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STERLING JOSEPH COLEMAN, JR., Central State University, Wilberforce, OH  
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## No Independence without Sovereignty! The Resistance of Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I to the British Occupation of Ethiopia (1941–1944)

STERLING JOSEPH COLEMAN, JR., Central State University, Wilberforce, OH

### Introduction

On 5 May 1941 Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I, recently restored to the throne of Ethiopia, delivered a stirring message of hope, triumph and future expectations from the steps of his imperial palace in Addis Abāba. Within his speech, the Emperor of Ethiopia declared,

It is my firm wish and purpose to merit the blessing with which God in His mercy has visited us, first, by sharing our gratitude to our Allies, the British ... secondly, to do work beneficial to the people and the country by establishing in our Ethiopia a Government which will protect the Faith and cause it to be respected, and by guaranteeing liberty of the people and Freedom of conscience.<sup>1</sup>

However, from 1941 to 1944, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I realized that the price of British aid was far more costly than mere gratitude and that the liberty and freedom of his people hard won from Italian rule would have to be re-won from British rule. But why was he able to succeed in removing British rule from Ethiopia by the end of 1944? What strategy and tactics did the Emperor of Ethiopia utilize to systematically remove British administrative, economic, territorial, infrastructural and informational control of Ethiopia? In an effort to answer these questions this study will argue that Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I regained *de facto* control over Ethiopia prior to his signing of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1944 by engaging in a pre-Cold War variant of flexible response which employed the tactics of obstructionism, opportunism, brinkmanship, leverage and propaganda to compel the British to surrender control of Ethiopia to its emperor.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I, *Selected Speeches of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie the First 1918 to 1967*, Addis Ababa: The Imperial Ethiopian Ministry of Information, 1967, p. 338.

<sup>2</sup> The Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1944 is an arbitrary title the author of this text assigned to this agreement. The proper title of this agreement is *Agreement between*

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By analysing *The Times* (London) and *New Times & Ethiopia News* (London) newspaper accounts; memoirs of American and British travellers, soldiers, and diplomats to Ethiopia; the autobiography of Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I; American, British and Ethiopian letters and correspondences; American, British and Ethiopian government documents and a wide variety of secondary sources this study will assess the history of the Emperor of Ethiopia's relationship with the British Empire; determine the extent of British military control over Ethiopia during the occupation of the empire from 1941 to 1944; and analyse Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I's overall strategy and tactics to remove British control over his empire.

Born under the name Täfäri Mäk<sup>w</sup>ännən on 23 July 1892, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I was the son of *Ras* Mäk<sup>w</sup>ännən Wäldä Mika'el Gudisa, the governor of the province of Harär in eastern Ethiopia.<sup>3</sup> The formative years of his life were spent under his father's tutelage and established a pace by which the future emperor would find himself steadily elevated from one position of power to another. For example, at the age of 13, the young Täfäri Mäk<sup>w</sup>ännən became *däggazmač*. In 1907, he was appointed by Emperor Mənilək II to the governorship of the province of Sidamo. In 1911, Täfäri Mäk<sup>w</sup>ännən was installed as governor of Harär and later that year married Mänän Asfaw of Ambassäl, the niece of the heir to the throne of Ethiopia, Iyasu V.<sup>4</sup> In the aftermath of the deposition of Iyasu V, *Däggazmač* Täfäri was elevated to the rank of *ras* by Empress Zäwditu and ensconced as heir apparent to the imperial throne in 1917. During his regency, *Ras* Täfäri in concert with – and sometimes against – the wishes of Empress Zäwditu and her supporters began to implement domestic and foreign policy reforms designed to modernize Ethiopia ranging from the abolition of slavery and the slave trade within the borders of the empire to entry into the League of

*His Majesty in Respect of the United Kingdom and His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia Addis Ababa, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1944*, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office 1945.

<sup>3</sup> The aforementioned titles and their definitions can be found in HAROLD GOLDEN MARCUS, *A History of Ethiopia*, Updated Edition, Berkeley: University of California Press 1994, pp. 280–283.

<sup>4</sup> Emperor Mənilək II ruled from 1889 to 1913 and Iyasu V ruled from 1911 to 1916. Some of the biographical data on Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I was derived from C.G.H. HILL, 'Ethiopian Personalities' 11 December 1942, in: PAUL PRESTON – MICHAEL PARTRIDGE (eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Part III: *From 1940 through 1945*, Series G: *Africa*, Vol. 2: *Africa, January 1942–March 1943*, Washington, D.C.: University Publications of America 1989, p. 171. It must be denoted that the veracity of British foreign policy reports has been called into question by some scholars of Ethiopian studies who view the data recorded within such reports as an exaggeration of actual events.

Nations in 1923.<sup>5</sup> Five years later, Empress Zäwditu crowned *Ras Täfäri* as *nəgus* of Ethiopia. In the aftermath of a brief rebellion by Empress Zäwditu's former husband *Ras Gugsä Wäle* against *Ras Täfäri* and the death of Empress Zäwditu herself on 2 April 1930, *Nəgus Täfäri* was crowned Emperor Ḥaylä Şəllase I at Addis Abäba's Cathedral of St George on 2 November 1930.<sup>6</sup> While Emperor Ḥaylä Şəllase I's rise to power was meteoric, his relationship with the British Empire can best be described as one of cautious ambivalence.

### Emperor Ḥaylä Şəllase I and the British Empire

The cautious ambivalence which defined the Emperor of Ethiopia's relationship with Great Britain was grounded within the history of Anglo-Ethiopian relations in the latter half of the nineteenth and early third of the twentieth centuries. Their relationship was a cautious one because Great Britain was one of three European empires which surrounded Ethiopia with colonies. The Italian Empire held Italian Eritrea along Ethiopia's northern border and Italian Somaliland in the south-east. The French Empire controlled French Somaliland in the north-east while the British Empire ruled British Somaliland in the east, Kenya in the south and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan in the west and north-west. In addition to his empire's tenuous geographical position, *Ras Täfäri*'s cautiousness in dealing with the British was influenced by the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 formed between his European colonial neighbours before a stroke physically incapacitated his predecessor Emperor Mənilək II in 1907. To protect their political and territorial interests in the Horn of Africa and avoid a conflict among themselves should the Ethiopian empire collapse upon the death of the ailing emperor; Great Britain, Italy and France agreed to guarantee the independence and political integrity of Ethiopia as long as the empire remained intact, yet divided the country among themselves into 'spheres of influence' should their worst concerns be realized.<sup>7</sup>

Added to Ethiopia's geographical position and the Tripartite Agreement of 1906, Emperor Ḥaylä Şəllase I's cautious dealings with the British was tempered by the Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1925 which clearly defined British

<sup>5</sup> RICHARD PANKHURST, *The Ethiopians*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 1998, pp. 210–211.

<sup>6</sup> MARCUS, *A History of Ethiopia*, 1994, pp. 132–133.

<sup>7</sup> The official title of 'The Tripartite Agreement of 1906' is *Agreement between Great Britain, France and Italy, respecting Abyssinia. Signed at London 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1906*. Sir EDWARD HERTSLET, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, II (102) London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. 1967, pp. 436–444.

