

## The Italo-Ethiopian Conflict

### ETHIOPIAN THREATS AND AGGRESSIONS —ATTEMPTS AGAINST ITALIAN COLONIES

Ethiopia has not only violated the particular Italo-Ethiopian treaties but she has also made several attempts to violate the territories of the Italian colonies with armed forces.

Notable, above all, was the Ethiopian preparation for Italian aggression during the war in Tripoli. The Ethiopian government avails itself of anti-Italian propaganda conducted by booklets and injurious verses. Moreover, in March-April, 1914, the Negus Uolde Chiorghia, governor of Gondar, advanced with a body of more than 50,000 armed men in the Tigris as far as the frontier of Eritrea, which was almost without garrison. The Italian government was obliged to send metropolitan troops hurriedly together with battalions of Eritreans which were in Lybia. Italian operations in Lybia were notably disturbed while the Italian colony of Eritrea threatened by invasion, suffered a serious economic crisis.

When the World War broke out while Italy was preparing herself for intervention (Feb. 1915) the Negus Micael prepared a plan of attack, collecting three corps of troops of about 150,000 men and directing an intense anti-Italian propaganda amongst the native populations of the Italian colonies. Italy was forced to take exceptional military measures for the defense of Eritrea and maintain a considerable number of troops during the entire war. Therefore, she could not participate in operations of a colonial nature which the Allies conducted in Asia as well as Africa, not without serious consequences for her in the systematization of colonial questions of the past war.

In 1916 a movement guided by Ligg Jasu created new difficulties in Italian Somaliland, resulting in the bloody encounter of Bulu Burti which cost the life of one officer, and many non-commissioned officers and Italian soldiers. Ligg Jasu openly supported the Mullah who had rebelled against Italy and England aiding him with arms and ammunition.

In 1925-26 during the operations of the police in northern Italian Somaliland, the Ethiopian government furnished the rebels with arms and ammunition.

### DIPLOMATIC AND PRIVATE VIOLATIONS

To these massed armed aggressions which represent true attempts at invasion of Italian territory must also be added the no less significant attacks on diplomatic consular representatives and Italian subjects on Ethiopian as well as Italian territory.

The memorandum of the government lists and documents 26 cases of aggressions perpetrated in 7 years from May 1928, after the signing of the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of Friendship to August, 1935.

Let us remind you, first of all, of an attack on the Italian legation at Addis Ababa in 1916 in which armed Ethiopians shot against the windows of the hall of the legation.

If there were no opportunities given and no regard shown to Italian economic initiative in Ethiopian territory against what was provided for in the treaty of political friendship and economic collaboration of 1928 and what was to be legitimately expected for the peaceful expansion of Italian economic interests, not even security was given Italian residents and transients in Ethiopian territory.

But more serious and numerous still are the violences perpetrated by the Abyssinians with raids, attacks and invasion of these Italian territories. These violences are a decisive proof of the spirit and aggressive Ethiopian programme as regards Italy, of the anarchy which dominates the Ethiopian provinces, especially those adjoining Italian territory. They reveal that intolerable, perpetual threat made on the part of the Ethiopians towards Italy.

The violations of the Italo-Ethiopian treaties and the hostile political attitude which the Ethiopians adopted towards Italy become much more serious due to the internal disorder of the country and have hindered the ancient political, economic and cultural structure to such an extent that they have not been able to effect a profound change which would put her on the path of no longer constituting a permanent source of danger to the neighbouring Italian colonies. It is no longer a question of solving single problems pertaining to the frontier alone or to obtain satisfaction for the numerous individual incidents because the Ethiopian state offers no guarantee in its actual state of being firmly able to fulfill the obligations it assumes.

The chronic internal state of disorder in Ethiopia itself constitutes a chronic danger for the security and development of the Italian colonies. There is no possibility of normal development of the economic and commercial activity of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland since there is no possibility of restoring regular trade with their natural hinterland constituted by the Ethiopian regions.

