policy of regaining the ancient limits of the Ethiopian Empire up to the western front was abruptly brought to an end. In France, the Brisson cabinet had fallen on October 26 and the most notorious Dreyfus case was reopened at about the same time.

In Paris, it was widely speculated that the next prey in line was Menelik's Ethiopia. Reporting on the consequences which would follow the Fashoda debacle, Marchand warned the Minister of Foreign Affairs from Cairo:

Comme conséquence de l'évacuation de Fachoda,
et peut-être du Bahr el Ghazal, je dois oser

41

Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream, p.373.

42

DDF., Lefevre-Pontalis to Delcassé, September 26, 1898, No.377, 1st. Ser., Vol.14, pp.585-586.

vous fair prévoir que le vrai but auquel tendent tous les efforts anglais est la destruction de l'Abyssinie. Je n'hésite pas a l'affirmer devant vous, et je possède les indications et certitude pour le faire. Vous pouvez juger des situations respectives de l'Angleterre et de la France en Afrique apres la chute, que j'affirme prochaine, de Menelik. 43

Some days later, the Agent in charge of the French Consulate general in Cairo dispatched to the Foreign Minister a still much more alarming report which made an Anglo-Italian invasion of Ethiopia very imminent. His cable read:

J'affirme que les Anglais du Nil préparent activement agression contre l'Abyssinie: j'ai entendu moi-meme a Omdurman graves paroles des officiers anglais sur ce sujet, attaque générale se produira simultanément par le Nil et le Sobat, par Kassala et route de l'Atbara, Ouganda, et meme par l'Erythrée avec le concours de l'Italie. Officiers anglais disent que l'Angleterre pas pouvoir garder quiétude en Afrique avec une Abyssinie libre. Je pense que signal sera donné aux approches de 1900, dans un an. Mon impression tres nette est que Menelik tombera si vous ne faites rien pour prévenir la chute. 44

French political circles were too overwhelmed by the Fashoda incident to consider confrontation with Britain in Ethiopia at the time. They were also fearful lest their defeat at Fashoda would considerably damage France's influence with Menelik. The Quai d'Orsay therefore instructed Lagarde to "enquire discreetly" on the impression the Fashoda
45
defeat produced on Menelik. Lagarde was also to approach Menelik to

43

Ibid., Marchand to Delcassé, November 4, 1898, No. 484, p. 754.

44

Ibid., Lefevre-Pontalis to Delcassé, November 9, 1898, No. 501, pp. 776-777.

45

Ibid., Delcassé to Lagarde, September 27, 1898, No. 382, p. 592.

ask him to allow Marchand's mission a safe passage to the coast through Ethiopia.

The British Government, as if to conform French diplomatic and consular officials' fears and concerns regarding its intentions in Ethiopia, strongly reacted to any such concessions to France by Menelik. It was the British Governments' contention, and this was communicated to French officials, that Menelik was treaty-bound not to allow armed troops to cross his territory under any circumstances. This, of course, was an absolute falsehood which Britain appropriately used as a pretext to desuade France from seriously considering and relying on Menelik's help. Article 1 of the Menelik-Rodd treaty of May 14, 1897 was applicable only to the signatory powers in circumstances which involved the armed forces of the two countries. It was inserted in the treaty to assure the peace of the area and to guarantee the tranquility of the yet undemarcated frontiers. The relevant part of the article in question read: "...Il est défendu aux bandes armées d'une part ainsi que de l'autre de traverser les frontiers du voisin sous un prétexte quelconque sans permission préalable des autorités compétantes."

Lord Cromer called on the French representative in Cairo on November 7 and informed him that he had been instructed by his Government to discuss with him the danger a French mission might entail, given Menelik's attitude towards Europe in general, in crossing

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Menelik-Rodd Treaty, May 14, 1897. See Appendices.

the Ethiopian Empire without first securing and being assured of Menelik's consent. Cromer also told the French representative that his instructions included to remit to him the contents of Article 1 of the Menelik-Rodd treaty. Commenting to his Foreign Minister about the encounter, the French representative reported that he had equally benefited from the occasion to make it amply clear to Cromer that the present communication had demonstrated to him the seriousness of British designs in the area. According to the French representative, Lord Cromer denied the allegation. Cromer also avoided to answer a second challenge directed at him by the french representative who had enquired if it was the British Government's intention to instruct its representative in Addis Ababa to ask Menelik not to allow the Marchand mission safe passage through his Empire.

46

Harrington was indeed instructed to make representations with Menelik not to concede to the French request. In December, Harrington had handed a memorandum to Menelik on the subject in question. The

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DDF., Lefevre-Pontalis to Delcassé, November 7, 1898, 1st. Ser., Vol. 14, N. 495, pp. 771-772.

47

The memorandum read in part: "...I have received despatches from my Government informing me 'that the French Government have agreed to evacuate Fashoda unconditionally, and that Major Marchand is returning to France to arrange for the retreat of the French garrison there. My Government understands that the French Government wish Major Marchand to return to Djibouti via Abyssinia. My Government have pointed out the difficulties of doing so, and also their objections to this being done without previously obtaining your Majesty's consent.' Furthermore my Government desire me to inform your Majesty that they are in no way responsible for the measure the French Government is taking as regards the retreat of Major Marchand's expedition via Abyssinia." F.O.1/34, Harrington to Menelik, December 3, 1898.

memorandum, of course, was a veiled threat to Menelik not to heed to the French request. However, Menelik officially authorized passage to the Marchand mission the same day he received the British memorandum. At an earlier date, Lagarde had urgently recommended to His Foreign Minister to allow Marchand to quickly proceed to the Ethiopian frontier. He had advised that he feared that any delay might mean that the British Government might try to scare Menelik out of allowing the Marchand mission to pass through Ethiopia indicating to him indirectly that any such acquiescence on his part to the French request might tempt them to divert the Kitchner army towards Ethiopia. Lagarde's insistence on a speedy French action was based on his confidence that, once the French mission was within Ethiopian territorial confines, it would be convenient for him, "with the personal influence he disposes with Menelik," to persuade him to grant passage to French armed personnel through the Empire. He affirmed of his confidence by saying, "I am sure of the sentiments of the Emperor towards France and to me."

Prior to the British-French disengagement at Fashoda, Menelik had already advanced far south and consolidated his jurisdiction over some newly acquired territories. Between 1896 and 1898 he had, as already

48

"L'Empereur autorise pleinement le commandant Marchand a traverser le territoire éthiopien... Grace aux facilités personnelles que j'ai pour correspondre avec le camp imperial, l'agent britannique n'aura pas pu communiquer a temps avec l'Empereur Menelik pour contrecarrer notre projet; et, a l'heure actuelle, les difficultés qu'il essaierait de faire naitre ne seront plus autant a redouter." Ddf., 1st. Ser., Vol.14, No.573, Lagarde to Delcassé, December 3, 1898, pp.875-876.

49

Ibid., Lagarde to Delcassé, November 21, 1898, No.560, p.859.

50

made mention, benefited from his well organized expeditions in partially accomplishing his policy of regaining 'ancient' Ethiopian territories. In October 1897, Ras Wolde Ghiorgis had effectively included the Kingdom of Keffa within Menelik's Empire. In march 1898, he had also hoisted the Ethiopian flag on the southern limits of the Omo River and Lake Rudolph.⁵¹ The territories east of the Omo River inhabited by the Borena Galla were also brought within the Empire by Fitawrari Habte Ghiorgis at about the same period.⁵²

One of the most important aspects of Menelik's policy in the territorial issue was the effort he immediately undertook to assimilate the newly regained territories within the central government and to integrate their administrative and economic set up within that of the national frame work. The south western provinces which were brought under effective Ethiopian sovereignty were considered to be agriculturally and minerally rich. They were therefore considered to be helpful to the future of the development of the Empire. Menelik thus launched a programme which would stimulate and accelerate their usefulness on the national level. It was primarily basing himself on this programme that he named all those western territories, including the ones beyond Lake Rudolph and stretching up to the northern tip of Lake Nyanza, the 'Equatorial Provinces' and assigned their economic exploitation and

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See pp.446-450; 545-548.

51

F.O.403/247, Memorandum by Beru, December 3,1897; Mérab, Impressions d'Ethiopie, Tome I, p.31.

52

Ilg, Sein Leben Und Seine Werke, p.166.

supervision to Leontiev.

Leontiev was a very controversial personality and someone with dubious credentials and connections. He was initially attached to the official Russian mission of 1893 to Menelik headed by Captain A.F. Eliseiev.⁵³ Through a combination of commercial as well as political proposals, Leontiev, in time, had become a frequentor of the court of Menelik and succeeded in associating his name with some of Menelik's efforts to obtain aid and technical knowhow from Europe. He also acquired the nominal Ethiopian title of 'Dejazmatch' before his name.

What the 'Equatorial Provinces' actually constituted is difficult to establish.^{*} Menelik himself was reluctant to define the extent of these provinces. This is because he had considered all such territories as he was able to bring under his Empire, before Britain was able to do so, as forming part of his 'Equatorial Provinces.' He gave Britain every assurance that his province would not penetrate as deep as the British sphere of influence which was specified under the Anglo-German Agreement of July 1, 1890. According to this agreement, most of the Ogaden and the south western provinces of present day Genu Goffa and Sidamo could have been brought under what was then called the British East African Protectorate. Menelik had not recognized the agreement. Leontiev, however, was being encouraged by Menelik to explore territories well inside the British sphere - as was defined by the Anglo-German Agreement - so that, as far back as May 1897 Wingate and Gleichen had to

53

See pp.202; 207.

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For the 'Equatorial Provinces' as claimed by Menelik at different stages and times see figure 11, p.537.

report. "...effective Abyssinian occupation now extends as far into British sphere of influence as defined by the Anglo-German Agreement
54
of the 1st. July, 1890." Leontiev, on his part, did everything possible to keep the controversy alive by assuming a much more active and grandiose role than assigned to him by Menelik.

Harrington was also very actively engaged in desuading both Menelik and Leontiev from pushing the 'Equatorial Provinces' idea too far. Reporting about his meetings with Menelik on the subject, Harrington wrote: "...With regard to Monsieur Leontieff I asked what was the extent of his province and the Emperor informed me that M. Ilg would show me." In a post-scriptum to his report, Harrington comments that Menelik's understanding of the extent of his provinces was read to him as contained in a memorandum prepared by him (Harrington) and
55
that "His Majesty acknowledged its correctness."

Menelik was carefully watching British movements in the region. On several occasions, he had expressed his unhappiness about the
56
Macdonald mission which was exploring the south western region. "With regard to the expedition of Major Macdonald," Harrington included in his report, "I assured the Emperor that, the officer was instructed carefully to avoid any proceedings which could endanger good relations

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F.O.403/255, Wingate and Gleichen Memorandum, May 7,1897.

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F.O.1/34, April 27,1898.

56

F.O.1/35, Harrington to Thomas, September 22,1897.

between Great Britain and Ethiopia or occasion any collision⁵⁷
between his followers and the Ethiopian forces."

Leontiev was deliberately exploiting the situation to his advantage. In a very calculating manner, he proved to be obtrusively mischievous to British officials. He planted the Ethiopian flag inside what Britain considered was within her sphere of influence and at appropriately chosen occasions suggested to British officials that he will abandon planting the Ethiopian flag only if was supported⁵⁸ by London in promoting his own interest in some parts of the region. According to Harrington, "he [Leontiev] pointed out that his attitude towards us had always been friendly, that sooner or later Menelik must die and that his intention was to declare himself independent. For this it was essential to him that he should have the support of some⁵⁹ European Government and that he much preferred to have our support."

Leontiev also gave the limits of what he said constituted the 'Equatorial Provinces.' Harrington, in his memorandum of October 11, 1900 to the Foreign Office says that "he [Leontiev] asserted that

57

F.O.1/34, April 27, 1898.

58

"Count Leontieff saw me in London, stated he wished to talk privately with me and arranged that we should meet in Paris for this purpose - which was done. The purport of his conversation was on the lines of his conversation of the 7th. of July last with Sir Thomas Sanderson at the Foreign Office - his object being, according to his account that of obtaining our support in view of future eventualities in Abyssinia." F.O.1/36, Harrington Memorandum to Foreign Office, October 11, 1900. In a separate note to Lord Salisbury Harrington confided the same day: "I must admit, I have so little trust in Count Leontieff's word that I am against any understanding with him." F.O.1/37, London, October 11, 1900.

59

F.O.1/37, Harrington Memorandum to Foreign Office, October 11, 1900.

inspite of Menelik's definite assurances to us that the province granted to him was bounded on the south by Lake Rudolph and on the west by the Omo. He had been instructed to occupy all the territory he could, down to the 2nd. parallel of north Latitude." A booklet⁶⁰ printed in Paris - most probably written by or for Leontiev - and entitled "Provinces Equatoriales d'Abyssinie," speaks of the region as being highly fertile, healthy, luxuriant and of moderate temperatures. Among others, it contains this relevant portion which throws some light on Menelik's policy regarding the area.

S.M. l'Empereur d'Ethiopie, Menelik II s'inspirant de l'exemple donné par les Khédives d'Egypte, qui, afin d'établir leur influence et leur autorité dans les regions peu connues avaient eu recours a l'intelligence d'Européens expérimentés, tels que Backer, Gordon, Hicks-Pacha, etc...choisit le comte N.de Léontieff, pour une mission du meme genre...Les provinces, occupant d'immense espaces entre le second et le sixieme degré de latitude, n'étaient soumises effectivement a l'autorité de l'Empereur que dans la partie septentrionale, tandis que, dans les regions équatoriales, sa souveraineté était plutot nominale que réelle, bien que ces pays fussent inclus dans le sphere d'influence de l'empire d'Ethiopie. 61

Harrington had been working hard to get as much information as possible on Leontiev's claims. His findings did not add much to what he had earlier obtained from Menelik. On June 2, 1899, Harrington enquired

60

Ibid. See also DDF., Vol.13, No.291, p.485. See figure 11, p.537.