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economic and territorial interests in the region. Within his autobiography, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I expressed his trepidations over this treaty,

Our Government has recently received identical notes written by both the British and Italian governments informing Us of their agreement for Britain to dam Lake Tana [which would give the British control over the headwaters of the Nile River] and for Italy to construct a railway traversing Ethiopia [a railway designed to link Italian Eritrea to Italian Somaliland]. We are greatly distressed about this agreement being concluded by the two governments among themselves alone, without informing Us, and then simply sending Us joint notifications.<sup>8</sup>

While *Ras Täfäri's* initial reaction was to bring the matter before the League of Nations and protest against its implementation in that venue, the future Emperor of Ethiopia was both alert and leery of a possible military invasion by the British. In light of the Anglo-Abyssinian War of 1867–1868 in which the British invaded Ethiopia, rescued several of their citizens, diplomats and other Europeans from Emperor Tewodros II; Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I believed that the British under a political pretext – the collapse of the Ethiopian government, a social pretext – the abolition of Ethiopian slavery, or an economic pretext – the control and/or ending of the Ethiopian arms trade would invade Ethiopia by itself or as part of a European military alliance designed to partition the Horn of African nation. Boake Carter, an American writer and traveller to the region observed during an audience with Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I,

Someday, he mused a decade ago when he first came into absolute power, some great powerful nation of Europe will use the prevalence of slavery in Ethiopia as an excuse to invade its territory rich in farmlands and minerals.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I's relationship with the British Empire was also founded upon a measure of ambivalence. In 1923 the British government sponsored Ethiopia's entry into the League of Nations yet did so on a pledge from *Ras Täfäri* that his empire would adhere to the arms control Convention of St. Germain of 1919 and pledge to end domestic slavery and the slave trade. Before his ascension to the throne of Ethiopia, *Ras Täfäri* was honoured with several decorations from the British.

<sup>8</sup> EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress 1892–1937: The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Selassie I*. London: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 81.

<sup>9</sup> BOAKE CARTER, *Black Shirt Black Skin*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1927, p. 52.

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He was given the G.C.M.G. [Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George] on his appointment as heir apparent in 1916, the G.C.B. [Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath] and the degree of LL.D. [Doctor of Laws] during a visit paid to England in 1924 and the chain of the Royal Victorian Order on the occasion of the Duke of Gloucester's mission to Abyssinia in November 1930.<sup>10</sup>

However, during his exile in Great Britain, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I believed he was personally dishonoured by his British ally when Great Britain and Italy concluded an agreement on 16 April 1938 that recognized the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 as a lawful conquest. In an interview with a reporter from the *Daily Mail*, the Emperor of Ethiopia expressed his disgust over the matter,

The reporter asked: "During your long ordeal, has the British government encouraged you in any way?" We answered that "as a member of the League of Nations, Great Britain has strengthened my belief in the League but, beyond this, has not given me any help."<sup>11</sup>

And while the British safely and successfully spirited Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I and his family from Ethiopia on 5 May 1936 and relocated them to England as the Italians marched towards Addis Abäba; until 11 May 1941 the British government refused to symbolically acknowledge Ethiopia as an ally by preventing the broadcasting of the Ethiopian national anthem on the nation's airwaves. This gesture was a wartime courtesy the British Broadcasting Corporation extended to France, Poland, Czechoslovakia and other nations victimized by Axis aggression.<sup>12</sup> By the time Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I victoriously re-entered Addis Abäba on 5 May 1941, his past relationship with the British weighed very heavily upon his current dealings with them.

He was an emperor among his people, but he was not yet ruler in Addis Ababa, occupied in April 1941 by the British, who had immediately established a military government for what they considered occupied enemy territory.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> HILL, "Ethiopian Personalities" 11 December 1942, in: PRESTON – PARTRIDGE (eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 1989, p. 431.

<sup>11</sup> EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress*, 1994, p. 60.

<sup>12</sup> RICHARD PANKHURST, "The Ethiopian National Anthem in 1940: A Chapter in Anglo-Ethiopian Wartime Relations" *Ethiopia Observer* 14 (3), 1971, p. 219.

<sup>13</sup> MARCUS, *The Politics of Empire*, 1994, p. 7.

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In an effort to remove the British from his empire, restore his nation's sovereignty and regain his full authority and power, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I devised an informal strategy of resistance designed to weaken and eventually eliminate British control over the administrative, territorial, infrastructural and informational affairs of Ethiopia.

#### Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I's Strategy of Resistance

The Emperor of Ethiopia's strategy of resistance was a pre-Cold War variant of the doctrine of flexible response. This doctrine was 'based upon a flexible and balanced range of appropriate responses ... To all levels of aggression or threats of aggression.'<sup>14</sup> The goal of Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I's strategy was to compel the British to quit their rule over Ethiopia without provoking them into a violent response and/or disproportionate use of force which could either destroy his resistance, cripple his attempts to regain *de facto* control over his empire or harden British resolve to maintain the occupation. A crucial aspect of the emperor's strategy was not to attack the British government directly but the instruments of power the British utilized to maintain control over his empire. For example, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I employed such tactics as obstructionism, opportunism, brinkmanship, leverage and propaganda to attack the instruments of British control – the British military, advisors, media and financial institutions – over the administrative, economic, infrastructural, informational and territorial life of Ethiopia. His probable rationale for utilizing such a strategy of resistance revolved around the fact that as much as he wanted an Ethiopia free of British rule, he still believed himself to be indebted to them for the sacrifices they made in his restoration to the throne. Also, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I may have been reluctant to engage his people in another war of insurrection against a European power in the immediate aftermath of the Second Italo-Ethiopian War. As displayed within another part of his victory speech, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I admonished his subjects,

Take care not to spoil the good name of Ethiopia by acts which are worthy of the enemy. We shall see that our enemies are dismissed and sent the way they came. As St. George who killed the dragon is the Patron Saint of our army as well as of our allies, let us unite with our allies in everlasting friendship and amity in order to be able to stand

<sup>14</sup> NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION, "Defense Planning Committee Final Communiqué," Brussels, 13–14 December 1967, in: *North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO Final Communiques 1, 1949–1974*, Brussels: NATO Information Services 1974, p. 197.

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against the godless and cruel dragon which has newly risen and which is oppressing mankind.<sup>15</sup>

But as he spoke of a Fascist dragon which was currently stalking the world, the Emperor of Ethiopia confronted a British lion which was currently stalking his home.

### **Obstructionism and Administrative Control**

Once the Ethiopian patriots and the British military defeated the Italian army in early 1941 and the empire became increasingly secure, the British military placed Ethiopia along with Italian Eritrea and Italian Somaliland under the control of the Occupied Enemy Territorial Administration (OETA) based in Nairobi, Kenya and led by General Sir Philip Mitchell, an ex-colonial governor.