The internal Ethiopian warfare amongst the leaders and tribes shut and imperil the Abyssinian markets. The history of the last few decades in Ethiopia is characterized by a continuous succession of internal armed struggles. Already in the period of the regency during the last years of the Negus Menelik's illness, there were two successive coup d'etats in Abyssinia, one on March 21, 1910 directed against the Empress, and the other during the summer of 1911 with the object of seizing Ligg Jasu. During that time the government of Ligg Jasu was occupied with military expeditions and internal strife.

After the revolt of September, 1916, at Addis Ababa which led to the downfall of Ligg Jasu, new wars were waged by these and the actual emperor.

In 1920-21 the present Negus led an armed expedition of about 15,000 men in Northern Ethiopia to capture the deposed prince who had taken refuge there. After the elimination of Ligg Jasu whom the Negus Menelik had recognized as his only legitimate heir, the revolts and declarations continued.

In March-April 1928, Addis Ababa was threatened by the declarations of "Degiac" Balcia, governor of Sidamo. In September of the same year the imperial Ghebi revolted under the command of Degiac Aba Uoau. Bloody fighting occurred between the Galla Uogerat, Azelo and other tribes against the local tribes. An insurrectionist movement and of violent xenophobia broke out in the region of Lake Tsana, provoked by the Ras Gugsu in open rebellion against the government of Addis Ababa.

In May, 1932, Ligg Jasu succeeds in fleeing from his place of detention but is caught again by the armed men of the Negus. A series of rebellions break out in Goggiam, one directed by the "Fituarari" Admasu against Debra Marcos, the capital of Goggiam, and another by Ligg Manu in the west.

Another bloody rebellion took place in October, 1934, in the northern Tigris at Mia Ceu.

This chronic state of disorder in Ethiopia has for years forced the adjacent bordering powers to guarantee their interests by treaties and conventions which had Ethiopia as their object. These accords were based on the presupposition of the definite and irripable separation of the actual Ethiopian state.

The territory of the Ethiopians is divided into spheres of influence for them, leaving the largest part to Italy. With the protocols of March 24 and April 15, 1891, the Italian and British governments establish a boundary line of East Africa among the spheres of influence reserved to Italy and to Great Britain. This line leaves Italy all the Ethiopian territory east of the thirty-fifth meridian, the cross-

## A Monthly Survey of Italian Trade and Industry

In 1915 Italy entered the great war on the side of the Allies. She did so of her own free will at a moment when their prospects of ultimate victory were almost at their lowest ebb. As a result of defeats which had neutralised Russia's power of attack and silenced the Serbs, the Austro-Hungarian army could have joined the German forces on the Western front had not the Italian army then entered the theatre of war. For 3 years and 6 months Italy held the field, and the first of the great victories which brought the war to a conclusion was that of Vittorio Veneto fought by 51 Italian, 3 British, 2 French, and 1 Czechoslovak divisions and 1 American regiment, against 63 Austro-Hungarian divisions.

By opening up the road by which the allies could have penetrated into the heart of Germany, the Italian victory determined the collapse of German resistance on the Western Front.

Italy went to the Paris peace negotiations with over 600,000 dead to her account, and with two treaties bearing the signatures of Great Britain and France—the Treaty of London and the Treaty of St. Jean de Maurienne,—under which she was promised, in case of an allied victory, colonial outlets for her expanding population and possibilities for satisfying the growing needs of raw materials of her rapidly developing industries. At Paris her claims under both these treaties were set aside. As a result of the distribution of mandates over ex-enemy possessions in Africa only, Great Britain was assigned 1,849,203 sq. kilometers of land with 7,079,000 inhabitants, France 1,879,706 sq. kilometers with 2,297,000 inhabitants, Belgium 59,000 sq. kms. with 3,000,000 inhabitants, Italy, with the stretch of desert between the oases of Gat and Gadames ceded by France and trans-Jubaland ceded by England, acquired 80,000 sq. kms., mostly desert or fever-ridden as is shown by the fact that the total population did not exceed 70,000.