61

Provinces Equatoriales d'Abyssinie: Expedition du Dedjaz Comte N. De Léontieff, Paris, Imp. Chambrelent (n.d.), pp.11-19. See also in F.O.1/37; Léontieff, "Exploration de Provinces Equatoriales d'Abyssinie," La Géographie: Bulletin de la Societe de Géographie, Masson & Cie., Paris (n.d.), pp.105-118; F.O.403/274, Monson to Salisbury, February 2, 1898; F.O.1/37, Harrington to Sanderson, June, 1900.

from Menelik "what he was going to give Leontieff" and the Emperor replied in the usual detached and uncompromising manner by reassuring Harrington that he only "intended giving him [Leontiev] a province near Walamo" and "assured [him] that there would be Abyssinian chiefs around him, so that Leontieff would not be able to go near the frontiers."⁶²

Leontiev had, in fact, attempted to present himself in Europe as the ultimate and supreme authority over the 'Equatorial Provinces' by having had Menelik's Amharic letter of appointment translated the way which suited his own purposes. In the translated document which he circulated among European diplomatic and commercial circles, Leontiev alleged that, as a result of his appointment, he was now a power unto himself to invite the European powers to negotiate directly with him important mining as well as economic concessions. As early as April, Menelik's foreign policy Councillors had assured Harrington that Leontiev's claims were mere "blague" and that "it was doubtful whether any province would be given to Monsieur Leontieff at all or at any rate if one was given, it would be one of probably some thousands of metres of square similar to what he and Monsieur Lagarde, the French Minister have received."⁶³ Ilg further informed Harrington that as the Emperor was unaware of the official reactions the situation might bring from the Russian mission in Addis Ababa, it would be advisable for Her

62

F.O.1/36, Harrington to Salisbury, June 3, 1899.

63

F.O.1/34, Harrington to Salisbury, April 30, 1898.

Majesty's Government "not to publish the contents of the document" and to "confine themselves, if publicly questioned on the subject, to stating that the document published by Monsieur Leontieff that he had been named governor of the Equatorial Provinces was not correct."

Some four years later, Menelik found Leontiev's presumptions going to far, and in fact intolerable, that he himself addressed a letter to Harrington denying the self-appointed role assumed by
64
Leontiev.

What made British colonizing efforts in the area so slow and indecisive had nothing to do with British foreign policy as such. The simple truth was that Britain was so engaged in different fronts at the time that its treasury was not able to cope up with the Ethiopian frontiers question as efficiently and as effectively as it wished to deal with it. Harrington said: "It is a pity to allow Menelik to extend his frontiers at our expense but the cost of the prevention of his doing so is, in my opinion, more than the value of what we would

64

I have heard that Dejaz Leontieff has been forming many mining companies in England and Belgium saying that he has my permission to dig for gold in Ethiopian territory. I find that Dejaz Leontieff has wrongly translated my letter of 9th. June 1897 and to suit himself has put things which I never said and showed it to Belgium [sic] companies. The Belgium [sic] companies have now informed me how he has tricked them to a great loss. Therefore, I declare that I have not given to Dejaz Leontieff any permission for gold mining in Ethiopian territory; also the letter which is mentioned in the concession written between the equatorial company and him which they declare to be King Menelik's letter I did not give such a letter to Dejaz Leontieff. The reason I never declared this to the public up to today is, because I thought all this might only be a gossip, for I never thought that Dejaz Leontieff would do anything against my wish and disobey my command. Now so as not to give Dejaz Leontieff a chance of creating troubles to the public, I would be glad if you could inform your government what I have written to you." F.O.1/40, Menelik to Harrington, May 8, 1902. The Amharic version of Menelik's letter of June 9, 1897 to Leontiev would be found in F.O.1/34.

65
save."

Menelik was so encouraged by the British indecisiveness that by mid 1899 he came out with an official statement of position that his territory now extended to the southern shores of Lake Rudolph. His ground for this, of course, was based on the concept of effective occupation and his proclamation (circular) of 1891 as regards the limits of Ethiopia. Funny enough, Harrington accepted Menelik's claim in principle without binding his government. He recommended Menelik's newest proposal as "worthy of serious consideration." His rationale, according to him, was that "a proposal on Menelik's part would put a limit to Abyssinian expansion, as he can scarcely not go beyond his proposed line, and partly because [he had] dreaded his making use of Leontieff to occupy territory that [the British Government] have not yet occupied."⁶⁶

The vigour with which both Menelik and Britain were determined to accomplish their own respective policies as regards the south western territories was the one great stumbling block which inhibited an agreement on mutually acceptable demarcating line. The tug of war was to continue for a considerably long period of time without a positive solution coming out of it. in 1902, perhaps because of Harrington's

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F.O.1/44, Harrington to Sanderson, February 17, 1900. Private British travellers to Ethiopia like Welby and Wylde had also suggested that effective British occupation was important as a means of desuading Menelik from advancing inward into British sphere of influence. For such comments, see Welby, Twixt Sirdar and Menelik, p.334; Wylde, Abyssinia, p.75.

66

F.O.403/284, Harrington to Cromer, June 3, 1899.

insistence and consistent recommendations that British indecisiveness would mean "an extension of Abyssinian influence" in the contested areas,⁶⁷ the British Government enlisted a private citizen of pleasure, W.Butter, "a sportsman and adventurer, to make a surveying trip to the southern border at his own expense."

What transpired between 1902 and 1909 is indicative of the strong feelings both Britain and Ethiopia attached to their respective claims in the south western regions. Butter, accompanied by Captain R.E.Maud, the official surveyor of the British expedition to the south western regions, had laid out a general outline of British claims which was considered acceptable to London. Harrington, just returning to Addis Ababa from Rome where he was participating in the preliminary meetings of the Tripartite Treaty of December 1903 with Giacomo Agnesa and Rodd, brought with him definitive instructions regarding the south western regions. It was broadly indicated to him that the basis of his negotiations with Menelik was to be on the proposals as drawn by Maud and Butter. It was also expressly stated to him that he was not to engage in any agreement which either altered the demarcating line as defined by the Anglo-Italian Protocol of March 24, 1891, or to commit himself to anything "prejudicial to Italian interests in those regions"⁶⁸ without first being advised of Italian concurrence.

It took three more years before Menelik and Harrington were

67

See for instance F.O.403/299, Harrington to Salisbury, June 12, 1900.

68

F.O.403/346, Lansdowne to Harrington, April 1, 1904.

able to agree in principle on a mutually acceptable definition of
⁶⁹their frontiers. Harrington hurried back to London for further
consultations and to impress on the Foreign Office the benefits to
be accrued from accepting Menelik's present proposals. In London,
he submitted his own proposal in which he emphasized that "it has
taken nearly eight years hard fighting to get this frontier, and no
time should be lost in sending Mr. Clerk a telegraphic instruction
to sign, as any delay will probably mean we may not get the frontiers
settled for a year or two more...."
⁷⁰In accordance with Harrington's
suggestions, the Colonial Office approved the draft agreement and
⁷¹Clerk was instructed to sign it. It took another year before the
final south western agreement on the British-Ethiopian frontiers was
worked out and signed in Addis Ababa on December 16, 1907 between
⁷²Menelik and Hohler, Harrington's deputy in Ethiopia.

69

Menelik and Harrington agreed to the frontier delimitation on December 7, 1906. See F.O.401/10, Zaphiro Report.

70

F.O.401/10, Harrington Memorandum, January 18, 1907.

71

Ibid., Colonial Office to Foreign Office, January 21, 1907.

72

Ibid., Hohler to Greg, December 24, 1907. See also F.O.401/11, Treaty of December 16, 1907. In his book Hohler says, "...the southern frontier Treaty was slowly proceeding, and on the 15th. December I had a final audience with the Emperor on the subject, when he tried to obtain another quarter of Lake Rudolph, whereupon I asked whether it was his desire to add a Minister of Marine to his new Cabinet. Next he wanted a mountain in Uganda, but after an hour's animated conversation he dropped that too, and the next day I received a copy of the Treaty with his seal and signature, and spent a happy hour affixing my seals and signature." Hohler, Diplomatic Petrel, p.145.

A stalemate further ensued in the actual demarcation of the frontiers in question. According to the December 16, 1907 Agreement, both governments were to "send commissioners, who shall in concert delimit the exact line of the frontier." But past intransigences were revived again when Menelik claimed much more than Britain was willing to allow him under the Butter-Maud line. Britain's Chief Commissioner for the delimitation of the frontiers was Major Gwynn. He was also responsible for delimiting the Ethio-Sudanses frontiers. However, as Menelik was by now a sick and bed-ridden monarch, his Crown Council - an amorphous and indecisive body - was reluctant to appoint an Ethiopian Commissioner to proceed in the work of the delimitation. Under the circumstances, the Gwynn Commission was therefore given a free hand to undertake a more or less independent delimiting task. Gwynn concluded that, given Ethiopian reluctance to demarcate the frontiers, the best solution for Britain was to advance as far north as possible into territories claimed by Ethiopia and to institute a patrolling system which would eventually inhibit Ethiopian officials from intruding into areas where British units were physically present. In this regard, he recommended several changes on the Butter-Maud line in order to obtain much more defensible frontiers. Accordingly, and contrary to the Agreement of 1907, he pushed the Butter-Maud line adjacent to Moyale further north thereby including the important water wells of Churre Moyale and Fort Harrington within British sphere. In what he termed a

a workable arrangement, he left the wells at Chellenko and an adjacent
⁷⁴ piece of territory within Ethiopian sovereignty. Menelik strongly
 objected to the Gwynn suggestions, and according to Hervey, Menelik "is
 said to have informed Fitauarari Habte Giorgis [the Minister of Defence]
⁷⁵ that he would not consent to them."

In March 1909, Schubert, a German national, was proposed by
 Menelik's Crown Council to act as Commissioner in the delimitation of
 the frontiers with Britain. Some time later, however, the idea was
 abandoned and an Ethiopian Commission was dispatched to the area.
⁷⁶ Its
 outcome was minimal and in fact insignificant. Upon the accomplishment
 of his assignment, Major Gwynn left Ethiopia in May blaming any further
 frontier altercations on Ethiopian officials. Ever since, the Ethiopian
 Government consistently rejected the Gwynn line with the result that
 the frontiers were to stay undemarcated until Kenya's independence from
 Britain.

Menelik's frontiers' ⁷⁷ policy is complex and therefore beyond the
 scope of this research paper. Apart from fulfilling a foreign policy
 which attempted to check European expansion into what Menelik considered
 were the limits of ancient Ethiopia, his frontiers policy did also
 serve to consolidate his grip domestically over territories he effectively

74

F.O.401/12, Gwynn to Hervey, January 27, 1909.

75

Ibid., Hervey to Grey, March 20, 1909. See also F.O.403/320, Thesiger
 to Sir P. Girouard, November 9, 1910.

76

F.O.401/12, Hervey to Grey, April 17, 1909.

brought under the central government.

What has been attempted in the foregoing pages is to show Menelik's role, at the time of the European rivalry, to thwart British and Italian designs which were bound to undermine Ethiopian sovereignty and territorial integrity. In all counts, Menelik was successful. First, he managed to check both Britain and Italy from extending their spheres of influence - the victorian jargon for territorial annexation - into Ethiopia. Secondly, he managed to preserve Ethiopia unscathed during the length of the European rivalry and its scramble for Africa. Finally, both Britain and Italy recognized Ethiopian independence and sovereignty as a result of his tenacious hold to the virtues of diplomacy and statesmanship.

77

The following agreements, documents and works are recommended in the study of the frontiers question with Britain, Italy and France: British-French Agreement of February 1888; Anglo-German Agreement of July 1, 1890; Anglo-Italian Protocols of March 24 & April 15, 1891; Menelik's Circular letter to the European powers, April 10, 1891; Anglo-German Agreement of November 15, 1893; Anglo-Italian Agreement of May 5, 1894; Anglo-Congolese Agreement of 1894; Ethio-French Treaties & Agreements of January 26, 1897, January 29, 1897, January 30, 1897, March 20, 1897; Anglo-Ethiopian treaty of May 14, 1897; Rodd letter to Ras Mekonnen, June 4, 1897; Mekonnen letter to Rodd, June 4, 1897; Agreement relative to the frontier between the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan & Eritrea, June, 1899; Treaty delimiting the frontier between Ethiopia and Eritrea, July 10, 1900; French-Italian Convention of July 10, 1901; Ethiopian-Italian Convention of May 16, 1908; F.O.1/32, pp.249 ff.; Work, Ethiopia, a Pawn in European Diplomacy, pp.9-50; 127-138; 163; 222-223; 316-323; Raphael, The Cape-To-Cairo Dream, pp.337-339; Hanotaux, Fachoda; Rodd, Memories, Vol.II; Pigli, L'Etiofia Nella Politica Europea; Hertslet, The Map of Africa by Treaty; Keller, Alfred Ilg: Sein Leben Und Seine Werke; Leontieff [?], Provinces Equatoriales d'Abyssinie; Rossetti, Storia Diplomatica; Vanderheyem, Une Expedition Avec le Negus Menelik; Zaghi, Crispi e Menelech; Bourgin, Les Politiques d'expansion Imperialiste; Ravier, L'Ethiopie et l'expansion Europeenne en Afrique Orientale; Traversi, L'Italia e l'Etiofia da Assab a Ual-Ual; Borelli, Ethiopie Meridionale; Chiesi, La Colonizzazione Europea nell'Est Africa; Conti-Rossini, Storia d'Etiofia; Gann & Dunignan, Colonialism in Africa; Marcus, "Ethio-British Negotiations Concerning the Western Borders with the Sudan," Journal of Ethiopian Studies, II, 2, Addis Ababa, 1964.

Active European rivalry in East Africa was brought to an end with the close of the Fashoda event. The diplomatic rivalry at Menelik's court, however, was to continue for some time until his death in the second decade of the 1900s. The newest type of rivalry now centred not around European territorial interests as such but on economic and related interests. The time was also opportune for this type of rivalry in that it had coincided with Menelik's desire to take the European powers into his confidence to use them as partners in his modernizing efforts. Up until the close of the 19th. century, Menelik was - we have observed - busily engaged with the idea of first establishing his Empire as a sovereign nation in order to later on gain an equal footing with those with whom he was to enter into economic relations.

