

# Ethiopia and World Politics

By George Padmore

**T**HE Italo-Ethiopian conflict is but a reflection of world politics, and of the new groupings and alliances taking place among the European powers, in preparation for a new world war. Therefore, in order to clearly understand why Italian fascism has chosen this moment to launch an attack upon Ethiopia, it is first of all necessary for the reader to get a complete picture of the present European political situation. Briefly, present day Europe can be described as fascist; for England, France and the small Scandinavian countries, are the only nations in Europe still adhering to democratic institutions.

The principal features of fascism are, aggressive nationalism, and the desire for territorial expansion. This is particularly true of Germany and Italy. The imperialistic ambitions of Italy are, however, more threatening to the peace of Africa, than that of Germany, whose primary interest at the moment is to fully re-arm, and to break through the diplomatic isolation which is being developed around the Third Reich by France, England, Russia and the Little Entente.

Italy's territorial designs are in two directions, Central Europe and Africa. Since it is easier for Mussolini to achieve what he is after in Africa, than in Europe, the danger of war against Ethiopia is very great. Furthermore, it is clear that all the big powers on the League of Nations Council—Great Britain, France and Soviet Russia—would rather prefer Mussolini to make war in Africa than disturb the *status quo* in Europe. We shall deal with this question in greater detail later on. Let us first examine the relationship of forces in Europe at the moment.

## Two Main Camps in Europe

Since the war, Europe has been divided into two main political camps, the Versailles and the Anti-Versailles. Those nations which emerged out of the war victoriously, are the supporters of the Versailles Treaty. Those who lost, are the Anti-Versailles, with the exception of Italy, whose special position we shall deal with later on. The Versailles group acquired what they now have at the expense of those who lost. For example, small states like Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia and Roumania, either gained their entire independence, or added much territory (Roumania) as a result of the break-up of the Austrian-Hungarian and German empires. Apart from the disappearance of the Haps-

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burgs and Hohenzollerns, Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also gained their independence as a result of the war and the Russian Revolution, which led to the break-up of the Tsarist empire.

Poland also acquired a strip of German territory known as the Corridor, which runs through Greater Germany and East Prussia. This was granted to Poland, then a staunch-all of France and a member of the Versailles camp, in order to give her an outlet to the Baltic by way of Danzig. The German African colonies were divided up between England, France and Belgium under mandates of the League of Nations. So much for those who gained by the war.

The sufferers from a territorial point of view were, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Russia, for Roumania annexed Bessarabia. For years the Soviet Government refused to recognize the right of Roumania to Bessarabia, but they have recently settled this question in Roumania's favor in order to make it possible for Russia to win the support of the Little Entente against Germany. Similarly, Germany has "recognized" Poland's claims to the Corridor in order to win her support against Russia. This is an example of high diplomacy!

After the Treaty of Versailles, the victor nations formed a united front called the Little Entente under the leadership of France, in which they agreed to help each other defend what they won in the event that Germany, Hungary or Russia ever attempt to regain lost territories by means of arms. France supports the Little Entente because she, too, needs allies in the event of another war with Germany. England,

while paying lip service to the League, pursues her traditional policy of balance of power.

## Russia and Italy

The position of Russia and Italy towards the Treaty of Versailles requires special mention. Russia emerged out of the war as a new type of state, a Dictatorship of the Proletariat or Workers' Government. As such, the early leaders, Lenin and Trotsky, refused to enter into any alliances or diplomatic entanglements with capitalist states. While the imperialists looked upon the world as divided into two camps—Versailles and Anti-Versailles, the Soviet leaders looked upon the world as divided into two different kind of camps—the Imperialist camp, and the Anti-Imperialist camp, represented by the Soviet Union. This characterized the early history of Russia's foreign policy. But since the defeat of the revolutionary movement in Germany and Central Europe resulting in the rise of Hitlerism on the one hand, and the threat of war in the East on the other hand, the present Soviet leaders have changed their foreign policy, as they no longer have any faith in the ability of the workers of Europe and America to defend Russia if attacked. So with the object of safeguarding the Revolution, the Kremlin has made an alliance with France and the friendship with the Little Entente. And since they are also afraid of losing what they have, they all find it possible to collaborate in defending the *status quo*, or to use diplomatic language, "Peace," for the *status quo* can only be changed by war. Russia can therefore be considered a member of the Versailles camp.