So much for the way in which the allies honored their treaty obligations to Italy.

What have been the consequences of this treatment?

If Italy badly needed colonial-expansion before the war, under post-war conditions it has become a vital necessity. In the twenty years preceding 1914 Italy's growing population had found an outlet in mass emigration to the under-populated territories of the United States, Canada, and South America, to say nothing of the large numbers of Italian workers who found employment in the mines, factories, and building trades of Central Europe, France, and Belgium. In 1913 over 700,000 Italians emigrated, and the annual average of the pre-war years stood around half a million. Their remittances were then the major credit item of Italy's balance of international payments. Besides this direct outlet, Italian agriculture, and to a minor extent Italian industry, could in those years freely export their products to the markets of the world, and though Italy's balance of trade was normally adverse, yet in 1914 she could point to an important and growing export business and she could freely import the raw materials she required. Her financial conditions were then sound. Receipts and payments on international account balanced, the lira was quoted at a premium, and on the other side of the Atlantic large and growing bodies of Italian settlers were gradually rising in the economic scale and creating growing markets for Italian products.

Post-war conditions radically changed this situation. From 1919 to 1921

the differential price which the British Government charged for the coal she exported to Italy placed a crushing burden on Italian transports and industries, putting them at a great disadvantage as compared to those of other countries, and other difficulties of all sorts beset her in securing essential raw materials. When in 1920 the Italian delegation to the League of Nations Assembly, headed by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tittoni, brought this situation to the attention of the League and suggested that the access to essential raw materials for all countries should be studied and dealt with by that body, the proposal had a most hostile reception from Great Britain and France, and was completely disregarded. Then came the anti-emigration laws enacted by the United States, followed by similar action in all parts of the British Empire and in most South American countries. The outlet of emigration, the peaceful substitute for colonial expansion, was thus definitely closed.

The Italian Government met this situation with dignity. With the advent of Fascism the emigration problem was viewed from a new angle. It was seen that the labor force of the Italian workers is the country's most precious economic asset, and that the moral status and economic well-being of those workers should be its first care. The emigration countries no longer required their services; well and good; they represented so much wealth which would stay in the country. Many parts of Italy, more especially the southern provinces and the Islands which accounted for a large percentage of emigration, had remained behind-hand in the equipment necessary for economic development—education, roads, water supply, sanitation, land-drainage and improvement,—and the Fascist Government set to work to remedy these deficiencies. Thousands of schools have been opened, hundreds of miles of roads built or reconditioned, great aqueducts now supply large areas with water, land reclamation has given hundreds of thousands of acres to the peasantry. Meanwhile the business-men rationalised their plants and factories, trebled the hydro-electric power at the service of industry, adapted production to the needs of the home and foreign markets. The application of science to agriculture increased the production of wheat; fruit and vegetable cultivation was extended and developed to meet the requirements of the export markets; the canning and packing industries were reorganized and greatly enlarged; transport facilities and market organisation were perfected. A stabilised and stable currency and a reorganised banking system completed the preparations for trade expansion on lines commensurate with national needs. The market growth in Italy's foreign trade, culminating in 1927-28, was such that had reasonable freedom of international commercial intercourse prevailed, the export of goods could have advantageously replaced the export of services which had been Italy's chief resource in the pre-war years.

But this was not to be. A night to exclusion protection policy was adopted by the United States; England first depreciated her currency and then closed her markets; the Ottawa agreements introduced differential tariffs throughout the British Empire; currency dumping was practiced on a large scale by Japan and other countries. Not content with tariffs, France introduced quotas and prohibitions, followed in this by most of the European countries, and exchange regulations and blocked cre-

dit finally demoralized the markets and paralysed foreign trade.