The modernizing factors which Menelik desired to introduce into his Empire included modern government administration, transportation and telecommunication, banking and commerce, hospitals, schools and a host of other economic as well as social prerequisites essential to the growing and expanding machinery of state. Of these, the two factors which for the following one decade were to generate the most stringent rivalry among the European powers were the railway and banking concessions of Menelik. Since his accession to the throne of Showa, Menelik had realized how a nation without sufficient or no links to the outside world could be handicapped both militarily and economically and had thus

recognized the importance and necessity of opening his Empire to the sea. He had therefore given a railway concession to Ilg to connect his capital with the French Red Sea port of Djibouti. In this regard, the rivalry which ensued among Britain, France, Germany and, to a certain extent Italy and Russia, was so intricate that it is not in the domain of this paper to look into its significance and implications. The interventions by these powers were so drawn out and cumbersome that Menelik convened a meeting with the representatives of Britain, France, Italy and Russia on April 20, 1905 and conveyed to them in the strongest terms possible of his displeasure and unhappiness the way the powers conducted themselves in starting the construction of the railway. He told the diplomats assembled in his court to transmit to their respective governments that, as a result of the long delay in the realization of his railway project, he was now intending to build it himself. He emphasized in the meeting:

Si je ne crois aucune proposition de vos
Gouvernements, aucune proposition mettant
d'accord vos intérêts internationaux, ce qui
mettrait fin a ce conflit, je me verrai, pour

79

For further readings in the field see, among others, T. Lennox Gilmour, Abyssinia, the Ethiopian Railway and the Powers; G. Angoulvant & S. Vignéras, Djibouti, Mer Rouge, Abyssinie; Vignéras, Notice Sur la Cote Francaise des Somalis; Harold G. Marcus, "Britain and Ethiopia 1896 to 1914: A Study of Diplomatic Relations," [Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation], Boston University, 1964, pp. 68-105; 152-167; J. B. Christopher, "Ethiopia, the Djibouti Railway and the Powers, 1899-1906," [Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation], Harvard University, 1942; "The beginning of Modern Transportation in Ethiopia: The Franco-Ethiopian Railway and its History," Ethiopia Observer, 1, 12, 1958.

assurer la construction du chemin de fer,
dans la nécessité de l'entreprendre moi-meme,
cette construction, sans solliciter ni accepter
de concours d'aucune part. 80

Even though Menelik pressed hard on the European countries which were feuding among themselves regarding the construction of the railway, the distance between Djibouti and Addis Ababa was finished and made ready for transportation only after his death in 1917. In 1903 Menelik was reportedly to be present in Djibouti for the inaugural ceremony of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway. The intrigues in his capital to desuade him from attending the ceremony was such that it seems Menelik had rather preferred not to attend it altogether. The French newspaper 'Le Temps,' in reporting Menelik's decision not to be present in the ceremony, bitterly commented that "les intrigues incessantes des légations d'Addis Ababa ne seraient pas étrangères a la décision prise, en la circonstance, par l'empereur ethiopien." That both Britain and Italy were trying either to boycott or sabotage the progress of the construction of the railway is evident from their very many adverse diplomatic activities. A day before the 'Le Temps' article, Rodd, for instance, had dispatched a telegramme to Lord Lansdowne from Rome informing him of Italian policy to abstain from attending the ceremony at Djibouti. The Rodd telegramme said, in part:

80

F.O.401/8, Ochs to Foreign Office, May 16,1905, Inclosure 2.

81

See "The Beginning of Modern Transportation in Ethiopia: The Franco-Ethiopian Railway and its History," Ethiopia Observer, 1, 12, 1958, pp.380 ff.

82

'Le Temps,' January 29, 1903.

"The Italian government would prefer not to be connected with any representation by ships at Djibouti in connection with the opening of the railway." ⁸³ Rodd, of course, was implying that his country should also follow suit. There was also a concerted effort by Harrington and Ciccodicola, the Italian envoy, to discredit Ilg in the eyes of Menelik by trying hard to implicate him in a scandal involving French interests in the construction of the railway. Ilg, a prominent and respected adviser of Menelik in foreign relations for many years and for whom Menelik had originally given the railway concession, had - at about this time - transferred his rights to the concession to the French Government. The way Ilg went ⁸⁴ about it had displeased Menelik.

The Lagarde era in Ethiopia was fast coming to an end and his usefulness in obtaining the railway concession for France was now being questioned in Paris. Phase two of the railway negotiations with Menelik was therefore commenced with the appointment of Klobukowski as a Special Envoy to Menelik's court.

Even with Menelik's newly gained status in the region, the European alignment at Menelik's court was not much different than

83

F.O.1/43, Rodd to Lansdowne, January 28, 1903.

84

"The other day when I was at Holota [Menelik's country retreat], when I mentioned Ilg's name, Menelik's face was a picture and when I contrasted Ilg's behaviour when the news of the French Government interference in the railway came with his present behaviour, he replied at once that Ilg had been bought. Ilg is certainly under a cloud at present. He has only seen the King twice since his arrival. Whether Ciccodicola and I are able to keep him where he is ~~remains~~ to be seen, but we shall do our best, whether we succeed or not in doing so. We have at

the pre-Adwa period. After Adwa "the various European Legations," writes Vivian, "divide themselves into two camps, French and Russian against England and Italians, and concern themselves with little else than political intrigue." After 1896, "the atmosphere in the Ethiopian capital," according to Jesman, "was charged with political electricity. The web of intrigue was constantly spun between the Ghebbi - the imperial residence - the legations, and the house of Herr Ilg..."

Regarding the diplomatic representatives in Addis Ababa at the time, Harrington's own report to Salisbury is very revealing. Of Vlassov, the Russian representative, he wrote that he "has apparently little influence with the King." Lagarde, he said, "seems to have lost ground considerably" and the Fashoda affair, he maintained, has "weakened his position greatly." Ciccodicola, his Italian partner in the diplomatic alliance, is, Harrington reported, "very favourably viewed by the King and has more influence with him than the other two." On his own influence with Menelik, Harrington was also favourably inclined. He said, "as regards my position, for the moment it seems very strong, and its strength, I think, owes more to Menelik's fear of our power and suspicion of our intentions, than to any friendship on his part towards England."

any rate the satisfaction of knowing that his influence will never again be what it was when we first came here." Ibid., Harrington to Sir Thomas, February 8, 1903.

85

Vivian, Abyssinia, p.182.

86

Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.91.

87

F.O.1/34, Harrington to Salisbury, November 7, 1898.

It was Menelik's intention to institutionalize diplomatic usages in his court the way they were practised in Europe. This was most probably necessitated by the diplomatic atmosphere that then prevailed in his capital. After Adwa, the situation culminated, in some instances, on feuds which somehow tended to make work and life cumbersome in the capital. Every diplomat spied against his colleagues and everybody rushed to the 'Ghebi' to circumvent the activities of the other in the hope that such condescending attitudes will easily buy favour from Menelik. Menelik, on his part, encouraged the practice to a certain extent because the process kept him well informed not only about the diplomats' own frivolities and activities but also about the magnitude and seriousness of their differences. Harrington, like all diplomats in the capital, complained about this self inflicted captivity. He said: "Life has been deadly dull here this year and falsehood and intrigue rampant as ever so that one's life here has been like the policeman's not a happy one."⁸⁸

At about the same time, we also note Menelik's efforts to define the diplomat's rights and privileges in Ethiopia. Harrington, for example, approached by the court to obtain his country's regulations regarding diplomatic rights and privileges, makes mention of this in a private letter to Maxwell. He wrote: "Just a hurried line to ask you whether the Librarian at the Foreign Office was asked to send me a book concerning diplomatic rights, usages and privileges - as Ilg has been worrying me about it. If there is such a book I should be extremely

obliged if you would have a copy sent me."

As things worsened, diplomatic precedence and matters pertaining to protocol in fact became a matter of concern both to the court and the diplomatic envoys. In Menelik's own court the fanfare surrounding diplomatic functions and receptions was enormous, and protocol invariably stiff but warm and cordial. And much as the foreign representatives liked it, it was also the source of their problems. They enjoyed to compare and contrast the number of invited guests, the class of wine or champagne that was served in their honour, the place accorded to this and that envoy at different functions, and got satisfaction with the monarch because this was considered to be an up-manship in their influence and career. The struggle for prominence was such that the place of the diplomatic doyen was highly sought and coveted by all. Harrington was a diplomat who envied and eyed such a position. For obvious reasons, he did not suggest the position for himself. However, he encouraged his government to approach the Italian government to allow Ciccodicola, its representative, to be elevated to the rank of Minister so that he will assume the role of doyen to the benefit of the two countries. Harrington also very well knew the feelings of his government about the matter. He himself had ardently propagated in the past that Italy should not be allowed to steal the limelight from Britain at Menelik's court. Yet, on February 14, 1908, Harrington telegraphed his Foreign Office: "the French are extremely anxious that their Minister should be doyen here. I am therefore of opinion that it is in our interest that before M. Brice, the new French Minister, arrives, the

the Italian Representative should be given the rank of Minister. 90

Harrington had rightly anticipated the reply to his cable. On February 18, he was elevated to the rank of Envoy Extraordinary ⁹¹ and Minister Plenipotentiary.

After Adwa, Germany got actively involved with Menelik at about the time of the Tripartite Agreement was being discussed in the European capitals. The agreement of December 13, 1906 - commonly referred to as the Tripartite Agreement - was a joint effort undertaken by Britain, France and Italy after Fashoda to minimize their rivalry in Ethiopia and to coordinate their diplomatic representation at Menelik's court the better to promote and defend their individual as well as collective interests not only in Ethiopia but also in East ⁹² Africa. Of the countries which were diplomatically represented in Ethiopia, the two important nations which were not signatory to the

90

F.O.401/11, Harrington to Grey, February 14, 1908.

91

"Question of doyen. Following refers to your telegramme No.12 of the 17th. instant. The King has raised you to the rank of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from the 31st. ultimo. You should formally notify the Emperor Menelik to this effect, and at the same time request that your appointment may be officially recognized from the date of your notification by His Majesty (consult p.139 of Foreign Office List for 1907, Rule IV of Vienna Congress). The result of this will be to make you doyen of the diplomatic Corps at Addis Ababa. Your credentials, which were dispatched on the 14th. instant, should reach you on the 8th. March next. We could hardly take steps as regards the relative precedence of the French and Italian Representatives without exposing ourselves to the charge of breaking the spirit of the Agreement of the 13th. December, 1906, towards France, even if it were not too late to do so." Ibid., Grey to Harrington, February 18, 1908.

92

Article 10 of the agreement stipulated that the three powers would work in concert regarding representation at Menelik's court.

Tripartite Agreement were Germany and the United States.

Germany's main interest was commercial than political. Accordingly, a German commercial mission headed by Dr. Felix Rosen was sent to Ethiopia at the beginning of 1905. Even though Rosen clearly stated the commercial nature of his mission and emphasized his Government's policy to respect Ethiopia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, there was an outcry in Addis Ababa among the diplomatic corps indicating that Germany, as a new comer, was trying to steal the show from the rest of the European powers and further complicating the political scene. Especially Britain and France suspected the objective of the German mission. Rosen signed a commercial treaty with Menelik on March 7, 1905. The same day, Harrington reported to his Foreign Office: "In spite of M. Rosen's assurances that Germany would attend strictly to her business, there is not one single question here in which the German Mission has not sought to interfere....With the entrance of Germany into the sphere of Abyssinian politics Great Britain has acquired another bitter opponent, and one who will not hesitate to use the most unscrupulous means to deal a blow at British influence."

93

For an account of the mission and related matters see Felix Rosen, Eine Deutsche Gesandtschaft in Abessinien, Leipzig, 1907.

94

DDF., 2nd. Ser., Vol.6, Nos.253; 254; 324.

95

F.O.401/8, Harrington to Lansdowne, March 7, 1905.

Germany, for sure, intended to compete and participate in the economic and commercial projects which were being negotiated by the European countries with Menelik. Of significance to Germany were the two railway and banking concessions which were being hotly discussed in Addis Ababa. While in Ethiopia, Rosen informed Lagarde of German intentions to fully participate in an international-⁹⁶ ized railway project, and on his way back, Rosen also told Cromer in Cairo of the German Government "wishes to obtain the nomination of the Board of Directors of the new Abyssinian Bank of a German Representative."⁹⁷

The 1905 Rosen mission to Menelik was in many respects very important in laying the foundation for future relations between the two countries. Especially, the importance of the mission lies in the fact that it was instrumental in bringing about normal and friendly contacts between the two countries after the turbulent pre-Adwa period in which relations were strained because of Germany's alliance and close association with Italy. It was not without cause that in its March 1, 1907 issue that the 'Cologne Gazette' hailed the Rosen mission as a remarkable success which will pave future understanding between Ethiopia⁹⁸ and Germany. That it in fact fulfilled a useful purpose was demonstrated by Queen Taitu engaging a German governess for the education of the princes and princesses at the Imperial court and that German merchants were

⁹⁶

DDF., 2nd., Ser., Vol.8, No.139. See also Notes 4 & 5, p.200; 201.

⁹⁷

F.O.401/8, Cromer to Lansdowne, May 18,1905.

⁹⁸

F.O.401/10, Lascelles to Grey, Berlin, March 1,1907.

beginning to receive "several marks of favour" - most important of which was the monopoly for the sell of alcohol and tobacco by German concessioners. On the cultural level, a German expedition was dispatched to Ethiopia in 1906 under Enno Littmann to excavate at the historic sight of Axum. The expedition's findings were later on published in several volumes and were used as useful sources of reference for future historical and archeological excavations.