The area came, as we shall see, under control of colonially minded British military officials, several of whom had lived and served in such British or British-controlled territories as Kenya, Uganda or the Sudan. Such officials were unfamiliar with the hopes and aspirations of an independent African state, and had remarkably little sympathy for them.<sup>16</sup>

One example of their lack of sympathy was the appointment of British military, economic and political advisors to the Ethiopian bureaucracy without the Emperor's consent in a genuine effort to administratively restore the country but also to strengthen the British government's hold over Emperor Ḥaylā Śállase I, the imperial court and the empire itself. In the British Parliament, the role of British advisors in Ethiopia was openly debated when Lord Noel-Buxton declared,

He [Emperor Ḥaylā Śállase I] therefore needs very real help, and it will not be enough if advisors are furnished and are no more than the advisors of the past ... We must ensure that the advisors are not ignored.<sup>17</sup>

In opposition to Lord Noel-Buxton's viewpoint, Viscount Cecil of Cherwood countered,

<sup>15</sup> EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I, *Selected Speeches*, 1967, pp. 338–339.

<sup>16</sup> RICHARD PANKHURST, "Post-World War II Ethiopia: British Military Policy and Action for the Dismantling and Acquisition of Italian Factories and Other Assets, 1941–1942", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 29 (1), 1996, pp. 40–41.

<sup>17</sup> HANSARD'S, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXI, 1942, col. 651.



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If we are going to try and contain the Government of Abyssinia, she will not be free and independent, and if we meant to do that we ought to have told the Emperor candidly that we could only engage in operations to restore him to the throne if he were prepared to submit to guidance and direction by us.<sup>18</sup>

In the realm of British public opinion, the appointment of British advisors to the Ethiopian court was equally contested in its vehemence. Sir George Maxwell, the British delegate to the Slavery Committee of the League of Nations, argued,

Either the advisor is of little use because his advice can be ignored, or, if his advice must be acted upon, he is in effect the master of the man whom he advises ... Let us face the facts at the outset, and let all parties concerned realize that a Government servant, exclusively in the employment of the Emperor, is a better officer than an advisor whose allegiance is divided.<sup>19</sup>

Margery Perham, author of *The Government of Ethiopia* responded,

To turn the advisers into employees certainly solves this problem, but it throws the responsibility back partly upon the Emperor, in the hope that he and his successors will be able to bear it, and partly upon our diplomatic representative.<sup>20</sup>

While this debate proceeded, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I quickly took steps to obstruct the actions of British advisors and neutralize their hold over his court. His first move occurred within a week of his return to the throne.

Since We had begun work on the New Ethiopia even before the conclusion of the war in Ethiopia, five days after We entered Addis Abeba [*sic*], on Gembot [*sic*] 2, 1933 [10 May, 1941], We established a cabinet composed of seven ministers.<sup>21</sup>

These handpicked remnants of the Ethiopian bureaucracy held sway over foreign affairs, education, justice, commerce, finance, public works, communications, health, security and agriculture. These ministers and their subordinates obstructed the British in their attempt to administratively run the country by mishandling official documents produced by their occupier and by ignoring recommendations submitted by British advisors. Within a

<sup>18</sup> HANSARD'S, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXI, 1942, col. 655.

<sup>19</sup> *The Times* (London), 2 December 1941.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 December 1941.

<sup>21</sup> EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress*, 1994, p. 167.

confidential note from Sir Robert G. Howe, the British Minister to Ethiopia, to Sir Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, the former reported,

Men such as Stafford and Mathew are young service specialists who know all the technical details of their jobs and are used to seeing a job put in hand rapidly and efficiently in orderly British colonies. When such men see their advice rendered nugatory by obstruction or inability [? Group omitted: ? of] Ethiopians and have to witness disgraceful conditions in administration for continuance of which they believe their services and the outside world will hold them responsible, they are unwilling to incur [group undecipherable: ? odium] of remaining under such conditions.<sup>22</sup>

To further strengthen his hold over his empire and weaken British control, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I 'quickly resurrected provincial and local governments, paying off debts incurred to insurgent leaders for their long struggle and buying continuing fidelity.'<sup>23</sup> This tactic worked so efficiently that the British were compelled to work within the imperial administration Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I established rather than duplicate, undermine or dissolve it by force. Once the British began to work within his bureaucracy, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I achieved *de facto* administrative control over his empire. Though the Emperor of Ethiopia signed the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention of 1942 which not only established British suzerainty over Ethiopia but also prevented him from appointing additional advisors to administrative and judicial positions; prior to the agreement, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I had nine months to appoint ministers, civil servants and bureaucrats from among his people and establish administrative chains of command that could easily frustrate or obstruct British advisors.<sup>24</sup> By the time Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I signed the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1944 which formally ended the British military occupation of Ethiopia and granted Ethiopian independence, his bureaucracy was firmly entrenched and managing the affairs of the empire.

<sup>22</sup> R.G. HOWE, "Mr. Howe to Mr. Eden" 19 June 1943, in: PRESTON – PARTRIDGE (eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 1989, p. 156.

<sup>23</sup> MARCUS, *A History of Ethiopia*, 1994, p. 152.

<sup>24</sup> The Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention of 1942 is an arbitrary title the author of this text assigned to this agreement. The proper title of this agreement can be found in "Appendix I: Agreement and Military Convention between The United Kingdom and Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, January 31, 1942", in: Lord RENNEL OF RODD, *British Military Administration of Occupied Territories in Africa*, London: His Majesty's Stationery Office 1948, p. 540.

### Opportunism and Territorial Control

From the moment Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I was restored to the imperial throne, he knew that to regain territorial control over his country the removal of the majority of British troops from Ethiopian soil was paramount. His victory speech on the palace steps highlighted his concern over this issue, 'It is my firm wish and purpose to merit the blessing with which God in His mercy has visited us. By the release of the Imperial [British] troops to fight the common enemy on other fronts, and by supplying them with troops whenever they may be needed.'<sup>25</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the ousting of the Italians from Ethiopia, the British occupied the Horn of African empire with elements of the First South African Division, the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> African Divisions comprised of British Kenyan, Nigerian and Ghanaian troops, and the Fourth and Fifth Indian Divisions concentrated throughout the population centres of Ethiopia. The emperor knew that after five years of occupation by the Italians and insurrection by the Ethiopian patriots his people were too exhausted to directly challenge the full military might of a well-trained, well-armed and well-led British Army. Contributing to this factor was the unknown number of Ethiopian patriots whose size as an effective fighting force could only be hinted at because they were scattered throughout the country. Meanwhile, the size of the army that accompanied Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I when he crossed the Sudanese-Ethiopian border on his march to Addis Abäba was woefully small. Led by Major Orde Charles Wingate 'who transformed the emperor's ragtag assortment of 1,670 Ethiopian exiles, European eccentrics and Sudanese misfits into a highly trained and disciplined unit called Gideon Force,'<sup>26</sup> the Emperor of Ethiopia only had this unit and the Ethiopian patriots to rely upon if he decided to militarily engage the British in a second Anglo-Abyssinian war. Possibly realizing the folly of such a strategy, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I relied upon Allied military setbacks in North Africa to prompt the British to re-deploy their forces to other theatres of war and largely quit the empire with the exception of a few select areas by the time of the first Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention signed on 31 January 1942.

