

# Ethiopia and the League of Nations

From: WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ETHIOPIA?

## PRESENT OUTLETS FOR THE POPULATION

"But why need the Italian people remain at home, it will be asked. They have been emigrating in large numbers for several decades; why should they remain at home now more than in the past, especially if the pressure of population is becoming steadily greater?"

"We have already mentioned that the United States is closed to them, and that their European neighbours have less need of them now than before the war, owing to general economic depression."

"The South American countries, on the other hand, still welcome Italians as well as most other Europeans and offer, as far as they are able, very favourable terms to intending settlers. In most of these countries there is a great deal of interest shown by all manner of private organizations, as well as by public authorities, in securing immigrants as settlers. But it appears that all these schemes, both public and private, are only moderately successful. This is probably due in part to the world-wide depression in agriculture since the war, and in part to the lack of capital by both the immigrant and the country in which he wishes to settle. In any event, Italian emigration to Argentina is not quite so great as in pre-war years, and to Brazil it is hardly one-half as great. It has never been large to other South American countries, so that, all told, it has averaged only about 80,000 a year since the war. Probably less than one-half of these are permanent settlers, for it has always been characteristic of Italian emigrants that they went out in search of work fully as much as in search of new homes. Reliable data indicate that approximately one-half of the overseas emigrants eventually return to Italy."

"In spite of the fact that the post-war movement of Italians to South America has slackened, there is some reason to believe that it will increase before long. These countries want European immigrants, and when the present program of public works in Italy is completed (in perhaps another decade), there will be many thousands of Italians to seek work abroad. It is not improbable, then, that the stream of Italians to South America will soon be larger than it has been recently. But it does not appear that permanent emigrants will amount to more than one-third of the natural increase in Italy. The countries of South America are not in the stage of development where they can use additional hundreds of thousands of common labourers each year in the development of their natural resources and in their industries, as was the United States before the war. A large part of the immigrants into South America must settle directly on the land, and this will necessarily be a rather slow process under the conditions prevailing in this region. I refer here particularly to the lack of transportation facilities, to the system of large land holdings, which is quite general south of Panama, and to the settlement of subtropical regions, which is far more difficult for Europeans than the settlement of the temperate areas."

"It does not seem likely, in view of all the facts, that the lands which have hitherto accepted Italian settlers, will, in the near future, provide places for as large a proportion of Italy's natural increase as in the past, and they certainly will not take as many migratory labourers."

"This situation, resulting in greater pressure of population at home, is leading Italy to enter into negotiations regarding Italian settlement with various countries which have not hitherto had much Italian immigration and to investigate the possibilities of emigration into the more thinly settled parts of the world where its people might find good economic opportunities. The reader who has followed us thus far will realize that, except in South America, the real white man's lands (temperate and subtropical) which are most thinly settled and which will support largely increased populations are in the hands of the English-speaking peoples. The Italians are finding to their great chagrin that these peoples do not want them, whether it be in the United States, in Australia, or in Canada. Naturally this is a shock to the pride of the Italians and when insult is added to exclusion, as it often is, we need not be surprised to find considerable bitterness of feeling arising against English-speaking peoples. There is no need to cite utterances showing this regarding our own country, for we all remember the debates, the editorials, the "expert" testimony, and so forth accompanying the discussion and passage of our recent immigration acts. Much of this discussion and testimony we should perhaps prefer to forget, and no doubt many of us have forgotten it, as it reflects but little credit on either our intelligence or our honesty. But we may rest assured that it will not be forgotten by the Italians as quickly as we should like, for it is no light matter to tell a people that it is inferior and throw on them the burden of proving in some easily recognizable way (successful war, for example) that they are not. Unfortunately we are not the only English-speaking people that has hurt the pride of the Italians by the method of their excluding them and particularly by the many public utterances of more or less responsible people in which they have been referred to as an inferior people..."

"In March, 1928, a former premier of Australia in attacking the government's immigration policy is quoted as saying: 'Italians are coming to this country at the rate of three hundred monthly. To whom does this country belong? to us or to Mussolini? Apparently all Mussolini has to do is to rattle the sword and we must allow all the grandmothers, grand aunts and other relatives down to thirty-third cousins of Italians here to enter. We colonized this country and it is for us to develop it along our own lines without dictation from anybody overseas.'