The Rosen mission was further responsible for initiating an Ethiopian mission to Germany. In September 1907, in order to reciprocate the visit of the German mission to his court, Menelik sent an Ethiopian one to the German Emperor headed by Dejazmach Meshesha. According to the 'Kolnische Zeitung,' the purpose of the Ethiopian mission was to set the ground for future commercial and amicable relationships between Ethiopia and Germany and to seek the German Emperor's assistance to use his influence at Constantinople to obtain a settlement on the question of the disputed Ethiopian monasteries at Jerusalem. As if to emphasize the commercial aspect of their relationship, the functions of the Ethiopian mission included - aside from the formal banquet given by the Emperor in its honour and a gala performance at the opera - a visit to a shooting gallery at Halensee where it viewed a collection of the latest types of German firearms; an inspection to the air-ship installation at Tegel; an

99

Ibid

100

F.O.401/10, Lascelles to Grey, Berlin, September 6, 1907.

an excursion to Potsdam; a demonstration at a fire prevention
 101
 firm and an extended tour at the Krupp works in Berlin. The
 Ethiopian mission presented the German Emperor with various gifts,
 including fine elephant tusks and several animals for the zoolo-
 gical Garden of Berlin.

Perhaps, the most important outcome of the Rosen mission
 was the confidence it tried to build in Menelik as regards German
 peaceful intentions about Ethiopia. It is to be remembered that
 immediately after Adwa, Menelik was faced with the tremendous task
 of coping up with the different European missions which came to his
 capital to negotiate treaties of one kind or another. On March 27,
 1897 Menelik therefore appointed Alfred Ilg, a Swiss engineer who
 had already served him for over twenty years in different capacities,
 102
 as adviser on foreign policy. Ilg assumed that role until he fell
 out of favour in 1907. It was to Germany that Menelik now turned to
 fill the vacancy left open by Ilg. Probably in February 1909, Menelik
 wrote a letter to Emperor Wilhelm that Dr. Alfred Zintgraff be granted
 permission to enter the Ethiopian diplomatic service in the capacity
 of an adviser on foreign policy. Emperor Wilhelm acceded to Menelik's
 103
 wishes.

101

Ibid

102

Keller, Alfred Ilg: Sein Leben Und Seine Werke, p.118.

103

"There is all probability that Menelik intended to fill the vaccant place of Ilg
 with a person from a 'neutral' country. In this case it seems the country was Germany
 and the person Dr. Alfred Zintgraff." F.O.401/12, March 1909. Menelik also had express
 his wish that a German should succeed his French physician. Ibid.

Zintgraff had earlier accompanied the Rosen mission to Menelik and he was made the German Chargé d'Affaires in Addis Ababa upon the return of Rosen to Berlin. Zintgraff's role as adviser, however, was short lived. Menelik, now an ailing monarch confined to bed through successive strokes, was being treated by a German doctor, Steinkuhler. At the height of Menelik's debilitating paralysis, Zintgraff, together with Dr. Steinkuhler, accused several dignitaries in Menelik's entourage - and by implication Queen Taitu - for having tried to poison the incapacitated Menelik. The seriousness of the implication surrounding the allegation infuriated not only the Queen and the court dignitaries but also Ras Tessema, a close confidant of Menelik and now Regent, in whose hand the unity, stability and security of the Empire were entrusted. What had brought the whole affair to a crucial turning point was the circular letter of Mr. Schellersteinwartz, the German Minister, which was distributed to the different foreign legations together with Dr. Steinkuhler's medical report on the treatment of the Emperor. At a time when power and authority were almost in a vacuum, the charges brought about by the German Legation were regarded as being too detrimental to the well being of the state. Ras Tessema therefore sent a very stringent note to the German Chargé d'Affaires in which he rebuked Zintgraff's behaviour and his unbecoming attitude in undermining the role of high officials whose banishment he requested after the poisoning allegation. The poisoning allegation,

however, does not appear to be clinically correct.

Hervey, reporting from Addis Ababa on Ras Tessema's note, comments thus:

Ras Tessema, who is now chief of the Rasses and invested with full power by the Abyssinian Government, sent, as a counterblast, his version of the affair to all legations....Dr. Zintgraff had interfered in matters which did not concern him. The doctor had made a mistake in not having asked another doctor to assist him in the examination of the urine....Ras Tessema refers to Dr. Zintgraff's demand for the King's Ministers to be ousted and turned out of the country, and for an investigation to take place....He mentioned Dr. Zintgraff's letter of appointment, which constituted him an adviser to the Government, to do such work as thought fit. This gave him no rights to issue commands. The Ras finishes by saying that he is certain the good relations between their two countries are not likely to be endangered by the action of a person of no account. 105

The Zintgraff affair, unfortunate as it were, contributed to souring Ethiopian-German relations for a time. He resigned his post and Dr. Steinkuhler was also replaced by Dr. Martin, an Ethiopian physician. Hoffman Philip, the United States representative at Menelik's court at the time, reported to the State Department that on the occasion of the Emperor's birthday anniversary he had met the German Minister at the 'Ghebi' and that he had "informed [him] that his relations with the
106
Abyssinian Government were still far from satisfactory." However, that the Zintgraff episode had not seriously affected Ethiopian German relations was soon ascertained by the dispatch, in April 1910, of yet another

105

F.O.401/13 Hervey to Grey, August 13,1909.

106

American Archives, Diplomatic Report N.35, August 19,1909.

107

Ethiopian mission to Austria and Germany.

At the time of the European rivalry over Ethiopia the United States was neither represented in Addis Ababa nor did it establish relations with Menelik. The reason was mainly because of the fact that Washington did not have colonialist ambitions in Africa. In light of its decision to abstain from joining the Berlin powers in their declaration as regards Africa, one would have suspected that it should have recognized Menelik's chagrin so as to lend him moral as well as psychological support in his fight against these powers. However, the United States did not have any substantial national interests in Ethiopia at the time which would have warranted its active involvement there. United States' interest in Ethiopia, if at all deemed important by Washington, centred around commercial relations. Menelik, nevertheless, had sought to establish diplomatic relations with Washington even though the response was not as readily forthcoming as he had expected it.

It was only at the close of 1903 that the United States sent a Commercial mission to Menelik. The mission was entrusted to Robert Peet Skinner who at the time was a United States Consul General at Marseille. An intelligence memorandum on Skinner by the British Consul General at Marseille and sent to the Chargé d'Affaires in Ethiopia by the Foreign Office describes him as "a personal friend and press supporter of the
108
late President Mckinley.

107

F.O.401/14, Findlay to Grey, Sophia, April 13,1910.

108

"R.P.Skinner is a western American journalist of great energy and push, of considerable ability of the commercial order; does not take, and apparently cannot take, a high view of international questions....Manners, those of a western

The draft of the commercial treaty Skinner presented to Menelik emphasized the commercial aspect of his mission. Article five of the draft stipulated that "His Majesty the Emperor guarantees that on reaching the frontiers of Ethiopia merchandize of the United States shall in respect to import duties enjoy the treatment of the most favoured nation...." Menelik, however, had earlier rejected all most favoured nation clauses both in the Rodd-Menelik and Rosen-Menelik treaties of 1897 and 1905 respectively and it was unlikely that he would have accorded the United States this privilege which he had already denied to the two European powers.

Both the British and Italian representatives in Addis Ababa - active partners in the diplomatic rivalry among the powers represented at Menelik's court - must have made their governments' opposition to such a political concession to the United States by Menelik because Clark, the British Chargé d'Affaires, notes that "both Major Ciccodicola and I pointed out to His Majesty two principal objections, from an

journalist, with some continental outward polish; stiff and somewhat rigid, and dictatorial. Always ready to contradict and lay the law. Tries to dress well. Has very great opinion of his abilities; and of the great destinies of his country....[He] is personally very ambitious....Skinner is an aggressively pushing Western American journalist; of Massilon, Ohio, a personal friend and press supporter of the late President McKinley, his townsman. He stumped the country with McKinley during the latter's last electionary tour, and as his share of the spoils, got the appointment as Consul at Marseille. Though always very careful to keep on excellent terms with this Consulate...Mr. Skinner is yet at heart jealous of Great Britain's supremacy, as a commercial opponent of a most obstinate kind, believes in the commercial and industrial superiority of the US, and has set his heart on America 'coming up on top!'" F.O.1/42, Memorandum of British Consul General on Skinner, September 25, 1903. The Memorandum was sent to Baird, Chargé d'Affaires in Ethiopia, by the Foreign Office on October 15, 1903. See F.O.1/41, Foreign Office to Baird, October 15, 1903.

Abyssinian point of view, to the acceptance of this treaty." The first objection was regarding the most favoured nation clause in the draft. Clark says, he and Ciccodicola suggested to the Emperor that if he were to grant it to the United States "he would find the conditions imposed upon him...incompatible with his Treaty obligations to other powers." The second objection was related to Skinner's request in the draft proposal for the exercise of the "liberty of conscience" and "worship" by the citizens of each of the two countries in the territory of the other. These, of course, were principles to which both Britain and Italy had adhered to for centuries in the past and had required of Menelik if he were to be admitted to the ranks of the civilized world. It was by referring to the same principles that both were urging and advising Menelik to totally abolish the slave trade in Ethiopia on which he had no absolute control. In fact, at repeated instances, the slave trade question was made an issue by Britain and Italy to debar Menelik from participating in the then consortium of international alliances. Now, for fear that the present draft proposal would give the United States a position of influence in Ethiopia, both British and Italian representatives advised against the granting of the concession to liberty of conscience. They said their main objection was that if this concession was given, it would create for Menelik a position which was tantamount to subjecting France to an unequal treatment with the United States since Menelik had recently expelled French

Catholic Missions from his country because of religious controversies.

The United States, as mentioned earlier, did not have significant national interests in Ethiopia, and therefore there were no serious stumbling blocks to prevent a hurried agreement. Skinner readily agreed to most of the clauses and the treaty was signed on December 27, 1903 without any major differences.

At the end of the mission, Mr. Skinner presented Menelik with an invitation to attend the St. Louis Exhibition which was to be held soon and which Menelik regretted he was unable to accept. He wrote the President of the St. Louis Exposition thanking him for the invitation. At the farewell ceremony, Menelik bestowed upon Skinner the Star of Ethiopia and the other members of his staff were given similar decorations of different grades. The Emperor also entrusted to Skinner several gifts consisting of ivory and two young lions to be presented to President Roosevelt.

The first Ethiopian representative to visit with the President of the United States was Hadji Abdul Sadak, at the end of 1905.

110

This relates to the expulsion of Monseigneur Jarousseau by Menelik. See F.O.1/42, Clerk to Lansdowne, December 23, 1903.

*

Menelik had neither accepted official invitations nor left Ethiopia all his life.

111

Skinner, Abyssinia, pp.172-173.

112

Ibid., p.119. See also F.O.1/42. Clerk to Lansdowne, December 27, 1903. For further readings into the Skinner mission see Skinner, Abyssinia, p.19; 23-24; 79-84; 86; 91-94; 172-173; 199; 202-204.

unfortunately, however, Abdul Sadak's mission was phony and one based on bogus credentials. In 1905, Abdul Sadak was in Europe on a special mission from Menelik to the Sultan Abdul Hamid of Turkey. At the conclusion of his mission to Constantinople, Abdul Sadak visited some other European capitals and while in Paris had a replica of Emperor Menelik's Grand Seal made, purportedly for the Emperor's use. It seems that Abdul Sadak was in fact intrusted with a mission by Menelik to buy some machinery from America. To this end, he carried with him Menelik's letter to Skinner - who then was stationed at Marseille - asking him his assistance in the purchase of the machinery in question. Skinner, however, was not at his post at the time as he was on leave and Menelik's letter was not handed to him. Abdul Sadak, however, preferred to proceed to the United States, arriving in New York on December 15, 1905. He was later on received by President Roosevelt on presenting a document sealed with the bogus seal from Paris. Abdul Sadak also presented lion skins and fine elephant tusks to the President in the name of of the Emperor. ¹¹³

For some years after the Skinner mission, the United States did not have any meaningful representation in Ethiopia until 1909. In accordance with Hervey's reports from Addis Ababa, the five years after the signing of the Menelik-Skinner treaty in 1903, United States' interest

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American Archives, Love to Secretary of State, Consular No.48, February 18, 1911. Abdul Sadak was arrested upon his return to Ethiopia and inquiries were conducted through the French Legation in Addis Ababa as to how Abdul Sadak or other accomplices managed to reproduce Menelik's Grand Seal in Paris without a permit from his court.

in Ethiopia was not altered significantly. In October 1908, Hervey reported that "since the fleeting visit and departure of Mr. Consul General F. Mowrer, the American Consulate was under the charge of a trading Vice-Consul, who left for the United States in June last.¹¹⁴ Again, in December, Hervey noted that "the United States of America have been represented only by a trading Vice-Consul whose chief characteristic was a pronounced fondness for the bottle; but a Minister Resident has now been appointed in the person of Mr. Hoffman Philip, Consul General at Cairo. The Vice Consul probably had no political relations with the Abyssinian Government, good or otherwise."¹¹⁵

Hoffman Philip, was appointed Minister Resident and Consul General on July 31, 1908.¹¹⁶ He arrived in Addis Ababa only on June 14, 1909. Even Philip was not so sure that the time was opportune for the United States to embark on establishing full diplomatic relations with Menelik because he feared that the active European rivalry prevailing in Ethiopia would naturally diffuse any such relationship between the two countries.¹¹⁷

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F.O.401/11, Hervey to Grey, October 14, 1908.

115

F.O.401/12, Hervey to Grey, December 31, 1908.

116

American Archives, Philip to Elihu Root, Tangier, August 26, 1908.