From 5 May 1941 to 31 January 1942 the Second World War was turning against the Allies in North Africa. On 16 May 1941 General Erwin Rommel was ordered by Berlin to leave Tobruk, Tunisia in Italian hands and concentrate his *Afrika Korps* against the British along the Egyptian border. The

<sup>25</sup> EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I, *Selected Speeches*, 1967, p. 338.

<sup>26</sup> MARCUS, *A History of Ethiopia*, 1994, p. 151.

following month, on 4 June 1941 *Luftwaffe* bombers executed a night raid on the port of Alexandria in Egypt killing 100 civilians. Four months later, on 23 November 1941 the *Afrika Korps* defeated elements of the British 30<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Corps at the Battle of Sidi Rezegh in Libya. During the following year on 21 January 1942 Rommel launched a counter-offensive against the British Eighth Army, and eight days later on 30 January 1942 his *Afrika Korps* captured the city of Benghazi, Libya.<sup>27</sup> This victory would eventually lead to Rommel's fateful confrontation with General Bernard Montgomery at the Battle of El-Alamein in August 1942. The Allied military situation in North Africa proved so dire that British and Ethiopian calls for British troop re-deployments from Ethiopia to other battlefronts echoed throughout official and unofficial channels. In a progress report to the House of Commons, Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced, 'It is fortunate therefore, that the Italian collapse in Eritrea and Ethiopia, and in British and Italian Somaliland is liberating progressively very substantial forces and masses of transport to reinforce the Army of the Nile.'<sup>28</sup> In a message to the people of East Africa, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I admitted, 'I myself have decided to build up a considerable central army in order to dissolve the feudal system in Ethiopia. If the English-speaking world helps me to organize this force rapidly, not only will the forces of my neighbours be released for service elsewhere, but frontier relations will also benefit.'<sup>29</sup> And during debates within the House of Lords over the establishment of a British military mission to create and train the new army as part of the terms of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention of 1942, Lord Davies concluded,

The military clauses contemplate first of all a Military Mission. I am sure that is heartily welcomed by the Emperor, and by all the friends of Abyssinia, but there is also to be apparently a force of occupation which is to guard the railway and other parts of the country. I do not imagine that we can afford at the present time to employ a considerable force in policing a country which belongs to our friends and at the same time fight our battles against the enemy. After all we have limited man-power.<sup>30</sup>

With these concerns in mind the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention of 1942 permitted Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I to formally

<sup>27</sup> JAMES KILBURNE WORDSWORTH BINGHAM – WERNER HAUPT, *North African Campaign 1940–1943*, London: MacDonald & Company 1968, pp. 70–72, 79–80.

<sup>28</sup> *The Times* (London), 10 April 1941.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 May 1941.

<sup>30</sup> HANSARD'S, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXI, 1942, col. 671.

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regain *de facto* territorial control over most of Ethiopia. While Article II of the Military Convention authorized Great Britain to ‘provide, at their own cost, a Military Mission for the purpose of raising, organizing and training, the Ethiopian Army’<sup>31</sup> it also authorized that the Military Mission would be withdrawn if the Emperor no longer needed it or the British withdrew from the Reserved Areas they continued to occupy. These Reserved Areas were outlined in Article V to include the territory of the Ogaden which was remanded to the control of the British Military Administration of Somalia and Article IX which appointed the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, the British Forces in East Africa to ‘Continue to use and occupy without payment any immovable property formerly belonging to the Italian State which he still requires. Continue the British military operation, management and maintenance of the Franco-Ethiopian Railway.’<sup>32</sup> For Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I the aforementioned terms of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention may have been bittersweet. On the one hand, the North African campaign and the agreement reduced the size of the British occupation force and permitted him to establish a centralized indigenous army and police force under his direct command. On the other hand, the agreement legally bestowed upon the British the right to occupy the region of the Ogaden and secure the Franco-Ethiopian Railway for an additional period of two years. And with the removal of British troops from the majority of Ethiopian territory, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I was able to maintain regional control through the Ethiopian patriots and their leaders until his new police force and army could be properly trained. For example, *Ras* Abbäbä Arägay, the chief patriot leader of Šäwa, was appointed Governor of the provinces of Sidamo and Borana in October 1941. *Bitwäddäd* Mängäša Ğämbäre, leader of the patriots of Goğğam, was appointed Vice-Governor General and Chief of the Armies of that province in March 1942. And *Fitawrari* Bäqqälä Wäyya, chief patriot leader for the Mount Zuquala and Guarage regions, was appointed Governor of the provinces of Wälläga and Sayo in July 1942 to name three among several such appointees.<sup>33</sup>

While the Emperor of Ethiopia opportunistically utilized the Allied defeats and Nazi victories during the early years of the Second World War to repeatedly push for British troop re-deployments, he formally utilized the

<sup>31</sup> “Appendix I: Agreement and Military Convention between The United Kingdom and Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, January 31, 1942”, in: RODD, *British Military Administration*, 1948, p. 549.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 551.

<sup>33</sup> The biographical data on these Ethiopian patriot leaders was derived from HILL, “Ethiopian Personalities” 11 December 1942, in: PRESTON – PARTRIDGE (eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 1989, pp. 172–180.

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Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention of 1942 to establish *de facto* territorial control over most of his empire. His gratitude for this restoration of power and the British withdrawal on somewhat favourable terms was made manifest several months later. "Full reports have now reached London of a ceremony in Addis Ababa, when the Emperor took a friendly farewell of the British troops. He gave a luncheon to all of them including about 100 British officers and men, and 600 men of the King's African Rifles and other African troops."<sup>34</sup>

### **Brinksmanship and Infrastructural Control**

During the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, Fascist Italy improved and invested in its new colony's infrastructure. The Italians established a car repair works, an oxygen factory, a tire re-treading plant, a canvas factory, a brewery, a flour and biscuit factory, a series of cotton mills, a rope factory, an electricity plant, a boot and shoe factory, an offal factory, and a cigarette factory in Addis Abāba along with improvements to the road and railways of Ethiopia.<sup>35</sup> In an assessment of the Italian investment in Ethiopia, Lord Hailey confessed to the House of Lords,

We may think what we like of the Italian invasion and its methods, but the fact remains that they have left in the country capital assets which cannot be valued at less than £ 80,000,000 or £ 90,000,000 after making all deductions.<sup>36</sup>

A special correspondent for *The Times* confirmed these findings,

Among the most important of the other results of the Italian occupation may be accounted the modernization of the principal towns: the construction of houses, shops, offices, and workshops on the European pattern ... Some of them contain useful industrial plant. The ubiquitous motor repair shops are the most obvious example, but there are also sawmills, cement, brick, and tile works, and factories for the production of such things as boots and coarser textiles.<sup>37</sup>

However, before the liberation of Ethiopia was completed by the British Army and the Ethiopian patriots, the Occupied Enemy Territorial Administration (OETA) implemented plans to seize, dismantle and relocate the

<sup>34</sup> *The Times* (London), 1 September 1942.