Now let us examine Italy's position. Although one of the victor nations, Italian fascism is hostile towards the Versailles Treaty. The reason for this can be traced to pre-war diplomacy. Before the war, Italy was an ally of Germany, but when hostilities broke out, Italy hesitated to join the Central Powers. Finally France succeeded in getting the Italians to come over on the side of the Allies. Thanks to the services of the well known French professor, Marcel Cachin, who is now the leader of the Communist Party of France, Aristide Briand, another old socialist, was able to bribe the Italians to join the slaughter. Funny old world this. While men like Lenin and Trotsky were dodging the French police for fighting against the war, "comrade"

Cachin, was acting as chief recruiting agent for his bourgeoisie. Well, in order to get the Italians to support them, the French signed a secret treaty with them promising them rich booty in Africa and elsewhere. It is very important for Negroes to understand this, for the failure of France and the other Allies to live up to their promises, today has direct bearing upon the Ethiopian situation. In other words, as war is again being prepared, France is trying to pay Italy her arrears by giving her a free hand to grab Ethiopia so as to win her support in the future.

### London Treaty of 1915

In the secret treaty of April, 1915, in London, Italy was to receive some of the German colonies and spheres of influence in the Balkans. But after the war, England, France and Belgium grabbed the colonies, and the Little Entente states gobbled up what ever was to be had in Europe and left the Italians in the cold. Here is where trouble began. Italy seized German-speaking Tyrol in southern Austria and part of Dalmatia and Fiume from the Serbs in 1920. But these small bites could not satisfy the Italians. When Mussolini came to power, he started to attack and denounce the Treaty of Versailles, but knowing that Italy is no match against France, he turned his attention towards the Balkans. It was not difficult for him to intrigue in the inner affairs of Yugoslavia and the other Balkan states, for jealousies are great among them. Mussolini incited national minorities against the dominant ones, and played off one power against the other. He flirted with all the discontented nations — Austria, Hungary, Germany and Bulgaria from time to time. He demanded the right of expansion in the Balkans; he wanted colonies; he wanted to turn the Adriatic into a Roman lake; he wanted everything. Not without reason, Italy is now supporting the rebel forces of Venizelos, to overthrow the Greek Government, so as to break up the Balkan Entente which exists between Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Roumania. Mussolini has his fingers in every intrigue in Europe. All because he is dissatisfied with things as they are.

### Hitler Prepares for War

Since Hitler has come to power many changes have taken place in the realignment of forces. Hitler is a fascist dictator like Mussolini, and like the Italian, dissatisfied with Europe as it is. In this respect both men are one, but nonetheless, their interests clash. For example, Hitler wants to get hold of Austria in order to use it as a stepping stone into the Balkans. He also wants colonies in Africa, but chief

of all to expand East, i. e., Soviet Ukraine. Mussolini also wants Austria, failing which, he is interested to keep Hitler out. It is here where the interests of the two dictators cross swords.

The difference between Hitler and Mussolini is this: Mussolini is a great boaster. He knows that his war machine cannot stand up before the combined forces of France and the Little Entente, so with this knowledge, he is looking towards Africa, for war is the only way out of the crisis, which is getting worse and worse daily. Hitler on the other hand, has a formidable war machine at his disposal, thanks to the Kaiser's generals who perfected the Reichswehr, under the benevolent protection of the Republican-socialists. To this army Hitler's man "Friday," General Goering, has added an air force potentially, if not actually the equal of any in Europe. This war machine all Europe is afraid of, in so much so, that the British Government has recently issued a White Paper which spells the end of all attempt to arrive at an agreement of "collective security."

Since it is clear to everybody outside a lunatic asylum, that Hitler intends to strike out East and into Central Europe as soon as the generals say "go," he has thrown all those who stand for the *status quo* into alarm. In this pre-war atmosphere, Mussolini sees his chance to offer his support to the highest bidder, and to cash in before the war begins, so that Italy will not be left in the cold as happened after the last slaughter.

### The Deal Is Put Over

As France is more in need of Mussolini's support than Germany, Pierre Laval, the French Foreign Minister, paid a visit to Rome in January, and there came to terms with Mussolini. What are the terms? France agreed to give Italy a slice of the French Sahara, about the size of England, a portion of French Somaliland, and part of her shares in the Abyssinian railway, which runs from Djibuti, the port of French

Somaliland to Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. But the most important part of the deal is that, Mussolini has a free hand to grab as much of Ethiopia as he can.

The Pact of Rome is the most glaring example of the united front of white Europe against black Africa. It should serve to open the eyes of Negroes the world over, that white nations, regardless of their political systems, have no scruples in joining hands in assigning parts of Africa to whichever one stands most in need of colonies. This was the policy adopted by the Berlin Conference of 1885. The Rome Pact is just a continuation of that policy. In other words, Africa is not worth while for whites to fight over. They share it out by mutual agreement. However, there are some white people who will be consoling the blacks that it is better to sacrifice Ethiopia, than to disturb the peace of Europe. Already this is the tune of sections of the European press. They openly say that the white man's continent is more important than the black man's.