117

"After careful study of the problem, it seemed that the situation in Abyssinia was fraught with high explosives elements resulting from European politics and that the trade value of our commercial relations had sunk to a temporary low chiefly as a result of these clashing ambitions. In the circumstances, I felt obliged to report that the little nation had become an amphitheatre of European controversies, and it appeared that no particular advantage to the United States would accrue from the

Menelik, on the contrary, counted greatly on the benefits that were to be accrued from Ethiopian-United states relationships and tried to encourage it at several instances. Philip himself records that "he [Menelik] attached great importance to the establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States as a means of expanding international relations beyond the confines of Europe. The predominant foreign interests in 1909 were those of Great Britain, France and Italy with Germany making a strong but futile effort to gain political and commercial advantages.¹¹⁸

Even on the commercial level, Philip was so discouraged by the existing European rivalry and the prospects that were open for his country that the first impressions he developed in this domain were not encouraging. He reported to the Department of State:¹¹⁹
 "General aspect and conditions not promising." Until the expiration of his term in Ethiopia in February 1910, he persistently maintained this point of view.

The European nations actively engaged in a rivalry over Ethiopia had, by the beginning of 1900, sought to mitigate their differences by agreeing to advance their respective individual as well as collective interests through coordinated diplomatic efforts. The negotiations and discussions for the draft agreement between Britain, Italy and France

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Ibid., p.17.

¹¹⁹

American Archives, Philip to Philander C.Knox, Diplomatic No.36, August 18,1909.

are so detailed that no attempt will be made here to explain the intricacies involved excepting to point out that what the parties in question desired was to freeze the 'status quo' over their Ethiopian interests in order to avoid active competition and rivalry among themselves. The resultant situation ushered in a new political element which was alien to 19th. century colonial lexicon, namely, the end to European expansionism in Ethiopia and the recognition of its territorial integrity.

After much debate which entailed hard bargainings, it was only on July 4, 1906, some six years later, that the representatives of the three powers agreed upon a final draft and initialed what was later to become the Tripartite Treaty.

A favourable reaction by Menelik regarding the treaty was very much doubted by all the signatories. Their representatives were therefore instructed to seek every possible means to obtain Menelik's adherence to it. Harrington, for instance, had been asked by the Foreign Office to emphasize to Menelik that the British Government had no other wish but "to secure in the future the integrity and independence of Abyssinia and to promote the material development of the country."

As expected, Menelik's reaction was not favourable. He indicated that he should first have been consulted during the negotiations and it was no use to confront him with a 'fait accompli' regarding his own nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Having accepted a copy

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F.O.401/9, Grey to Lister, July 4, 1906.

121

Ibid., Harrington to Grey, July 4, 1906.

of the draft he sought silence to commenting on its contents. Harrington's position with the Emperor was laready strained to be of significant help to his government in trying to induce Menelik to accept the treaty. Of the undue pressure exerted on him by London Harrington comments that the action was rather of "personal disadvantage
122 in [his] relations with his Majesty." Grey's reply to Harrington was rather telling. He said: "So far as it concerns us, it will be sufficient for all practical purposes if the Emperor Menelik will say that he has no objection. That he should be an actual party to or sign the Agreement
123 does not appear to be necessary."

During all the meetings with the representatives of the three powers Menelik requested other substantiating documents in support of the treaty the better to appreciate its intents and objectives. It was in the meeting of October 11, for instance, that he demanded to be supplied with copies of the various European treaties mentioned in the draft treaty and insisted on being fully briefed on some of the clauses of certain articles included therein. On December 10, Menelik responded in writing to the powers' individual as well as joint demarches. He wrote:

We have received the arrangement made by the three powers. We thank them for their communication, and their desire to keep and maintain the independence of our Government. But let it be understood that this arrangement in no way limits what we consider our

122

Ibid., Harrington to Grey, September 11, 1906.

123

Ibid., Grey to Harrington, October 9, 1906.

sovereign rights. 124

Three days after receipt of the above reply from Menelik the three powers signed the Tripartite Treaty on December 13, 1906. The very first article reaffirmed the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. However, the article was obviously inconsistent in that it still maintained the validity of the previous agreements which these powers had signed earlier defining their respective spheres of influence in the area. Hence, the treaty recognized Britain's paramountcy in the Nile Valley and reaffirmed France's dominant role in the economic development of Ethiopia in particular and the region in general. What Italy gained was minimal. It was promised equal treatment as regards Menelik's railway concession to the European powers and was granted a veiled recognition on its protectorate claims over Ethiopia. Ultimately, Menelik was to be a victor in the present gamble. By the present treaty, his position of sovereignty was readily accepted by the Tripartite Treaty powers and his country had come out much more stronger and stabler more than ever.

The major European powers intended to promote their respective national interests in Ethiopia via the stipulations of the Tripartite Agreement. But did they? By Article 10 of the treaty the three signatory powers had pledged to work in concert regarding diplomatic representation at the court of Menelik. However, this was not going to work out. Once France was satisfied that its economic concessions,

especially the railway negotiations with Menelik, were ascertained to it, it felt free to deal with Menelik independently of the others. This, of course, infuriated Britain to a great extent. M.Klobukowski, the new French Minister in Addis Ababa, was tactfully benefiting from the situation.

It was anticipated by the signatories to the Tripartite Treaty that the new 'entente' modelled by them in Ethiopia would open the way for a brighter political as well as diplomatic cooperation in East Africa. "By these means [the stipulation of the treaty]," Hervey had reported from Ethiopia to his Foreign Minister some time later, "the Emperor Menelik's favourite plan for playing off one Power against another would become impossible." Unfortunately, he continued, because of the French envoy's absolute and "strictest secrecy," the European cooperation at Menelik's court was not possible and "the Agreement as hitherto interpreted has failed to realize its aims."¹²⁵

In the same report Hervey assessed the situation by saying that even though Britain's place with Menelik was then rapidly declining it was his belief that, in the long run, not anyone power, not even France, would play a dominant role in Ethiopian affairs. He feared that the new place assumed by France would not last for he stressed that Menelik was using France, as usual, to promote the construction of the Ethiopian railway. Hervey concluded: "He [Menelik] considers himself quite clever enough to outwit the French should the occasion arise."¹²⁶

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F.O.401/12, "General Report on Abyssinia for the years 1907 and 1908," Hervey to Grey, December 31, 1908.

126

Ibid

John Lane Harrington, the most active and capable British envoy at the court of Menelik for the last one decade had also felt that his country's role in Ethiopia was fast declining and that in fact European representations in Ethiopia were losing their meaning. It was indeed the end of an era. Colonial politics and diplomacy in East Africa - at least its grand designs as regards the Nile Valley and the spheres of influence it promoted in the area - was losing its significance while Menelik's assertion of his country's independence, unity and sovereignty was setting in in its place.

In resigning his post in December, 1908, Harrington, in his last memorandum from Addis Ababa, points out that the French representative was the most responsible person for the disintegration of the newest
127
European alliance over Ethiopia. It should however be mentioned here that France's newly acquired position in Ethiopia was not that important when

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"Previous to resigning my position as His Majesty's Representative in Abyssinia, I consider it my duty to submit, for consideration of His Majesty's Government, the following observations on the present situation in Abyssinia particularly as regards our position there....Since the signing of the Tripartite Agreement of December 1906 the position has entirely changed and British influence may be said to be absolutely non-existent....The principal object of the Tripartite Agreement of 13th December, 1906, was to avoid, so far as possible, by a previous arrangement, any difficulties which might arise over disputed succession, and to maintain if possible Abyssinia as an independent Kingdom...By the terms of the Agreement, the Representatives of the three Signatory Powers were to keep one another informed of their action on proposed action in any matters which concerned the interests of any one of them. Unfortunately, the action of the French Government, through their Representatives in Abyssinia since the signature of the Agreement, has been such that its purpose has been stultified, and its effect, in the opinion of the few Abyssinian Chiefs of influence...is that Great Britain and Italy have handed Abyssinia over completely to France. The French Government hardly any longer conceal their view of Abyssinia as a purely French preserve, and by every means in their power they are fostering French influence

considered in light of past undertakings by Menelik. As far back as 1902, Harrington himself had reported: "I have not yet seen that any of us have what I would really call influence, that is, influence that would make Menelik do what he did not want to do. Influence to the detriment of others is plentiful here, but to one's own advantage is decidedly infinitesimal."¹²⁸

Menelik's reign was coming to an end. He had built an almost unified and strong Empire. He had withstood the force and pressure of the European powers and had successfully thwarted their expansionist designs. It was this determined action on his part which, in the long run, assured Ethiopia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. In designating his heir, his proclamation of May 18, 1909 dwelt on the need for the Ethiopian people to jealously guard, defend and preserve this hard won independence, sovereignty and territorial

and laying the ground to establish the claim to be the paramount Power in Ethiopia and the arbiter of its destiny....Further, it has been admitted to me short of actually mentioning the French Legation by name, both by Menelik, the Queen, and various high Abyssinian chiefs, that Mr. Klobukowski supported the intrigue against me last year with a view to obtaining my removal from Abyssinia." F.O.401/11, Harrington to Grey, December 5, 1908.

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The influence to the detriment of Harrington himself was even more conspicuous. Hohler, his successor, reports some time later that Menelik was so disenchanted with Harrington that "to say Harrington recommended this or that measure was enough to block it definitely." Hohler, *Diplomatic Petrel*, p.140. Menelik had requested Harrington's recall on October 24, 1907. (F.O.401/10, Hohler to Grey.) In requesting Harrington's recall Menelik notified Hohler that "as in all the words that Sir John speaks to us, civility is lacking, it is therefore our desire to have another Minister in his place." (F.O.401/10, Menelik to Hohler, October 29, 1907). Harrington resigned in December, 1908.

integrity which he was now passing over to the trust of other generations of Ethiopians. The proclamation said: "Wherever you are be strong and defend your country against the entrance of any 'air' (invader)."¹²⁹ After his death following a long period of ill-health, Lij Iyassu, his grand son, succeeded to the throne with Ras Tessema as Regent.

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F.O.401/13, Proclamation of May 18, 1909. " በቴዎድሮስ ጊዜ፡ የሆነው፡ ጸብተኞች - ለሠዕል፡ ለተሰለፉ - ነዳገዎ - በዋላጎ፡ ጊዜ... " ["You have witnessed what had happened at the time of the death of Theodros, and also at the time of Yohannes - the bloodshed for power."] (A literal translation from the Amharic.)

CHAPTER 8

MENELIK'S FOREIGN AND DIPLOMATIC POLICIES: SOME CONCLUSIONS ABOUT DECISION-MAKING

The foregoing chapters were an evaluation of the salient aspects of Menelik's foreign and diplomatic policies. This last chapter is intended to pull together in a short and summary form the strands of Menelik's foreign policy decisions as analyzed in the seven earlier chapters. In trying to do such a summation this chapter is organized in terms of the following decision-making categories: 1. Menelik's principal advisers and their roles and degree of influence; 2. Decisional motivations; 3. The prevailing system of information and communication.

1. Menelik's principal advisers: their roles and degree of influence

In any governmental system entailing policy decisions there is a body or organization¹ which is either entrusted with or is responsible for initiating, studying and formulating such policy decisions as are required to formally conduct foreign relations. Snyder, Bruck and Sapin call this body and the over all process thus involved in the formulation of policies the "unit" of decision-making. "The unit is," they maintain, "an analytical tool - a guide to the way the observer reconstitutes the decision-making universe and how its boundaries are to be established." Accordingly, these authors

¹ There could be more than one body or organization within different systems.

establish that "the empirical questions underlying the concept of unit are: 'who becomes involved in a decision, how and why?'²"

The emphasis put in the enquiries 'who', 'how' and 'why' certainly stimulates research interest in the process of decision-making. The first question tries to answer as to who is or are involved in the decision-making process without qualifying that which necessitated his or their presence in the process and without supplying details as to why the imminent decision has required such a presence. The second question deals with method rather than substance - namely - it attempts to give classifications as to how, in what way and by what means the decision maker or makers has or have been a party to the process. The third question probes into the motivations of the member or members of the decision-making unit or system.

Accordingly, therefore, the first set of questions in the first category deal with the ability and performance of the decision-maker, his capacity to explore ways and means in order to arrive at a well studied and what could be said to be the optimum decision. Not only is this ability reviewed in contrast with the finality of the results arrived at but also, as Deutsch maintains, as regards "the ability of decision-makers to predict the kind and intensity of the reactions to their decisions, both by possible opponents and by supposed passive bystanders or supposed supporters or subordinates"³ before the event takes place.

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Snyder, Bruck and Sapin (eds.), Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics, p.98.

3

Karl W. Deutsch, The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control, The Free Press of Glenocoe, 1963, p. 161.

The second category of enquiry makes a study of how the decision-maker is pertinent to this particular body of decision-makers and how he is selected to the job. The analysis often touches upon the domains of profession, personal behaviour and individual interest and the environment, or conditions which made his selection possible.

The last category deals mainly with exploration of the motives behind such a selection, namely, why this particular individual and not the other one is selected. What difference could be observed if A is substituted by B who displays the same pattern of thought or reaction on given issues.

Often times, the selecting of the decision-makers from among the possible participants is based on the urgency and classification of the different issues, the problems involved and the decisions to be reached. In the case of Menelik's government the unit of foreign policy decision-making was generally composed and classified according to a set of well-defined priorities, namely, the magnitude of the problems involved and the gravity of the issues that were to be considered. The following general categories of units are readily observed with each unit assigned particular responsibilities:

<u>Decision-making unit</u>	<u>Definition of responsibilities</u>
1. Menelik	Decisions not entailing national security. Normally, decisions involving court and diplomatic representatives. Also state affairs.
2. Menelik + Taitu	Decisions affecting national problems and not involving national security - but ordinary state affairs.
3. Menelik + Taitu + Crown Council	Decisions regarding national and national security issues. [This unit sometimes includes the 'Abune' (Archbishop), most of the advisory Rases (the Crown Council) in court and some influential Governors General of provinces.]

<u>Decision-making unit</u>	<u>Definition of responsibilities</u>
4. Menelik + Taitu + Crown Council + Foreign Affairs Advisers + Foreign Envoys	Decisions dealing mostly with foreign relations, negotiations of treaties and agreements.