"In Canada an Italian farmer who wished to have a fellow Italian admitted so that he could employ him received the following letter from the Department of Immigration and Colonization at Winnipeg: 'It has been the experience of this Department that Italians as a class do not readily accept and remain at agricultural work, but sooner or later drift to the urban centres and engage in other occupations. As I have no definite assurance or guarantee that Filippo Greco, if admitted to Canada, would accept and remain at farm-work, I regret no action can be taken to facilitate his admission'."

"The two significant facts in this exclusion of Italian immigrants from the English-speaking countries are that: (1) such exclusion has the immediate effect of increasing population pressure in Italy and thereby renders some desperate or reckless attempt to ease this pressure more probable; and (2) it creates a fund of resentment against the excluding peoples, a large part of which is quite likely to be transferred to Great Britain and which may go far towards dissolving—in connection with Italy's treatment at Versailles—the traditional bonds of good feeling between Great Britain and Italy. This is a very important matter because, as we have pointed out in several other connections, there are a number of possible, even probable, situations in which, to say the least, it would be exceedingly inconvenient to Great Britain to have Italy for an enemy..."

"But," it may be said, 'Italy has colonies with an area of almost 1,500,000 square miles; why does she not exploit them and cease to complain of having no outlet for her people and of insufficient resources for her industrial development?' The answer to this is very brief, but conclusive. A rainfall map of north and east Africa shows that Italy's colonies are of little worth agriculturally. Only in very restricted areas is the rainfall over ten inches annually, and

almost nowhere does it exceed twenty. A little, but after all a very little, may be accomplished by irrigation. Italy's colonies are chiefly poor grazing-lands and desert. At the best they will furnish land for only a few hundred thousands of settlers and consequently will do but little to postpone the day when Italy must look elsewhere for land.

"Where, then, can Italy find room for expansion, and where can it secure the resources needed for its industrial development?"

"In addition to the possibilities of settlement in South America which have been pointed out above, the most feasible direction of expansion would seem to be in Asia Minor—Syria and Mesopotamia. The former of these is now mandated to France by the League of Nations, and the latter, though now called an independent kingdom, is under the control of Great Britain..."

"For Italy, Syria would not only be a land for agricultural settlement, but also a source of various raw materials which Italy sadly needs for its industries and which France does not need and consequently is not likely to develop in the near future. There are considerable deposits of lignite, iron ore, copper, lead, and so forth in this region. Besides there are some indications of petroleum, although as yet no profitable wells have been brought in. Such of these products as France does not possess at home, it has in greater abundance close by, in north Africa, so that it would not cripple itself industrially in allowing Syria to pass into the control of Italy. Indeed, there is good reason to think that if France were to concentrate the development of its dependencies more, the actual benefit derived from them would be considerably greater."

"In order to make Syria most useful to Italy, it should be coupled with Mesopotamia or Iraq, which is under British control. These two countries are contiguous and (except Mosul) are much alike in climate and in agricultural possibilities. Iraq is even more thinly settled than Syria, having less than 3,000,000 persons on an area of 143,250 square miles..."

"If in addition to the acquisition of Syria and Iraq the immigration policies of Australia, Canada, and South Africa were changed so as to admit considerable numbers of Italians, the pressure in Italy would be relieved for some time to come and the Italian jingoes would find themselves without a sound basis for agitation."

Someone will point out that even if there were room for eight to ten millions of Italians to settle in Syria and Iraq, and that many more in Australia, South Africa, and Tunis, Italy's population problem would not be solved by giving her these new outlets. It will be said that the population will go on increasing in Italy just as in the past, and after twenty or twenty-five years the problem will have to be faced all over again. It will further be urged that having once bluffed some of the great powers into giving her new outlets, Italy will try the same thing over again and will be in stronger position to make good her threat to take something if it is not freely given."

"If population were increasing in Italy wholly without regulation, and if there were no prospect of increasing control of births, this might be the correct view. I have shown above, however, that the birth-rate is declining rather rapidly in Italy. We know further that under modern conditions nothing increases the practice of birth control so much as enhanced prosperity and the growth of industrialism. Now, there is not the least reason to suppose that as prosperity becomes greater in Italy (through the access to new lands), and as industry develops (through the acquisition of enlarged resources), the Italians will not respond to better conditions in the same manner as the rest of the Western peoples and reduce the size of their families very materially."