<sup>35</sup> PANKHURST, "Post-World War II Ethiopia", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 29 (1), 1996, p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> HANSARD'S, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXI, 1942, col. 667.

<sup>37</sup> *The Times* (London), 19 September 1941.

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Italian-built plants, factories, workshops and mills and transport them to other colonies of the British Empire where they could be utilized to produce war material for the Allied cause. “Plans for dismantling of Italian industries developed fast. The Italian fascist surrender at Gondar, on 27 November 1941, marked the end of the British East African Campaign. Five days later the British military authorities made their first detailed proposals for the dismantling of Italian assets in Ethiopia.”<sup>38</sup> From 27 November 1941 until 28 February 1942, the British Army by Ethiopian estimates stripped the empire of 80 per cent of its Italian-created industrial infrastructure.<sup>39</sup> Up until the enactment of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention of 1942, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I lacked a legal and military recourse to halt these industrial asset seizures. The emperor had signed no treaty, convention or agreement with Great Britain which would have determined the disposition of such property. In addition to this legal problem, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I lacked a trained military or an organized police force to nationally challenge the OETA seizures. The Emperor of Ethiopia’s sole recourse was to express his disapproval to Sir Robert Howe over these property seizures. However, a legal recourse did emerge with the signing of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention of 1942. Within that document, Article XIII stated, ‘His Majesty the Emperor will at the request of the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, the British Forces in East Africa, requisition a hand over to the British Forces any private property outside the areas referred to in Article III which may be required by these forces, subject to the reasonable needs of Ethiopia.’<sup>40</sup> The key to this tenet was that OETA had to *request* from Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I for his permission to extract any future industrial assets before they could requisition them. On 28 February 1942 OETA failed to seek his permission when they attempted to seize the Ğimma sisal rope factory. In an armed confrontation between British African troops and Ethiopian patriots led by *Däğğazmač* Gäräsu Duki, the leader of Ğimma, five Ethiopian patriots and two British African soldiers were killed when his forces refused to permit the British to requisition the factory because they perceived that one of the trucks the British was using had been captured in battle by the Ethiopians during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War and rightly belonged to them.

<sup>38</sup> PANKHURST, ‘Post-World War II Ethiopia’, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 29 (1), 1996, p. 43.

<sup>39</sup> HOWE, “Mr. Howe to Mr. Eden” 17 June 1942, in: PRESTON – PARTRIDGE (eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 1989, p. 108.

<sup>40</sup> “Appendix I: Military Convention between His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom and The Emperor of Ethiopia”, in: RODD, *British Military Administration*, 1948, p. 553.

On this pretext and acknowledging that no formal request was lobbied by OETA, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I ordered *Däğğazmač* Gäräsu Duki's forces to prevent the convoy of trucks from moving or the British African troops from dismantling the factory. Sir Robert Howe noted, "In view, therefore, of the orders which had been given by the convoy commander, to escort the convoy intact to Addis Ababa, it seemed certain that bloodshed would occur when either the twenty lorries containing the Rope Factory plant were left behind or the Emperor's orders were countermanded. It was for this reason that I asked for an audience."<sup>41</sup> Then over a period of several tense days in which Sir Robert Howe and Sir Philip Mitchell attempted to bully the Emperor of Ethiopia into submission on this issue, he refused to yield and made his full displeasure over OETA's industrial requisitions known to his occupier. Sir Robert Howe recounted,

It is His Majesty's most frequent allegation that the British military authorities gave him assurances that they would keep him informed of all requisitions, and that they would pay him compensation for them. His Majesty states that none of these assurances were kept. On their side the military authorities said that none of these assurances were given, but that, with a few exceptions, most of the requisitions were decided by a joint Anglo-Ethiopian commission.<sup>42</sup>

Regardless of whether or not Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I was legally in the right to prevent the British from requisitioning the Ğimma sisal rope factory or whether OETA had gone through the proper channels to dismantle the facility, the end result of the emperor's brinkmanship with the British Empire over this matter was the cessation of all future requisitions of Italian industrial assets in Ethiopia. In a correspondence with Anthony Eden who complied with his following suggestion, a beleaguered Sir Robert Howe declared, "Accordingly, I recommend that when our present list of requirements has been substantially satisfied we shall make no further demands on the Ethiopian Government for the materiel which still remains to them, unless a very good case for its removal can be made."<sup>43</sup>

With this firm stance against the British military's policy of requisitioning his nation's industries, the Emperor of Ethiopia assumed *de facto* control over the infrastructure of his empire. While he may have acted too slowly in preventing the majority of British requisitions as a whole, Em-

<sup>41</sup> HOWE, "Mr. Howe to Mr. Eden" 6 March 1942, in: PRESTON – PARTRIDGE (eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 1989, p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 June 1942, p. 108.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 June 1942, p. 109.



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peror Ḥaylā Śəllase I eventually challenged OETA over its wilful neglect of his authority prior to and including the confrontation in Ġimma. The emperor was clearly resolved to engage in an open conflict to assert and maintain his imperial power. While OETA may have been willing to accept his challenge through a contest of arms, the British Foreign Office was reluctant to do the same and concluded OETA's requisitions. And while Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I did not anticipate the British Foreign Office restraining OETA, the Emperor of Ethiopia still engaged in a game of brinkmanship with the British military over his nation's infrastructure, compelled them to acquiesce over future requisitions, and regained *de facto* control over most of his empire's infrastructure.

### Leverage and Economic Control

Under the terms of Article IV of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention of 1942, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I conceded in

order to facilitate the absorption into the Ethiopian economy of the funds to be provided under paragraph (a) above, and to promote the early resumption of trade between Ethiopia and the surrounding territories, His Majesty the Emperor agrees that in all matters relating to currency in Ethiopia the Government of the United Kingdom shall be consulted and that arrangements concerning it shall be made only with the concurrence of that Government.<sup>44</sup>

In adherence with the terms of the agreement the emperor consulted the British government about stabilizing the value of Ethiopia's official currency, the Maria Theresa dollar. The Italians during their occupation introduced the Italian lira to Ethiopia while the British during their ouster of the Italians followed suit with the East African shilling. By the time Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I returned to the imperial throne in 1941, Ethiopia circulated three different currencies whose variable rates of exchange contributed to the crippling of the empire's economy.