In a given unit or system the set of important decision points may be of a lower or higher degree of concentration and even of hierarchy. According to Deutsch, "if all important decisions are concentrated at one point, and if decisions made at that point tend to govern or override all decisions made elsewhere in the system, the performance of the system may resemble the situation of concentrated sovereignty" which he associates with the absolute monarchies of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe.⁴ Deutsch further maintains that the concentration of decisions in such a system corresponds to some extent to the concentration of symbols of legitimacy, and the imputation of responsibility to the individual princes, ministers, or rulers. On the other hand, the concentration of such overriding decisions at a single point also implies that no autonomous subsystem is allowed to freely participate within the larger political system, at least to an extent which sufficiently permits a modification of decisions reached at the highest level.

In a similar political system decisions of this kind are considered to be "ultimate" or "final". This is so because there is no way that these decisions could be changed, altered or modified after the attainment of a particular stage in the decision-making process. In international politics, however, the concept of "concentrated sovereignty" could be very misleading.

⁴

Ibid., p.209

Undue emphasis on the degree of sovereignty that is exercised tends to minimize the limits which normally constrain decisions. It is to be realized that both domestic as well as international situations could make decisions wholly unapplicable or unobservable. For instance, no leader is guaranteed the full support of his people and the necessary sacrifices in the execution of his decisions, and likewise no government possesses the necessary resources to translate its choice into action in the face of probable opposition from other governments.

In analyzing the workings of political autonomy Deutsch distinguishes three types of categories. The first one he call 'limit probabilities'. This is characterized by the probability that the government's or the state's behaviour will be confronted by physical, social, economic or military limitations such as overwhelming resistance, external force or inner difficulties. The second category Deutsch designates as 'limit signals'. This is a situation wherein signals, data or information announce the approach of physical or social limit. These types of limit signals must be in the possession of the decision system so that they will be interpreted in advance and applied in order to further control its behaviour in a more or less efficient manner. The third category is 'limit images'. These are defined as "images of such physical or social limits, of their configurations, and of the probability of meeting them under particular conditions."⁵

In analyzing Menelik's decision-making process it is observed that it somewhat resembles one undertaken in a system of concentrated sovereignty.

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Ibid., p.212

It implies therefore that within the prevailing system there was a corresponding concentration of symbols of legitimacy and the imputation of responsibility to the individual princes under him. It could also be inferred that the concentration of such overriding decisions at his level did not allow any autonomous subsystem or subsystems to freely participate within the larger political system, or did not permit such subsystems to be actively engaged to an extent of being able to modify decisions reached at the highest level. This is so because in a system where such decisions are considered to be "ultimate" or "final" there is no room for further instrumentality for modifying or changing such decisions after the attainment of a certain stage within the system.

What was the role and degree of influence of Menelik's principal advisers? It is already said that in the prevailing system "ultimate" or "final" decision rested with Menelik. He therefore was the main actor in the system and the focus of all activities. To make his task easier, it is unanimously held by writers of his epoch, he possessed a natural gift to discern, to deliberate, to analyze and to choose with the backings of fair and good judgement. He was a person acclaimed for his intelligence and perception.⁶ Menelik was also remembered for his patience and his capacity to absorb details.⁷

⁶ Rodd, Memories, II, p.174.

⁷ Lt. Colonel Sadler, reporting from intelligence accounts gathered at Zeila from General Albertoni and Italian prisoners, said of Menelik: "Consulting all, and listening attentively to their opinions, he is guided by no one, and none know his plans but himself. He is an able and cautious diplomatist, who does nothing in a hurry, leaves nothing to chance, and risks nothing." F.O. 403/255, Lt. Colonel Sadler to Brig. General Cuninghame, May 8, 1897.

Gleichen calls him "a most enlightened ruler." Commenting on his characteristics as a leader and a decision-maker he wrote: "by an almost superhuman activity and attention to every detail, he has succeeded not only in consolidating the country in a manner never previously attained, but in gaining the respect and affection of his people."⁸

As observed from the different categories of decision-making units already identified⁹ Menelik was supported and assisted by the following advisers:

(a) Queen Taitu; (b) Ras Mekonnen, a close confidant and adviser in major fields of foreign affairs; (c) Alfred Ilg, Counsellor in foreign relations, especially as regards European affairs; (d) Yosef Negusse, interpreter and senior official who executed the day to day decisions; (e) a host of other highly placed and senior officials.

8

Gleichen, With the Mission to Menelik, p.143. Following are the comments of three writers: "Of his intelligence there can be no question. He has always been attracted by Europeans..and he has succeeded by attentively studying their views and methods in forming a tolerably clear idea of Western thought; consequently he is very sensitive to European opinion and morbidly anxious not to be included in the category of mere barbarian potentates." 'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik', p.62 "[Emperor John's] decision, whether rightly or wrongly given, was law, and though anxious to be just - for he loved his country - he would take advice from none. [Menelik] is...more given to thought and deliberation....He is far in advance of his predecessor for he takes counsel from those about him, and is always mindful of those below him." Welby, Twixt Sirdar and Menelik, pp.88-89. "I beg to state to the Department that the personal energies of King Menelik have been responsible for all progress that has been accomplished in the country in past years. This ruler is a most exceptional Abyssinian - he has already sought after the light. Though absolutely without education or any sound knowledge of Western civilization, his natural talents have enabled him to grasp correct ideas and act upon them, while his personal magnetism and

Of all the people from whom Menelik sought advice and counsel, Queen Taitu had a good deal of influence on him. According to Frankel, "influence means participation in the decision-making process without power to make a formal decision."¹⁰ Influence can be exerted or exercised in different ways and its analysis may employ the concepts of 'access',¹¹ 'information' and 'advice'. "Access," Frankel writes, "is an obvious condition for the awareness of the decision-maker; information is a filter through which influences¹² percolate; advice is the formalization of influence in some situation."

Queen Taitu had all three tools in her employ. We have made mention earlier that she was a close adviser of Menelik, and this had given her a prominent place for influencing decisions. She had an open and uninterrupted access to Menelik which she used effectively and efficiently. She also had

admirable characteristics have won him admiration from foreigners who have come in contact with him and renown among his people. So great has been King Menelik's influence in Abyssinian affairs, that it may truthfully be said that he personifies the 'Abyssinian' known to the outside world." American Archives, Philip to Secretary of State, Diplomatic No. 85, December 21, 1909.

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See pp.598-599.

10

Joseph Frankel, The Making of Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Decision-Making, p.5

11

The concept of 'access' has been coined by David Truman. For a discussion of the concept refer to his: The Government Process, 1951.

12

Joseph Frankel, The Making of Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Decision-Making, p.5

diverse channels of information at her command which made it easier for her to "percolate" influences within the system as and when needed.

A lady of admirable tenacity and intelligence, she actively participated in most meetings pertaining to foreign policy decision-making. As a result, she contributed immensely to the formulation and execution of crucial decisions of national importance.¹³ Her active role and participation in the decision-making process was crucial and her influence over Menelik was indeed significant.¹⁴ Jesman called her "the greatest single influence in his life" and Gleichen recognized her as "a woman of much ability" and said that "it is generally understood that the King owes much of his success to her counsels."¹⁵

Another prominent adviser to Menelik, whose opinion and counsel the Emperor sought at all levels of foreign policy decision-making, was Ras Mekonnen. An able and highly respected foreign policy adviser, Mekonnen served his monarch in the capacity of Ambassador, Envoy to foreign countries with missions and assignments and negotiator on state affairs. He was so close to the Emperor that Menelik addressed him to King Humbert of Italy as "mon frere, mon bien-aime Ras Meconen." As a military leader he is best known

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Regarding Taitu's role in the Ethiopian-Italian negotiations on the Treaty of Wichalle in general and Article 17 in particular see pp. 307-310.

14

Jesman, The Russians in Ethiopia, p.60

15

Gleichen, With the Mission to Emperor Menelik, p.147

for his gallantry at the Battle of Adwa and, as a mediator and conciliator, for his dedication to the cause of peace both before and after the Battle of Adwa. After the Battle of Adwa, when the European powers converged on Menelik's capital to enter into treaty agreements with him on issues ranging from border problems to the establishment of friendly relations, Mekonnen was the principal figure who arranged and finalized the different agreements and treaties.

Remarkably observant and of very high intelligence Mekonnen's rare qualities as a leader and a diplomat did not escape the attention of Menelik. Menelik trusted and depended so much on him that it could be said that he stood as the Emperor's 'alter-ego' in the field of foreign affairs. At about the time Mekonnen was conducting the Anglo-Ethiopian negotiations of 1897 a British intelligence report compiled on him at Zeila said: "Ras Makunan is described as a skillful diplomatist, first in the counsels of Menelik, a position which has incurred for him the jealousy of all the other nobles of the state with the exception of Menelik's uncle, Ras Dargee."¹⁶

The other two important persons of influence in the field of foreign affairs were Alfred Ilg and Yosef Negussie. These two officers complemented each other in the performance of their duties. The former, a Swiss engineer by profession, was in the service of Menelik for over two decades in different roles and capacities. When he was first recruited by the court his main function was that of a technical adviser, especially in the field of construction. It was only after the Battle of Adwa, at the time of the European rivalries

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F.O. 403/255, Lt. Colonel Sadler to Brig. General Cunningham, May 8, 1897.

over Ethiopia, that on March 27, 1897, Menelik appointed Ilg as an adviser
17
on foreign relations and related matters.

Ilg was addressed differently at different times by many writers of the period. Some called him just adviser to the Emperor and some other elevated him to such ranks as Minister of State for foreign affairs, Minister of foreign affairs and even Prime Minister. Menelik himself referred to Ilg as
18
"the Counsellor of our Kingdom." Denying reports abroad which magnified the role and status of Ilg at the court of Menelik, the Rodd mission informed the Foreign Office that "M. Ilg has not been appointed 'Premier Ministre' to the Emperor, for Menelik is his own Prime Minister. His official title is 'Conseiller d'Etat', and he advises Menelik on European affairs. He has no
19
executive power, and his advice is not always taken."

Ilg was, initially and at least until his disgrace and removal from office, a figure much respected by Menelik and held in high esteem in court circles. His advice and opinion, especially as regards European affairs, carried weight and, as a result, he was a sought after person by the foreign diplomats in Addis Ababa next to the Emperor and Ras Mekonnen. For sure, Ilg
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had influenced Menelik in foreign policy decision-making. However, it should

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Keller, Alfred Ilg: Sein Leben Und Seine Werke, p. 118

18

'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik,' 1897, p. 9.

19

'Precis of Information Obtained by the British Mission to Abyssinia,'
March-June, 1897, p. 46.

20

F.O. 1/44, Harrington to Salisbury, Memorandum by Harrington to Salisbury,
February 17, 1900.

be pointed out that his counsel did not always carry weight. The fact that Menelik was his own decision-maker and that some high placed Ethiopian officials were suspicious of Ilg's moves and motives to a certain degrees reduced the effectiveness of his role in Ethiopian foreign policy formulations. Rodd, for instance, recounts a story told to him by Ras Mekonnen wherein the latter says that Ilg and some others have imposed themselves upon Menelik and that all worked for the sake of money and cared little for peace in the area. Rodd writes that Mekonnen even berated these advisers for their
 21
 "corruption and connivance."

Ilg's counterpart, Yosef Negussie, was educated in a Catholic seminary as a young man and was initially serving with Antonelli as an interpreter and translator of official documents. It is contended, but evidence is lacking, that it was Antonelli who introduced Yosef to Menelik to serve in his court in the capacity of interpreter and translator. Apart from this official status, Yosef also served in such capacities as special emissary to foreign missions and countries, representative of the Emperor in the handling of the affairs of foreigners living in Ethiopia, coordinator of policies and other matters between the court and the various Legations and adviser in foreign
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 affairs.

Among the best known Ethiopian Counsellors who influenced Menelik, we find Ras Wolde Ghiorgis, Dejazmatch Balcha, Fitawrari Hapte Ghiorgis,

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'Papers Respecting Mr. Rodd's Special Mission to King Menelik', 1897, Rodd to Salisbury, June 4, 1897. For reports that support such a thesis, see, among others, F.O. 1/43, Harrington to Sir Thomas, February 8, 1903; F.O. 401/12, March 1909.

22

For a detailed account of Yosef's role in the foreign policy decision-making process, see pp. 303-311.

Negadras Haile Ghiorgis, Ras Tessema (later on Regent), Ras Mengesha Atikem and Dejazmatch Meshesha Worke. Of these, information passed to this day by word of mouth has it that the last two were Menelik's favourite Counsellors in the field of national and domestic affairs.

Another element in the decision-making process was the role of the Ethiopian Church. The state being the defender and protector of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, its allegiance to Menelik was very strong. The 'Abune' - the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church - was therefore identified with state affairs on different levels. On many occasions, the 'Abune' participated in the initiation and formulation of major decisions and rendered the Church's services in the support and execution of crucial government policies. The 'Abune' also served the Emperor as a go-between by relaying information to different decision-making points within the system. Another important attribute to the office of the 'Abune' was the services it rendered to the court in general and the Emperor in particular by way of conciliation and providing disinterested advice.

There were also a host of other secretaries and interpreters who served Menelik with distinction. Who among these were important in their services to Menelik could not be determined. However, they all were instrumental in the promotion and execution of Menelik's essential decisions in foreign affairs.²³

Until he was incapacitated by several paralytic strokes in late 1907 Menelik ran most of the business of his Empire single handedly without the use of a formally organized and instituted system of government. The necessity

to form such a government was impressed upon him as he grew weaker in health, and when he realized that the national cohesion was being seriously threatened by divisive elements both from within and without. On October 25, 1907 Menelik announced to the different Legations represented in Addis Ababa the formation of his first Government. He informed the representatives of the powers:

"It is sometime since we thought of introducing a European system into our country. You have always said it would be good if we too would adopt some of the European systems. I have now started to appoint a Ministry, and, if it is the will of God, I will complete it." ²⁴ The first Minister of Foreign

Affairs and Commerce appointed by Menelik in the new Government was Negadras ²⁵ Haile Ghiorgis.