For five long years, from 1929 to 1934, Italy held out against the quota and exchange-control system. Her trade policies were based on the maintenance of the most favored nation clause, she stood for freedom of trade subject to moderate protection to safeguard essential home industries, and was resolutely opposed to export and import prohibitions. The Italian Government participated in all the efforts made by the League of Nations and other international organisations in favor of freer trade, a policy which had the whole-hearted support of her delegates. But all was in vain. The doctrines of exasperated nationalism, economic self-sufficiency, and manipulated currencies prevailed, and Italy, however reluctantly, had no choice but to resort to similar measures in self-defence.

But if the doctrine of economic self-sufficiency is to prevail, if the settlement of international accounts by goods and services is ruled out, and if balances must be settled in gold, then the possession of adequate natural resources is a question of life or death for a nation. To deny the right of securing natural resources by colonial expansion to a country so placed, in an ascending phase of its parabola, with an expanding population, a rising standard of living, and keen national sensibilities, is dangerous. It is like placing a boiler under high pressure and then sitting on the safety valve. The results are likely to be unpleasant.

Bearing these antecedent conditions in mind, let us now look at the situation which has arisen between Italy and Abyssinia.

The eventual rights of Italy to colonial expansion in Abyssinia have long been recognised in a series of treaties stretching over a period of more than forty years.

When in September Italy submitted to the League Council a detailed and fully documented memorandum showing that the safety of her East African colonies was seriously and permanently menaced and their economic development impeded by Abyssinia, that Abyssinia had disregarded her treaty obligations to Italy and flagrantly failed to observe the solemn engagements she undertook

twelve years before toward the League, that she was not only a slave-owning but a slave-raiding State, incapable of exercising effective control over her own subjects, Italy had a right to expect that her accusations would be examined and, unless disproved, acted upon.

No attempt was made to disprove them; but no redress was offered. In the absence of collective action to make the Negus respect his obligations or quit the League, Italy had no alternative but to take necessary steps for protecting her possessions and asserting her rights under international agreements. Thereupon the League declared her "aggressor" and called on the member States to wage a deadly economic war to her detriment.

This being the case, the Italian business world stands united behind the Government, determined to resist by every means in their power what they consider as an unjustified and unjustifiable attempt to prevent Italy from securing economic expansion in a part of Africa where climatic conditions would allow of permanent settlement by her people, and where she has acquired over a period of forty years, a recognised right to economic expansion and political influence.

The Italian business world knows that if our farmers, workers, engineers, and investors (Italy is not a great capitalistic country but savings rapidly accumulate, thanks to the thrifty habits of an industrious and enterprising population) secure a free hand in the Italian zone of influence in Abyssinia, they will bring with them good government, justice, hygiene, and vastly improved conditions for the native populations, who receive them as liberators from their Amhara oppressors. They will find fertile lands to cultivate, raw materials to use, natural resources to develop.

The Italian business world is convinced of the justice of Italy's cause and is prepared to make any and every sacrifice which may be required of them to ensure its triumph and to render vain the economic siege the League has organized.

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sing of the meridian with the Blue Nile as far as the sixth parallel and leaves to Italy all the territory north of the sixth parallel as far as the intersection with the Giuba river which marks the "ulterior" line with its "thalweg". With the Protocol of May 5, 1894, the Italian and British governments analogously establish the line of demarcation between those of the British and Italian spheres of influence, assigning all the territory of the ancient emirate of Harrar and all of Ogaden.

The tripartite accord of 1906 reconfirms these protocols and also recognizes the French economic interests relative to the railway traffic of Djibouti and the hydraulic interests of Great Britain and of Egypt in the Nile Basin with reserve of the local hydraulic interests and territorial interests already recognized.

The hydraulic interests of Great Britain are then defined in the application of the tripartite accord in the Italo-British exchange of letters of 1925, with which Italy pledges herself to favour the construction of some hydraulic works on Lake Tsana and the British government pledges itself to respect specified interests of the population in that region.

The pre-eminent Italian interests, which by means of these diplomatic acts are given juridical recognition, correspond to the fact for which Italy who has the most urgently recognized need of colonial expansion, is the power which suffers the greatest dangers from the actual state of Ethiopia.