Now let us turn our attention to the seat of conflict.

### Preparations for War

Mussolini's aggressive attitude towards Ethiopia dates back to the time when France and Russia failed to get Poland to support the Eastern Locarno Pact. He figured, and correctly so, that France would have to come to terms with him, so he began to provoke Ethiopia, knowing that France was in his hands and could not protest. Neither would England, for since 1925, an agreement existed between Great Britain and Italy for mutual spheres of interests in Ethiopia. Italy is to have special economic rights in the east, and freedom to build a railway to connect the Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland; while England is to enjoy the right of control over the waters of Lake Tsana, the source of the Blue Nile, which supplies water to the British-owned cotton plantations in Anglo-Egyptian Soudan. The only other big power on the League Council is Soviet Russia, but Litvinov dares not raise his voice in protest, although Ethiopia is a member since 1923, and Article I of the Covenant "guarantees" the sovereignty and integrity of member states. The League is no more than a farce.

For instance, when the first clash took place of Wal-Wal, the Emperor immediately appealed to the League for justice, but instead of receiving a hearing, pressure was brought to bear upon him to withdraw his charges against Mussolini. Not having one colored member on the Council he was forced to do so, as the

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## CHICAGO WAR

The article by Miss Thyra J. Edwards in the March CRISIS, telling of the company union maintained at a garment factory there kicked up quite a fuss. J. Wellington Evans, since revealed as an employe of the factory, replied in the April number with his condemnation of unions and Miss Edwards. In the June issue Miss Edwards will have her rebuttal in an article entitled: "Who Is Disinterested?" Out May 22.

## Crawford

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to the end. But the fact that he was guilty put another aspect to the matter.

Recently Crawford has been following the suggestion of Miss Martha Gruening and claiming he was abandoned by his counsel in the Buckner case and was compelled to plead guilty and throw himself on the mercy of the court. Miss Gruening also charges that counsel was both unduly and unusually anxious to close out the Buckner case. The facts, however, are that counsel was being pushed to close out the Buckner case by Crawford himself, as is shown by his letter of February 11, 1934.

The truth is that a few days before Crawford wrote his letter of February 11, 1934, he had been interviewed in jail by two reporters from the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*. According to their feature story in their paper February 10, 1934, Crawford had expressed himself as dissatisfied with the result of the Ilsley trial. As a consequence, on February 12, 1934, when Crawford was brought to Leesburg to dispose of the Buckner case, counsel advised the court of the purported statements of Crawford in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* and declined to take the responsibility of pleading Crawford guilty. The court then called Crawford to the bar and read him the article in the paper. Crawford denied the interview with the reporters. The court then told Crawford he was entitled to a trial, but Crawford repeated his wish to plead guilty. After careful examination to make sure the plea was voluntary, the court accepted Crawford's guilty plea and imposed a life sentence.

Back in the penitentiary Crawford wrote counsel expressing his gratitude. Even as late as January 20, 1935, he wrote counsel complaining that "the

Being advised of all facts I desire

not to be called as a witness at this trial

George Crawford.

people in New York" were writing him up in the paper, and assuring counsel he knew who really saved his life.

Yet within six weeks he was writing to Miss Helen Boardman in a wholly contradictory tone.

**I**N one sense the Crawford case might be considered as unfinished business on the association's docket. It took the case in the honest belief, based on Miss Boardman's preliminary investigation and the Boston reports, that Crawford was innocent. It thought it had an innocent defendant and was in a position to wage a finish fight to end jury discrimination in Virginia. It discovered too late it did not have an innocent defendant; and the defendant being unwilling to go on, it was compelled to leave the jury issue with the exposure of the discrimination in the trial court.

But the association is not apologizing for the Crawford case. Four young Negro lawyers set a high standard of professional skill and competence in the handling of a murder trial. The presiding judge stated from the bench that with over thirty years' experience as a trial judge he had caught a new vision of how a murder trial should be conducted. Throughout the state the circuit judges were so impressed with the conduct of the case and the demonstration of the right of Negroes to jury service the same as white citizens, that voluntarily they began in many counties to add Negroes to the jury lists, including the trial judge, upon his return to his own home county. Since the main object of carrying the case to the United States supreme court would have been to force Virginia to place Negroes on her juries, the Crawford case was the means of convincing Virginia of the justice of granting Negroes jury service of her own free will.