2. Decision motivations

As Snyder, Bruck and Sapin readily admit, little effort has been made up to now to extend the motivational analysis of foreign policy decision-making beyond listing highly generalized objectives such as security, power, economic welfare and so on. ²⁶ Most analysts are not agreed on the exact meaning of the

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F.O. 401/10, Menelik to Hohler, October 25, 1907.

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"The Negadras Haile Ghiorgis has been described in sombre colours by Mr. Clerk, but I venture to think he might have depicted him blacker still. This adroit schemer has been presented with the portfolio of Commerce and also Foreign Affairs. He seems never to leave Menelik's side, and by dint of continual presents, great plausibility, and a perfect knowledge of how and when to approach the King on any subject, he appears to stand pre-eminent at the present moment on His Majesty's confidence." F.O. 401/10, Hohler to Grey, October 28, 1907.

26

Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck & B. Sapin, "Motivational Analysis of Foreign Policy Decision-Making," in International Politics and Foreign Policy, (ed.) James N. Rosenau, The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1961, p. 247. Even though it has been sometime since Snyder et al. maintained this position we still do not find substantial research conducted in the field.

concept of motivation. While Frankel considers the concept of motivation to be typically Western - because, he says, it assumes purposive behaviour and a degree of freedom - and puts emphasis on the point that motivation "often poses the question - what for? - instead of the question - why?"²⁷

Snyder, Bruck and Sapin on the other hand assert that in dealing with motivational analysis they "are concerned primarily with 'why' questions - why does a decision get made?" This is: "Why does action take the 'particular form' that it does in a 'particular situation?' Why do 'patterns' of action evolve from decision-making?"²⁸

There is no questioning, however, that the enquiry "why" is most crucial to the concept of motivation since it is at all times identified with action which determines the choice of behaviour in specific circumstances. Snyder, Bruck and Sapin have identified two types of motives. In their study of motivational analysis of foreign policy decision-making they have attempted to draw a distinction between 'because of' and 'in order to' motives. "'In order to' motives," says the group, "refer to an end state of affairs envisaged by the actor. Such motives thus refer to the future." What is motivated, according to their study, is the "voluntative fiat", the decision "'let's go,' which transforms inner projection into an act." On the other hand, 'because of'

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Joseph Frankel, The Making of Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Decision-Making, Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 115.

28

Snyder, Bruck & Sapin, "Motivational Analysis of Foreign Policy Decision-Making," in International Politics and Foreign Policy, (ed.) James N. Rosenau, p. 247.

29

Ibid., p. 250.

motives refer to the actor's 'past experience', "to the sum total of factors in his life-history which determine the particular project of action selected to reach a goal."³⁰

One of the fundamental **attributes** of motives, we will find out, is the environment which conditions the actors to behaviour or act in the manner they did under given circumstances. Thus, factors such as nationalism, patriotism, reward, success, victory, familiarity, etc. may, under certain conditions, reinforce motivational orientations. When analyzed, these factors may arise from interpersonal relations among the decision-makers, that is the system - or they may arise from the relations between the total membership of a ³¹ decisional unit and the setting.

It must also be indicated here that decisions and human actions also involve more than influence on the environment and the rational mechanism of the decision-makers. Frankel points out that "the assessment of the environment does not lead to decisions and to political actions automatically, but only through its fusion with an element existing within the decision-makers."³² Many terms are employed, indicates Frankel, to denote "this inner element." These are, according to him, ideologies, goals, objectives, purposes, ends, programmes, interests or the good (national, of the country, of the people), aims, principles, ethos, the way of life, etc. The concept of motivation, it could therefore be assumed in a general manner, is identifiable with values and

30

Ibid.

31

Ibid., p. 249.

32

Joseph Frankel, The Making of Foreign Policy, p. 111.

objectives. However, it is conceded by some that the greatest source of confusion arises from the lack of distinction between values and objectives.

In light of the foregoing analysis of the concept of motivations, we note three major factors, in the case of Menelik, which prompted the motivations that gave rise to the corresponding decisional action. The table is a generalization about the highest motivations attributable to the decision-makers and the decisions that had been undertaken by them. It is not therefore intended to present a detailed and complete list of all the factors leading to the motivations and decisions in question. Only some of the pertinent and salient ones are provided.

<u>Motivations</u>	<u>Decisions</u>
(a) Power struggle between Yohannes and Menelik	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of friendly relations with Italy - Establishment of friendly relations with other European powers - The acquisition of arms and ammunition - Conclusion of treaties and or agreements with Italy
(b) Resistance to Italian protectorate ambitions over Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long and sustained period of negotiations, especially on Treaty of Wichalle, particularly Art. 17 in order to reach a peaceful and negotiated settlement - Denunciation of Treaty of Wichalle - Battle of Adwa - Treaty of Peace - Normalization of relations

<u>Motivations</u>	<u>Decisions</u>
(c) Taking advantage of European rivalry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assertion of unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of nation - Effective use of diplomacy to thwart danger on Ethiopian territorial integrity - Conclusion of favourable agreements with rival and competing European powers - Confrontation with colonialist and expansionist countries - Establishment of friendly relations with other European countries

3. The prevailing system of information and communication

According to Deutsch the effectiveness of information at the receiving end depends on two classes of conditions. First of all, he maintains, "'at least some parts of the receiving system must be in a highly unstable equilibrium', so that the very small amount of energy carrying the signal will be sufficient to start off a much larger process of change. Without such disequilibrium already existing in the receiver, information would produce no significant effects."³³ The second condition, he says, involves, 'selectivity' of the receiver, that is, "what patterns are already stored in receiver, and how specific must be the pattern of the incoming signal in order to produce results."³⁴

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Karl W. Deutsch, The Nerves of Government, p. 147

34

Ibid., p. 184.

An important factor for the system to function properly and efficiently is the availability of adequate facilities to collect both internal and external information for its transmission to the points of decision-making. The system, it must also be noted, should be reasonably well-equipped for screening and evaluating such information as it has received before any decisions are made. Even then the chances for incoming information to be distorted, exaggerated, falsified and so on are great. Since it is also possible for all information received not to be thoroughly digested and assimilated there is always a danger to put stress where it does not belong. In order to avoid the pitfalls of these anomalies it is therefore necessary to also rely on an intuitive approach. Such a reliance on intuition provides the decision-maker or the leader with the necessary tools to avoid distracting, irrelevant and misleading details and have a better grasp of his environment.

Essentially, information can be considered as being the link between the decision-makers and their environment. The analysis of this link has led to a host of communication concepts (the notion of a communication net, of channels of information, the concept of feedback, etc.) - which are quite useful in the study of politics and decisions.

The concept of feedback, (that is, the effect of messages fed back into the system either about actions or about the state of the system), for instance, is crucial in the study of decisions and the nature of political system. Generally, it is assumed that in most democracies decision-makers are subject to a relatively direct feedback from subordinates and from opinion at large and that the smooth and coordinated inflow of information

makes their task much simpler and easier. This is so partly because the information which is fed into the system is analyzed in stages, screened, sifted and systematized before it is presented to the decision-makers' consideration. Unlike this system, totalitarian or absolutist power structures are marked by the indirect and controlled natures of the feedback.

The prevailing system of information and communication during the time of Menelik falls, to a certain degree, in the second category. The feedback was indirect because, as is shown in figure 12, the system was broken into several subsystems which originated, collected, controlled, coordinated and disseminated information before it reached the top level of the decision-making body. It was controlled because the feedback was unidirectional, namely, that the tendency was for information to proceed only upwards and in one direction from below and other levels and the contents of the feedback did not circulate freely within the system as a whole.

As it happened the information and communication system within Menelik's palace was so coordinated and regularized that there was no major information item worthy of the Emperor's ear that did not reach the court. The rumours of the city, the gossips of the courtiers and military leaders, the complaints of the people in a province far from the capital, the issues in the diplomatic circle, in short, all current news were sifted out and brought to the attention of the Emperor.

As indicated earlier, the way information was relayed was most of the time unidirectional and tended to go upwards, from the lowest echelon in the rung

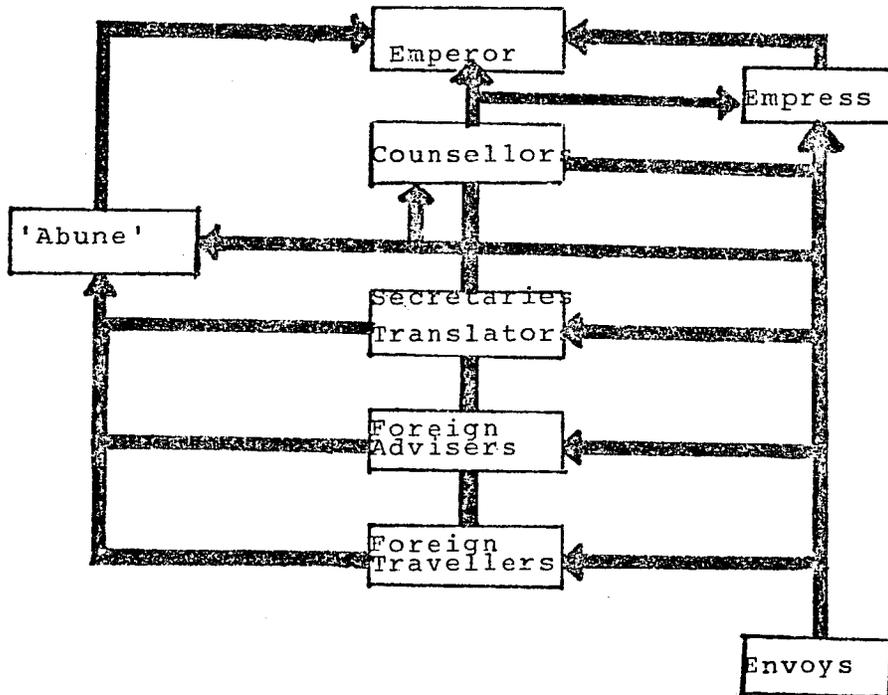


Fig. 12: System of communications and information in the decision-making process

to the highest. Thus information obtained and gathered from foreign travellers was relayed to the Emperor either through foreign envoys, foreign advisers, members of the Crown Council, the 'Abune' and the Queen or directly passed to him by travellers from abroad. In order to maintain confidentiality the intermediary hierarchies in the system were bypassed whenever the information

to be given was considered to be of sensitive nature or top secret. The same channels or intermediaries were also used to disseminate information from the top, that is the Emperor, to the lowest clerk or official at the bottom of the administrative structure whenever public opinion and reaction

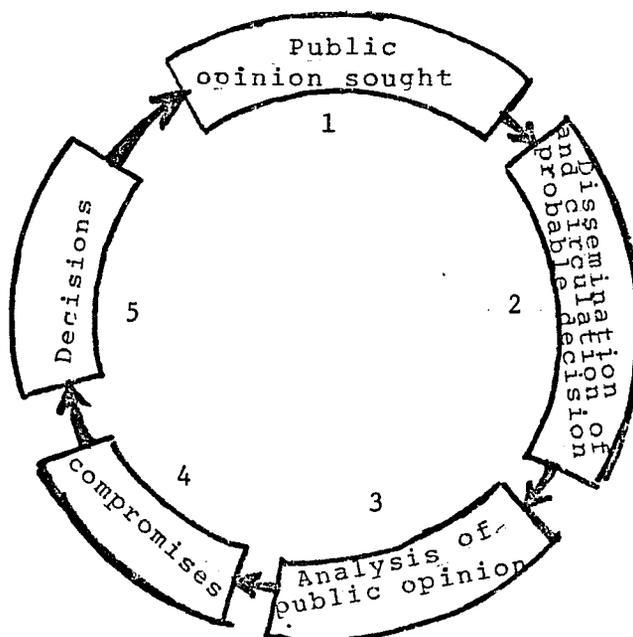


Figure 13: Stages in decision-making

was desired to be weighed or assessed. The reactions from the public did not necessarily influence or carry weight in the decision-making process. The practice was encouraged by Menelik only to allow him room to be as close as possible to the wishes and aspirations of the people and, in some cases, to stimulate debate on crucial issues.

The information thus gathered, though not analyzed critically and systematized, would be used as an effective tool to initiate discussions and ultimately lead to decisions. However, the participation of the public in foreign

policy decision-making should not be overstressed. In fact, the role of the public could be considered to be nil, given the lack of interest displayed by the people regarding international relations. The only pertinent stages where the public counted in the field of foreign affairs was when the decision to be reached involved the people directly. Such was the case, for instance, when Menelik mobilized the Ethiopian people against Italy at the time of the Battle of Adwa. However, this was a rare case, and the only significant reason why Menelik at all times needed to listen to the people was not so much out of the desire to benefit from the weight and impact of such public reactions but simply to be in touch with the people and to appreciate their fears and anxieties and also to benefit from public acclaim that might be forthcoming as a result.

ABBREVIATION

AA	American Archives, United States Government, Department of State, Consular and Diplomatic Reports on Ethiopian Affairs, (Washington D.C.)
AD	Archives Diplomatiques, Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, (Paris)
AEMD	Archives du Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, Memoires et Documents, (Paris)
ASMAE	Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri, (Roma)
ASMAI	Archivio Storico dell'ex Ministero dell'Africa Italiana, (Roma)
Doc. Dipl.	Atti Parlamentari, Documenti Diplomatici, (Roma)
GP	Die Gross Politik der Europaischen Kabinette, 1871-1894 (Berlin)
DDF	Documents Diplomatiques Francais, (Paris)
DDI	Documenti Diplomatici Italiani, (Roma)
FO	Foreign Office Records, Public Record Office, (London).
GDD	German Diplomatic Documents, La Politique Exterieur de l'Allemagne, Documents Officiel, (Berlin)
MAE	Ministero degli Affari Esteri, L'Italia in Africa, (Roma)
MAE (Mar Rosso)	Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Etiopia: Mar Rosso, (Roma)
PP	Parliamentary Debates, (London)

PART FOUR

APPENDICES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Circular letter of April 10, 1891 of Emperor Menelik
to the European
powers

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, Digsa, 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. (Rudolph.)