The disadvantages of a currency based on the silver dollar led the Controller of Finance and Accounts, Nairobi, to put forward proposals for a new Ethiopian currency to be linked to sterling, wholly

<sup>44</sup> "Appendix I: Agreement and Military Convention between The United Kingdom and Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, January 31, 1942", in: RODD, *British Military Administration*, 1948, p. 541.

divorced from the silver dollar, and to be operated by a currency board in London.<sup>45</sup>

With some minor modifications in these proposals, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I approved this new currency in June 1942 but slowly realized that he may have increased his nation's economic dependency upon Great Britain. Within the Ethiopian government,

It was felt that both the location and the composition of the Currency Board implied a derogation of the Emperor's sovereignty, a dangerous lack of Ethiopian control and an excessive British control. Moreover, the Ethiopian Government felt that a currency backed solely by British securities or sterling cash was, in time of war, insufficiently stable, and they therefore suggested a 30 percent gold backing to be provided from Ethiopian gold resources.<sup>46</sup>

But this request was merely the herald for a more ambitious project which, if it proved successful, could have ensured Ethiopia's economic sovereignty. Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I submitted a counter offer of an Ethiopian national bank to the original British offer of a Currency Board which would have retained a British management board located in Addis Abäba as opposed to London.<sup>47</sup> When the British staunchly refused to entertain the creation of an Ethiopian national bank, the Emperor of Ethiopia created the bank by edict, capitalized it nominally with one million Maria Theresa dollars, yet rested its solvency upon,

Maria Theresa dollars, Italian lira, East African pounds, and Indian pounds. The fluctuating values and difficulties of exchange of all these currencies kept the emperor constantly under pressure to accept British terms and resort to a Currency Board. Pressed by Ethiopia's poor financial status, in May 1942 Haile Selassie decided to appeal to the United States for both financial and political aid.<sup>48</sup>

Long before Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I lodged his formal request for economic and political assistance from the United States the American government displayed more than a passing interest in British activities in Ethiopia during its post-liberation period. Herschel Johnson, the Minister-

<sup>45</sup> HOWE, "Annual Report, Ethiopia, 1942" 20 August 1943, in: PRESTON – PARTRIDGE (eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 1989, p. 385.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 385.

<sup>47</sup> JACQUELINE SWANSINGER, "A Three-Legged Race: Ethiopian Reconstruction, 1940–1944", *Journal of World History* 2 (2), Fall 1991, p. 184.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184–185.

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Counsellor of Embassy in the United Kingdom, in a letter to Wallace Murray, the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs at the United States Department of State acknowledged,

As reported in my dispatch No. 498 of today's date, the Foreign Office still considers the Emperor's restoration in the nature of an experiment. It desires to use the Emperor as an instrument of authority in a part of Ethiopia and also accordingly give his government a measure of recognition but is making clear to the Emperor that he must act only by and with British consent. The British Government is far from being prepared to admit the Emperor's government to the status of an ally or to state when it might again recognize Ethiopia as a fully independent state.<sup>49</sup>

Part of America's political interest in Ethiopia stemmed from Ethiopia's status as the first nation liberated from Axis rule and its post-war development could have served as a future test case for other liberated countries if the Allies proved victorious. The other part of America's political interest in the British occupation of Ethiopia stemmed from Great Britain's adherence to an agreement that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill signed on 14 August 1941 – the Atlantic Charter. This treaty bound the two nations to a post-war environment in which,

First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other; Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned; Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.<sup>50</sup>

While the British may have considered the Atlantic Charter to be little more than an instrument to help break American isolationism and bring the United States into the Second World War as an ally at a future date, the Americans utilized the agreement as a guidepost for interacting with liberated nations in the upcoming post-war world. When Emperor Ḥaylä

<sup>49</sup> H. JOHNSON, "The Minister-Counselor of Embassy in the United Kingdom (Johnson) to the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Murray)" 16 May 1941, in: *United States. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1941 (In Seven Volumes)*, Vol. III: *The British Commonwealth The Near East and Africa*, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office 1959, p. 350.

<sup>50</sup> WHITE HOUSE NEWS RELEASE, "The Atlantic Charter", in: HENRY STEELE COMMAGER (ed.), *Documents of American History*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 1949, p. 634.

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Šəllase I called upon the Americans for aid, the United States may have viewed his request through the idealistic lens of The Atlantic Charter.

As early as October 1942 Emperor Həylä Šəllase I wanted the Americans to establish a legation in Ethiopia to serve as a counterbalance to the British legation in Addis Abäba. E. Talbot Smith, the American Consul at Asmära reported to Secretary of State Cordell Hull,

Does the Emperor suggest that he would like an American Legation established at Addis Ababa to observe the operation of his Government under the treaty of January 31 1942? I feel secure, having interviewed him twice and having had several long conferences with his closest advisor, the Minister of Pen [Wäldä Giyorgis Wäldä Yoħannəs] that this is exactly what he means.<sup>51</sup>

After the American legation was established in Addis Abäba the following year, the Emperor of Ethiopia instructed his Vice Minister of Finance, Yälma Därässa, to seek a loan of \$ 40 million as credit to be made available in the United States in cash balance, to purchase consumer goods, and rebuild Ethiopia with an additional loan of \$ 10 million under the Lend-Lease Act of 1941 to stabilize the Maria Theresa dollar.<sup>52</sup> The American reaction to his requests was overwhelming. Not only did the United States lend-lease 5,430,000 ounces of silver for the purpose of coinage in Ethiopia and fulfil its request for credit but also dispatched a mission of agricultural, mining, engineering, economic and medical experts to help the Ethiopians rebuild their country in December 1943.<sup>53</sup>

The State Department's decision to lend-lease silver to Ethiopia enabled the emperor to return to his scheme of creating a national bank. Selassie used American silver to mint fresh Maria Theresa dollars. He decided to exchange the new dollars for old currency already in circulation, which could then be kept as reserves against a proposed paper issue. This was compatible to the Americans because they could recover the lend-lease silver once the new paper currency was accepted by the

<sup>51</sup> E. TALBOT SMITH, "The Consul at Asmara (Smith) to the Secretary of State" 13 October 1942, in: *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers (In Seven Volumes)*, Vol. IV: *The Near East and Africa*, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office 1963, p. 110.

<sup>52</sup> YILMA DERESSA, "The Ethiopian Vice Minister of Finance (Yilma Deressa) to the Secretary of State" 12 July 1943, in: *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1943, 1964*, p. 101.

<sup>53</sup> H. STETTINIUS, "The Acting Secretary of State to the Minister in Egypt (Kirk)" 23 October 1943, in: *IBID., idem.*, pp. 116–117.

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Ethiopian population. The scheme also suited Selassie because it allowed him to secure his new bank with silver reserves.<sup>54</sup>

Also the lend-lease of silver to Ethiopia permitted Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I to achieve *de facto* economic control over Ethiopia. By leveraging the Americans from their distant legation in Asmāra into the political heart of his struggle against the British in Addis Abāba, he set his new ally against the British on issues that extended far beyond the creation of the Ethiopian national bank and the stabilization of the Maria Theresa dollar. For example, in a letter from Secretary of State Cordell Hull to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt it was acknowledged that

The appeal of the Emperor, as expressed by Yilma Deressa [Yəlma Dārəssa], for the ‘diplomatic cooperation’ of this Government in connection with the drafting and negotiation of a new Anglo-Ethiopian treaty would seem to imply a desire on the part of Ethiopia that we use our good office with the British in gaining terms more satisfactory to the Ethiopians in any future treaty which might be signed.<sup>55</sup>

Though Ethiopia required agricultural, economic and infrastructural development and would receive such aid from the United States during and after the Second World War and one year after the British promised and delivered £ 1,500,000 during the first year of their occupation £ 1,000,000 during the second year of the agreement; £ 500,000 during the third year and £ 250,000 during the fourth year as part of the terms of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention of 1942, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I leveraged the United States of America against the British Empire in an international gambit to weaken Great Britain’s hold over the Ethiopian economy long enough so that he could stabilize the Maria Theresa dollar and establish a national bank whereby he could achieve *de facto* economic control over his empire by the end of 1943.<sup>56</sup>

### Propaganda and Informational Control

In the ensuing months after Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I regained his throne on 5 May 1941, the emperor confronted an active yet uncoordinated disinfor-

<sup>54</sup> SWANSINGER, “A Three-Legged Race”, *Journal of World History* 2 (2), Fall 1991, p. 191.

