

IV. LETTER FROM THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

[Translation from the Italian]

ROME, August 7th, 1926.

I am instructed by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs to acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 22nd last transmitting copy of a letter, with enclosures, addressed to you by His Imperial Highness Ras Tafari Makonnen respecting the notes exchanged in December 1925 between the Italian and British Governments with the object of rendering each other mutual support in requesting the Abyssinian Government to permit the construction of certain public works in Abyssinia.

The Royal Government regrets to observe, from the tenor of the note addressed by His Imperial Highness Ras Tafari Makonnen to the Members of the League of Nations, that the Abyssinian Government has not clearly understood the letter and spirit of the agreements reached between the Italian and British Governments. This is the more a matter of surprise to the Royal Government in that already some time ago the Italian representative in Addis Ababa fully explained to the Abyssinian Government the meaning and scope of those notes, clearly pointing out that they simply constitute an agreement as to procedure concluded by the Italian and British Governments with a view to co-ordinating certain economic interests of the two countries, and that its application in actual practice would naturally be subject to the decisions of the Abyssinian Government and the latter's recognition that these interests were in keeping with those of Abyssinia and would be beneficial to the country's economic and civil progress.

It was subsequent to those declarations that, on June 19th last, His Imperial Highness Ras Tafari addressed to the Italian Minister in Addis Ababa a letter thanking the Italian Prime Minister for his assurances and stating that His Imperial Highness had never entertained any doubt as to the friendly intentions of Italy and her desire to respect the independence of Abyssinia.

The Italian Government would observe that neither in the letter nor in the spirit of these notes can anything be found which would justify the apprehension on the part of the Abyssinian Government that the Italian and British Governments intended to exert precipitate and forcible pressure on Abyssinia; the friendly and explicit assurances already given in this connection should have sufficed to prove that any such apprehension is absolutely groundless.

In particular, as regards the recognition by the British Government of an exclusive sphere of Italian economic influence in certain parts of Abyssinia, it is clear that this constitutes an agreement which is binding solely on the Italian and British Governments; it cannot detract from the right of the Abyssinian Government to take such decisions as it may think fit or limit the possible action of third parties.