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 Assal, the province of our ancient vassal Mohamed Anfari, skirts the coast of the sea, and rejoins Arafalé.

While tracing today 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 Addis Ababa, the 14th Mazir, 1883 (10th April, 1891).
(Translated direct from the Amharic.)

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ዩኢጣሊያ፡ ሰው፡ ዩኢጣሊያ፡ ሰው፡ ዩተካሰሱ፡ እ
ገደሆነ፡ እነዚያ፡ በመረጡት፡ ዲፊ፡ ያለዚያም፡
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ዩኢተዮፍደ፡ ገገሠ፡ ነገሌህ ተ፡ ዩኢጣሊያ፡ ገ

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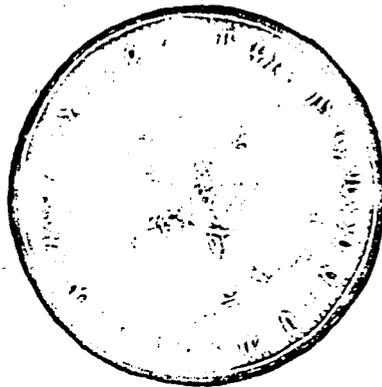
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ገዢ: ክፍል:: ደህ: አሁን: የተደረገው: ውል: በሮማ:
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Per Sua Maesta il Re d'Italia



Psicholantonelli

Treaty of peace of October 26, 1896 between
Emperor Menelik and Italy

Sa Majesté Humbert I, Roi d'Italie, et Sa Majesté Menelik II, Empereur d'Ethiopie, désireux de mettre fin a la guerre et de faire revivre leur ancienne amitié, ont stipulé le traité suivant.

Pour conclure ce traité, Sa Majesté le Roi d'Italie a délégué, comme son envoyé plénipotentiaire, le major docteur César Nerazzini, chevalier des Saints Maurice et Lazare, officier de la Couronne d'Italie. Les pleins pouvoirs du Major Nerazzini ayant été reconnus en bonne et due forme, Son Excellence le Major Nerazzini, au nom de Sa Majesté le Roi d'Italie, et Sa Majesté Menelik II, Empereur d'Ethiopie et des Pays Galla, en son propre nom, on convenu et conclu les articles suivants:

Art. 1: L'état de guerre entre l'Italie et l'Ethiopie a pris définitivement fin. En conséquence il y aura paix et amitié perpétuelles entre Sa Majesté le Roi d'Italie et Sa Majesté le Roi d'Ethiopie, ainsi qu'entre leurs successeurs et sujets.

Art. 2: Le traité conclu a Outchalé le 25 Miazia 1881, correspondant au 2 mai 1889, est et demeure définitivement annulé ainsi que ses annexes.

Art. 3: L'Italie reconnaît l'indépendance absolue et sans réserve de l'empire éthiopien comme Etat souverain et indépendant.

Art. 4: Les deux puissances contractantes n'ayant pu se mettre d'accord sur la question des frontières, et désireuses cependant de conclure la paix sans délai et d'assurer ainsi a leurs pays les bienfaits de la paix, il a été convenu que dans le délai d'un an, a dater de ce jour, des délégués de confiance de Sa Majesté le Roi d'Italie et de Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Ethiopie établiront, par une entente amicale, les frontières définitives. Jusqu'a ce que ces frontières aient été ainsi fixées, les deux parties contractantes conviennent d'observer le 'status quo ante,' s'interdisant strictement de part et d'autre de franchir la frontière provisoire, déterminée par le cours des rivières Mareb, Belessa et Mouna.

Art. 5: Jusqu'a ce que le Gouvernement italien et le Gouvernement éthiopien aient d'un commun accord fixé leurs frontières définitives, le Gouvernement italien s'engage a ne faire de cession quelconque de territoire a aucune autre puissance. Au cas ou il voudrait abandonner de sa propre volonté une partie du territoire qu'il détient, il en ferait remise a l'Ethiopie.

Art. 6: Dans le but de favoriser les rapports commerciaux et industriels entre l'Italie et l'Ethiopie, des accords ultérieurs pourront être conclus entre les deux Gouvernements.

Art. 7: Le présent traité sera porté à la connaissance des autres puissances par les soins des deux Gouvernements contractants.

Art. 8: Le présent traité devra être ratifié par le Gouvernement italien dans le délai de trois mois à dater de ce jour.

Art. 9: Le présent traité de paix conclu ce jour sera écrit en amharique et en français, les deux textes absolument conformes, et fait en deux exemplaires, signé des deux parties, dont un restera entre les mains de Sa Majesté le Roi d'Italie et l'autre entre les mains de Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Ethiopie.

Etant bien d'accord sur les termes de ce traité, Sa Majesté Menelik II, Empereur d'Ethiopie, en son propre nom, et Son Excellence le major docteur Nerazzini, au nom de Sa Majesté le Roi d'Italie, l'ont approuvé et revêtu de leurs sceaux.

Fait à Addis-Abeba, le dix-sept Tekemt mil-huit-cent-quatre-vingt-neuf, correspondant au 26 Octobre 1896.

Convention of October 26, 1896
on prisoners between Emperor Menelik and Italy

Entre Sa Majesté Menelik II Empereur d'Ethiopie et des pays Galla, et son Excellence le major docteur César Nerazzini, envoyé plénipotentiaire de Sa Majesté Humbert I Roi d'Italie, a été convenue et conclue la présente convention:

Art. 1: Comme conséquence du traité de paix entre le royaume d'Italie et l'empire d'Ethiopie signé ce jour, les prisonniers de guerre italiens retenus en Ethiopie sont déclarés libres. Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Ethiopie s'engage à les réunir dans le plus bref délai possible et à les remettre à Harrar au plénipotentiaire italien, aussitôt que le traité de paix aura été ratifié.

Art. 2: Pour faciliter le rapatriement de ces prisonniers de guerre et leur assurer tous les soins nécessaires, Sa Majesté

L'Empereur d'Ethiopie autorise un détachement de la Croix Rouge italienne a venir jusqu'a Gueldessa.

Art. 3: Le plenipotentiaire de Sa Majesté le Roi d'Italie ayant spontanément reconnu que les prisonniers ont été l'objet de la plus grande sollicitude de la part de Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Ethiopie, constate que leur entretien a entraine des dépenses considerables et que de ce fait le Gouvernement italien est redevable envers Sa Majesté des sommes correspondant a ces dépenses.

Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Ethiopie déclare s'en rapporter a l'équité du Gouvernement italien pour le dédommager de ces sacrifices.

En foi de quoi, Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Ethiopie, en son propre nom, et son Excellence le major docteur César Nerazzini, au nom de Sa Majesté le Roi d'Italie, ont approuvé et revetu de leurs sceaux la présente convention.

Fait a Addis Abeba le 17 Tekemt 1889, correspondant au 26 Octobre 1896.

Convention on frontiers of March 20, 1897
between Menelik and Lagarde

Entre Sa Majesté Menelik II Roi des Rois d'Ethiopie et M. Lagarde Ministre Plénipotentiaiar, représentant du Gouvernement de la République Francaise, Officier de la Légion d'honneur, Grand-Croix de l'ordre Impérial d'Ethiopie, il a été convenu ce qui suit:

La frontiere de zone cotiere conservée par la France comme possession ou Protectorat direct sera indiquée par une ligne partant de la frontiere franco-anglaise a Djalelo, passant a Rahalé, le mont Dagen, Sablola, Gobad, Airoli, le bord du lac Abbi, Mergada, le bord du lac Alli et de la remontant par Daimuli et Adghino Marci puis gagnant Doumeirah par Ettaga en cotoyant Raheitah.

Il reste bien entendu qu'aucune Puissance étrangere ne pourra se prévaloir de cet arrangement pour s'immiscer, sous quelque forme et quelque prétexte que ce soit, dans les regions situées au dela de zone cotiere francaise.

Le lac Assal étant l'heritage de l'Empire d'Ethiopie, il est convenu qu'on ne défendra jamais de prendre dans ce lac le sel destiné

a l'Ethiopie et que l'arrangement qu'a été fait avec une compagnie au sujet du lac Assal reste intact.

Ecrit a Addis Abeba le 12 megabit 1889 [20 Mars 1897.]

Treaty of Friendship and Commerce
of May 14, 1897 between Menelik and
Rodd

Sa Majesté Victoria, par la grace de Dieu Reine de la Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande, Impératrice des Indes, et Sa Majesté Menilek II, Rois des Rois d'Ethiopie, désireux de fortifier et de rendre plus efficace et avantageuse l'ancienne amitié qui existe entre les deux Royaumes:

Sa Majesté la Reine Victoria ayant nommé comme son Envoyé Extraordinaire et Représentant aupres de Sa Majesté l'Empereur Menilek, James Rennell Rodd, Esquire, Compagnon de l'Honorable Ordre de Saint-Michel et Saint-Georges, dont les pleins pouvoirs ont été reconnus en bonne et due forme; et

Sa Majesté l'Empereur Menilek, agissant en son propre nom comme Roi des Rois d'Ethiopie,

Se sont accordés sur, et ont conclu, les Articles qui suivent, par lesquels ils s'engagent eux-memes, ainsi que leurs héritiers et successeurs:

Article I

Les sujets et protégés de chacune des deux Parties Contractantes auront pleine liberté d'entrer, de sortir, et d'exercer leur commerce dans les territoires de l'autre, jouissant de la protection du Gouvernement sous la juridiction duquel ils se trouvent, mais il est défendu aux bandes armées d'une part ainsi que de l'autre de traverser les frontieres du voisin sous un prétexte quelconque sans permission préalable des autorités compétentes.

Article II

Les frontieres du Protectorat Britannique sur la Cote des Somalis, reconnues par Sa Majesté l'Empereur Menilek seront réglées ultérieurement par échange de note entre James Rennel Rodd, Esquire, comme Représentant

de Sa Majesté la Reine, et Ras Meconen, comme Représentant de Sa Majesté l'Empereur Menilek au Harrar. Ces notes seront annexées au présent Traité, dont elles formeront partie intégrale sitot qu'elles ont été approuvées par les Hautes Parties Contractantes. En attendant, le 'statu quo' sera maintenu.

Article III

Il est convenu que la route des caravanes entre Zeila et le Harrar par voie de Gildessa restera ouverte dans tout son parcours au commerce des deux nations.

Article IV

Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Ethiopie de son coté accordera la Grande-Bretagne et ses Colonies en ce qui concerne droits de douane et impôts intérieurs tous les avantages qui'il accordera aux sujets d'autres nations. De l'autre coté, tout matériel destiné exclusivement au service de l'Etat Ethiopien aura le droit de passer en Ethiopie par le port de Zeila en franchise de douane sur demande de Sa Majesté l'Empereur.

Article V

Le transit de tous les engins de guerre destiné a Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Ethiopie est autorisé a travers les territoires dépendant du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique sous les conditions prescrites par l'Acte Général de la Conférence de Bruxelles signé le 2 Juillet, 1890.

Article VI

Sa Majesté Menilek II, Roi des Rois d'Ethiopie, s'engage vis-a-vis du Gouvernement Britannique a empêcher de son mieux le passage a travers de son Empire des armes et munitions aux Mahdistes, qu'il déclare ennemis de son Empire.

Le présent Traité entrera en vigueur sitot que la ratification de Sa Majesté Britannique sera notifiée a Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Ethiopie, mais il est entendu que les prescriptions de l'Article VI seront mises en exécution a partir du jour de sa signature.

En foi de quoi Sa Majesté Menilek II, Roi des Rois d'Ethiopie, en son propre nom; et Rennell Rodd, Esquire, pour Sa Majesté Victoria, Reine de la Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande, Impératrice des Indes, ont signés le présent Traité, fait en deux exemplaire, écrit en Anglais et en Amharique identiquement, les deux textes étant considérés comme officiels, et y ont affixié leurs sceaux.

Fait a Addis Abbaba, le 14 Mai, 1897.

Exchange of notes between Ras Mekonnen
and Rennell Rodd regarding the eastern
frontiers

A.

Harrar, June 4, 1897 (28 Genbot, 1889)

Peace be unto you.

After friendly discussion with your Excellency, I have understood that His Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia will recognize 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, opposite the wells of Hadou, follows the caravan road, described in that Agreement, through Abbassouen till it reaches the hill of Somadou. From this point on the road the line is traced by the Saw mountains and the hill of Egu to Moga Medir; from Moga medir it is traced by Eylinta Kaddo to Arran Arrhe, near the intersection of latitude 44° east 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.

The tribes occupying either side of the line shall have the right to use the grazing-grounds on the other side, but during their migrations it is understood that they shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the territorial authority. Free access to the nearest wells is equally reserved to the tribes occupying either side of the line.

This understanding, in accordance with Article II of the Treaty signed on the 14th May, 1897 (7th Genbot, 1889), by His Majesty the Emperor Menelek and Mr. Rennel Rodd, at Addis Abbaba, must be approved by the two High Contracting Parties.

I have, &c.
Rennell Rodd.

B.

May this reach the Honourable Mr. Rennell Rodd, Envoy of the British Kingdom.

I inform you to-day that, after long friendly discussion, 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 the French and the English Governments agreed in February 1888), it follows the caravan road by Abbassouen till Mount Somadou; from Mount Somadou

to Mount Saw; from Mount Saw to Mount Egu; from Mount Egu to Moga Medir; starting from Moga Medir, it goes in a direct line to Eylinta Kaddo and 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.

The subjects of both the Contracting Parties are at liberty to cross their frontiers and graze their cattle, but these people, in every place where they go, must obey the Governor of the country in which they are, and the wells which are in the neighbourhood shall remain open for the two parties.

These two letters on which we have agreed, according to Article II of the Treaty of His Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia and Mr. Rennell Rodd of the 7th Genbot, 1889 (14th May, 1897), the two Sovereigns having seen them, if they approve them, shall be sealed again (ratified).

Written at Harrar, the 28th Genbot, 1889 (4th June, 1897).

Ras Makunan.

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