<sup>55</sup> CORDELL HULL, “The Secretary of State to President Roosevelt” 2 August 1943, in: *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1943*, 1964, p. 106.

<sup>56</sup> GREAT BRITAIN FOREIGN OFFICE, “Appendix I: Agreement and Military Convention Between The United Kingdom and Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, January 31, 1942”, in: RODD, *British Military Administration*, 1948, pp. 540–541.

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mation campaign designed to weaken and discredit his rule both within Ethiopia and abroad. As he recorded within his autobiography, “Among the British military officers in Ethiopia, there was a person called Brigadier [Maurice S.] Lush, who led a political group which had sinister intentions toward Our country. They spoke publicly that the purpose of their coming was to rule Ethiopia.”<sup>57</sup> In the House of Lords a version of this propaganda campaign ensued when Lord Noel-Buxton declared,

The Emperor is helpless without our protection. We are responsible for his restoration and consequently for the welfare, up to a point, of the population. We must remember that more than half the population of the country is not Abyssinian who have no voice whatever as to the Government and cannot express their wishes – to use the words of the Atlantic Charter.<sup>58</sup>

This campaign of disinformation even continued in diplomatic circles when it was revealed in a communiqué between Secretary of State Cordell Hull and the American Minister in Egypt, Kirk,

We have a reply to the effect that if Ethiopia should express a desire to adhere to the Declaration [of the United Nations], the British would issue no objection. However, the British appear to be averse to encouraging such initiative by Ethiopia because they feel it would lead to demands for material assistance now which might be difficult to furnish and probably to some territorial or other claims after the war as a reward for adherence. Furthermore, they feel it might lead to a desire by Ethiopia to play a more active role in the war, thus resulting in confusion and difficulties.<sup>59</sup>

But in Ethiopia proper, this campaign of disinformation started to have tragic consequences, “In Harer, the propaganda campaign conducted by a British political officer among the Gerri Kocher Somalis resulted in civil conflict. He was responsible for the bloodshed which occurred.”<sup>60</sup> Whether the Emperor of Ethiopia foresaw that such a campaign of disinformation would be directed against his rule by the very same government that helped restore him to power is uncertain. What is certain is that during his exile in England in the aftermath of the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, Emperor

<sup>57</sup> EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress*, 1994, p. 172.

<sup>58</sup> HANSARD'S, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXI, 1942, col. 649.

<sup>59</sup> HULL, “The Secretary of State to the Minister in Egypt (Kirk)” 5 June 1942, in: *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1942*, 1963, pp. 104–105.

<sup>60</sup> EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress*, 1994, p. 172.



quietly replied, 'I know!'"<sup>64</sup> But what began as an alliance of convenience between the Emperor of Ethiopia and a British anti-imperialist blossomed into a life-long friendship which reaped huge dividends for both parties during and after the Italian and British occupations.

In the person of Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I, Sylvia Pankhurst gained something which she did not possess—legitimacy. Though she earned a measure of respect and a reputation as a suffragette and communist, Sylvia Pankhurst had no legitimacy as an advocate and champion of Ethiopia. Prior to her encounter with Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I and the second Italian invasion of Ethiopia; Sylvia Pankhurst never studied about Africa or Ethiopia at a university, never attended a rally, conference or meeting that addressed African or Ethiopian concerns and never travelled to Africa let alone Ethiopia. Her interviews with Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I and other members of the imperial family such as his wife, Empress Mänän Asfaw of Ambassäl, and his daughter, Princess Tsehai, allowed Sylvia Pankhurst to eloquently address Ethiopia's concerns before a British and international public which could have dismissed her as being an anti-imperialist, anti-fascist malcontent who knew nothing about the cause she championed. Sylvia Pankhurst's association with Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I gave her enough legitimacy to prevent her from being completely dismissed by her opponents.

In the person of Sylvia Pankhurst, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I gained a tireless crusader who fearlessly held the Italians, the British and the world responsible for the Second Italo-Ethiopian War and the subsequent British occupation of Ethiopia. Though she continued to instigate rallies, meetings and protests against the Italian and later British occupation, her main venue for expressing her outrage appeared within the pages of her newspaper, *New Times & Ethiopia News (NT&EN)*. In May 1936 "and under the editorship of Sylvia Pankhurst, a weekly newspaper entitled *New Times & Ethiopia News* was established and published every Saturday. This newspaper helped put Us [Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I] loudly to voice Ethiopia's woes and to capture a worldwide audience."<sup>65</sup> Initially the goal of *NT&EN* was to defend the case of Ethiopian independence and attack Italian Fascist and Nazis aggression as well as defend the cause of other nations victimized by the Axis. Once the Ethiopian patriots and the British Army liberated the Horn of African nation, Sylvia Pankhurst redirected her attacks squarely against the British occupation in a bid for full Ethiopian independence and

<sup>64</sup> RICHARD PANKHURST, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Counsel for Ethiopia: A Biographical Essay on Ethiopian, Anti-Fascist and Anti-Colonialist History, 1934–1960*, Hollywood: Tsehai Publishers and Distributors, 2003, p. 48.

<sup>65</sup> EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress*, 1994, pp. 6–7.



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sovereignty. On nearly every issue Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I confronted during the occupation, the *New Times & Ethiopia News* expressed the opinions of not only its editor, Sylvia Pankhurst, but also the views of contributors such as Helen Napier of the Friends of Abyssinia League of Service; Professor Angelo Crespi, a teacher at the University of London; Dr. Ruth Schulze-Goevernitz, an Austrian professor; Eric Virgin, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I's former military advisor from Sweden and an American aviator, Count Hillaire du Berrier.<sup>66</sup> For example, when a cloud of doubt began to emerge over whether or not the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement and Military Convention of 1942 had been agreed upon by both the British and Ethiopian Empires. Sylvia Pankhurst made clear her stance on the matter,

We sincerely hope these strange confusions will be obliterated and compensated shortly by the news that a fully satisfactory Agreement has been signed accordingly – Complete Ethiopian independence, Restitution of all Ethiopian territory held before the Italian invasion, A loan to Ethiopia by Great Britain, the United States, or both, on fair terms, the Right of Ethiopia to recover the former Ethiopian territories held by Italy since the latter part of the nineteenth century, must be provided for, Ethiopia's need for access to the sea must be early met.<sup>67</sup>

On the issue of territorial control pertaining to the possible partition of Ethiopia through a British special plebiscite in the Ogaden, *NT&EN* declared, “We make no apology for dealing in strong and emphatic terms with the dangerous and persistent intrigue to dismember Ethiopia which is operating in the areas reserved to British military occupation ... The matter must be probed to its source, there must be no toleration of the duplicity and chicanery which has too often sullied the record of the European Great Powers in their relations with African peoples.”<sup>68</sup> When the administrative controversy over the appointment of British and Ethiopian advisers to Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I emerged, Sylvia Pankhurst railed,

The Emperor further emphasized his desire to be kept fully informed by Generals Platt and Cunningham and Major (now Lieutenant-Colonel) Wingate, as well as by the Chief and Deputy Chief Political Officers, of their plans and the progress of their work – and here the Emperor was explicit – of the appointments they desired to have

<sup>66</sup> PANKHURST, *Sylvia Pankhurst*, 2003, p. 23.