The real difference between the association and its critics, once the facts of the Crawford case are known, will be seen to lie in a difference in point of view. The association is keenly conscious of its obligation to make an unrelenting fight for Negro rights, and pledges itself to continue that fight without fear or favor.

## Ethiopia

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Ethiopian Ambassador at Geneva could not find a single statesman among the big powers to support his country's appeal. Even Mr. Litvinov refused to raise his voice in protest out of fear that it might offend Laval, and antagonize Mussolini. Ethiopia was therefore left to fend for herself, and negotiate directly with Mussolini who is trying to

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terrorize and intimidate the Emperor by dispatching troops to the frontiers while negotiations are taking place in Addis Ababa. However, Hailie Selassie has publicly declared that such bullying methods will not intimidate him to sacrifice his country's rights.

**The Racial Aspect**

Apart from the economic motives, and the necessity for fascism to find a way out of the crisis, the racial aspect looms large. It is well known that the Ethiopians and the Japanese are the only two colored nations which have ever defeated white powers at arms. This has not been forgotten by the Italians, and for that matter, by the white race. Not without reason, the Rome correspondent of the *London Times*, in a dispatch writes, "Mussolini is not only defending the rights of Italy, but he is upholding the prestige of the white race in Africa," while Vernon Bartlett, the diplomatic editor of England's "great" liberal paper *News Chronicle* shouts that "Great Britain cannot afford to jeopardize her friendship with Italy simply in order to defend Ethiopia on the basis of abstract justice." The gentleman, however, lets the cat out the bag when he says, "if a small nation like Holland is threatened, then that is different. Ethiopia is not a civilized nation." What Mr. Bartlett means is that, Ethiopia is black, for surely this man, one of the foremost British journalists, knows that the Ethiopians were christians when his ancestors and those of his Dutch friends were running wild in the forests of the North countries. But the prize goes to a fascist paper, *Affari Esteri*, which has just published the following appeal: "It is time that the white nations of Europe should abandon their long suffering toleration towards the only African state which is still autonomous, and proceed to settle all questions connected with the Abyssinian problem. Abyssinia is a gander to the white race. The young Abys-

sinians are inspired with the idea of 'Africa for the Africans,' and are already combining with Japanese immigrants in the country to combat the white man's influences in Africa."

We can continue to quote many such statements, not only from the fascist press, which are to be expected, but from liberal and democratic papers, which under one form or other are trying to prove that blacks are unfit to rule themselves, and Italy will civilize them. Even the French press which is not as a rule hostile toward Negroes, has become rather chauvinistic since a young white colonial official was killed in the course of a tribal feud along the French Somaliland-Ethiopian frontier. We mention this fact only in order to show that the most liberal whites can adopt a hostile attitude towards colored peoples when it suits their purposes. About this let us have no illusions.

**Ethiopian-Japanese Friendship**

Much of Ethiopia's present difficulties can be traced to her friendly relations with Japan. Within recent years, the Emperor, realizing that his country is surrounded by colonies owned by England, France and Italy, all of whom would like to see Ethiopia backward, if not reduced to the status of a colony like the rest of Africa, has been trying to modernize his realm. This is no easy task, for apart from external intrigues, Haile Selassie has had to face formidable opposition from the great feudal Rasses (chiefs), as well as the dignitaries of the Coptic Church, who wield great influence. The Emperor has few reliable counsellors and every fool knows that no white nation is going to lend him capital, for a strong black state in Africa would be considered worse than bolshevism. It would inspire the blacks in other parts of the continent to do likewise, for the white man has spread the slander abroad that the Negro is biologically unfit to govern himself, which unfortunately,

many so-called black intellectuals seem to believe, to judge from the cynical delight they take in ridiculing every attempt made by black men to build a modern state.

In order to find the means of carrying through his program of reform, the Emperor has given certain preferential privileges to Japanese who not only need markets for their textiles and other commodities, but lands where they can cultivate raw cotton so as to become independent of the white powers, England and America, from which Japan now buys most of her cotton lint. This is what the white man does not like. A colored nation trading with another at their expense. This is intolerable! England and France dare not interfere, for they have enough problems of their own—England in the far East, and France in Europe, to antagonize Japan; so Mussolini has been assigned the task to intervene in Ethiopia and break up the ties between herself and Japan before it is too late. But Mussolini is playing with fire. Not only will the Ethiopians, despite all his air force, make him break his teeth if he attempts to bite, but Hitler is awaiting the first opportunity to march into Austria and attack his rear.

The danger of war in Africa is great. In this hour of danger, it is the duty of every black man and woman to render the maximum moral and material support to the Ethiopian people in their single-handed struggle against Italian fascism, and a not too friendly world.

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