

requirements of the Abyssinian people, I am to point out that in notes exchanged between the British Minister in Addis Ababa and the Abyssinian Government on March 18th, 1902, the Emperor Menelik confirmed an oral undertaking given some days previously "that there is to be no interference with the waters of the Blue Nile and Lake Tsana except in consultation with His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of the Sudan; that, in the case of any such interference, all other conditions being equal, preference will be given to the proposals of His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of the Sudan; and that His Majesty the Emperor Menelik has no intention of giving any concession with regard to the Blue Nile and Lake Tsana except to His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of the Sudan or one of their subjects." Since the date of this undertaking, which shows that twenty-four years ago the Emperor Menelik contemplated the construction by the British Government of a barrage at Lake Tsana, His Majesty's Government have on several occasions made specific proposals in regard to this work, the full effect of which it is now possible to foretell as the result of the detailed observations which have been carried out by scientific missions despatched to the Lake with the consent and assistance of the Abyssinian Government. In these circumstances, His Majesty's Government feel that they cannot fairly be charged with proceeding in regard to Lake Tsana with undue precipitancy.

5. In the concluding paragraph of their protest, the Abyssinian Government enquire whether the Anglo-Italian notes can be regarded as compatible with the independence of Abyssinia, especially when those notes state that a portion of Abyssinia will be "reserved" to the economic influence of a particular Power. Sir Austen Chamberlain desires to emphasise that the Anglo-Italian notes do not "reserve" any part of Abyssinia to Italian economic influence. His Britannic Majesty's Government, so far as they are concerned and under certain conditions, "recognise an exclusive Italian economic influence in the west of Abyssinia and in the whole territory to be crossed by the above-mentioned railway" (joining Eritrea and Italian Somaliland). This recognition cannot affect the rights of third parties or bind the Government of Abyssinia. It imposes no obligation on anyone except the British Government, who, in return for the Italian undertakings in regard to Lake Tsana, engage not to compete or support competition with Italian enterprise in the region specified.

6. Sir Austen Chamberlain will be happy to repeat these explanations and assurances to Abyssinia in the presence of the Council at its next meeting when it takes into consideration the note addressed to you by the Government of Abyssinia.

(Signed) John MURRAY.