"We must recognize that the knowledge of harmless and reasonably certain means of preventing conception changes almost beyond belief the likelihood of a population's growing up to the limits of subsistence under the conditions of modern life. There is no people that cannot and probably none that will not, sooner or later, adapt its fertility to the actual situation in which it must live. The personal advantages of controlled fertility are so obvious that it is unthinkable that they will not appeal to all peoples. There are, of course, obstacles, of various and different kinds opposed to the control of conception by the traditions and customs of different peoples. But among a people that is rapidly emerging from the thrall of superstition, it is not at all likely that these inheritances from the past will long postpone the conscious control of growth in numbers by almost the entire population. The control of conception is one of those great movements in the history of mankind that proceed to their issue in spite of all difficulties; albeit, at times, they seem to proceed far too slowly."

"It is unreasonable, however, for the peoples who have made the greatest headway in the control of their growth in numbers to demand that all other peoples follow their example at once. It is no more possible for Italy with its historical background to control its fertility to the same extent as France than it is that France should have the birth-rate of China. It takes time for great social changes to become ingrained in the mental attitudes of people, and during the period of their establishment the needs of peoples should be ministered to as far as possible."

"It is frequently said that the population problem of any nation is purely a domestic question—that 'the day has passed when any nation has the right to use its own reckless (sic) overbreeding to justify a course of action in international affairs which would be inexcusable if its population were stationary.' Such an attitude shows a complete failure to understand what is really possible in the matter of the control of conception in countries like Italy and Japan. It is in the best imperial style of successful 'land-grabbers' and is really inexcusable in a 'liberal' journal like the New Republic, which prides itself on its realism in politics and economics."

"We should face the facts of the given situation and attempt an adjustment to them which accords with our most enlightened sense of justice. Surely when the facts are known, Italy cannot be said to be inexcusable for wanting and preparing to take, if need be, land for its surplus population, while Great Britain and France are held blameless for the war which may ensue, although they are holding land and resources which they do not need and cannot possibly settle and develop within the next century. It must be remembered that no nation has deliberately and with forethought made its birth-rate what it is today. Everywhere the birth-rate is a natural consequence of the conditions of life existing among the different peoples, and as such it is inevitable that it should be what it is. Furthermore, it is not at all likely that its course will be greatly altered by any governmental action aimed directly to that end, for it is too intimately bound up with personal development and subconscious mental attitudes to respond readily to such external influences."

"The present distribution of land and resources among the peoples of the world, on the other hand, is quickly alterable. We all know what war can accomplish in this respect. Just as much could be accomplished in a short time by peaceful negotiations if the nations thought this more desirable than war. For there could be great changes in the distribution of land and resources among the peoples of the world with no very great fundamental change in the lives of the individuals involved in the transfer. A change of sovereignty and migration to a new land certainly does not involve any such revolution in mental attitudes as the change from uncontrolled to controlled fertility."

"When there is no possible chance for birth control to become general among a people for two or three decades, or even for several generations, it is absurd to call conduct based on this fact inexcusable, while overlooking the fact that aggressive conduct on the part of a growing people is only necessary because other peoples

are holding out of use land and resources which the expanding peoples need. It is an interesting kink in our notions of international ethics that aggression is condemned indiscriminately, apparently because it is aggression, while the maintenance of the status quo, which may work untold hardship on millions of people, seems to have general approval. It is, of course, to the interest of peoples who have all they want to throw the onus of moral responsibility for war on those who have little and would, therefore, necessarily be the ones to initiate a struggle for a change of the status quo. But we should have arrived at sufficient knowledge of the methods and conditions of the acquirement of lands in past times, to prevent mere possession from creating in our minds an unshakable presumption of moral right to hold them under any and all conditions."

Italy's military difficulties in her Colonies on the Red Sea are briefly dealt with in the Italian memorandum to the League of Nations.

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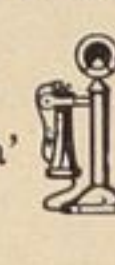
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