<sup>67</sup> *New Times & Ethiopia News* (London), 31 January 1942.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 March 1944.

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made by him. He was not prepared to surrender the right to make appointments, and in a tactful phrase he made that clear.<sup>69</sup>

When the controversy over the British removal of Ethiopia's infrastructure emerged, the *NT&EN* admitted, "There is now a tremendous dearth of equipment and trained personnel. The Italians destroyed what they could; the British have removed much of what remained ... The Emperor generously agreed that everything which could be of assistance to the war effort of the United Nations might be taken by the British Allies – whether Ethiopian raw or other material, or booty captured from the Italians. This agreement has been very freely taken advantage of."<sup>70</sup> On the issue of Ethiopia's control over its economic future, Sylvia Pankhurst offered,

Before we consider some actual details of the export trade, I must allude to the greatest single factor – apart from those due to the war and common to all countries – which has operated against this revival, namely, the rise in value of the Maria Theresa dollar from 1s.10 ½ d. in 1942 to 3s. to-day ... The rise of the M.T. dollar was primarily due to the withdrawal by our military authorities in Nairobi of the silver dollar reserve, which alone had enable Barclays Bank to maintain the then official dollar rate of 1s.10 ½ d. The withdrawal undermined confidence in the shilling because the Bank could no longer sell M.T. dollars against shillings.<sup>71</sup>

Finally over the issue of the British disinformation campaign in Ethiopia against Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I, *NT&EN* announced, "A meeting was held under the auspices of the [British] Ministry [of Information] at which Press and public were addressed by one speaker – Miss Margery Perham, whose propaganda to dismember Ethiopia is well known and who urged from the Ministry of Information platform that it would be difficult for Britain to restore Ethiopia to her full pre-invasion territories and independence."<sup>72</sup>

However, the extent of Sylvia Pankhurst's campaign through the *NT&EN* did not cease with her weekly publication alone but extended into the Houses of Parliament. Members of Parliament such as Eleanor Rathbone, Colonel Josiah Wedgwood and Peter Freeman among others asked Parliamentary questions and signed letters to the press on her behalf, while allies within the House of Lords such as Lord Davies and Lord Stamford financially contrib-

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 January 1942.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 September 1942.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 November 1944.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 May 1944.

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uted to the upkeep of *NT&EN*.<sup>73</sup> Through the questions she asked her Parliamentary contacts to pose on the floors of the House of Commons and the House of Lords and her pro-Ethiopia, anti-imperialist, anti-fascist rhetoric in *NT&EN*, Sylvia Pankhurst drew the ire of the British government when one of her allies in the House of Commons, Eleanor Rathbone [M.P. for Combined English Universities] asked,

‘Is the Minister aware that this paper, whatever its defects, has been a very useful watchdog in the interests of Ethiopia, and that if this particular article is unjustified, the best way to deal with it is to give a definite assurance that no such plebiscite has been arranged or is contemplated?’ Mr. [Brendan] Bracken, [Minister of Information] taciturnly replied, ‘I am afraid I cannot agree with the hon. Lady. This paper contains attacks on England which are worthy of Goebbels. It has insulted the British troops who have rescued Ethiopia, and in my opinion it is a poisonous rag.’<sup>74</sup>

In spite of the opposition the *NT&EN* and its editor confronted, it was still a popular newspaper for its time. Its circulation reached ten thousand copies weekly with editions distributed to members of both Houses of Parliament, foreign ambassadors in Britain, British representatives abroad, delegates to the League, the press, political parties, trade unions, freemason’s lodges, philanthropic bodies and churches.<sup>75</sup>

Above all Sylvia Pankhurst and *NT&EN* permitted Emperor Ḥaylä Śəllase I to regain informational control over his empire. While the Ethiopian emperor never controlled the media or the means by which information about his empire was distributed to the world, he did control with the aid of Sylvia Pankhurst, the debate over Ethiopia’s viability as an independent nation. It must also be noted that Emperor Ḥaylä Śəllase I did not encourage Sylvia Pankhurst to create *NT&EN*, the Emperor of Ethiopia did however *endorse* her newspaper by granting interviews featuring him and the imperial family and by encouraging others to participate as well. The constant focus of *NT&EN* upon the administrative, economic, territorial, infrastructural and informational problems in Ethiopia kept the African empire firmly fixed in the British and international consciousness for the duration of the Second World War. Where other newspapers such as *The Times*, *The Daily Mail*, or *The Manchester Guardian* often buried stories about Ethiopia deep within its pages if it reported on them at all during the British occupation, *NT&EN*

<sup>73</sup> PANKHURST, *Sylvia Pankhurst*, 2003, pp. 3–4.

<sup>74</sup> HANSARD’S, *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. 398, 1944, col. 220.

<sup>75</sup> PANKHURST, *Sylvia Pankhurst*, 2003, p. 24.

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kept Ethiopia's recovery under British rule on its front pages until the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1944 formally ended the British occupation.

Sylvia Pankhurst and *NT&EN* also helped Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I to reshape world opinion about Ethiopia as a viable, sovereign nation whose occupation by the British was a temporary measure rather than as a weak, disconsolate aging empire which collapsed into a military protectorate or crown colony of the British Empire. Through his alliance with the Manchester suffragette, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I sold his nation to the world as a sovereign member of the international community to the extent that both he and his ally were rewarded for their efforts. Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I won international recognition for his empire's sovereignty and independence by gaining a seat at the United Nations in 1942 and Sylvia Pankhurst was awarded the Queen of Sheba medal and the Patriots medal by the emperor as well as the privilege for both herself and her son, Richard Pankhurst, to immigrate to Ethiopia.<sup>76</sup>

#### **Why Was the Emperor's Strategy Successful?**

There are two reasons why Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I's strategy of resistance and the tactics he employed within that strategy succeeded. The first reason is that his opposition, the British Empire, was neither united nor coordinated in its occupation of Ethiopia. The main entities of the British government which had a direct bearing upon the occupation – the Foreign Office, the War Office, OETA and Parliament – harboured opposing views which muddled their administrative, economic, territorial, infrastructural and informational control over the Horn of African nation. For example,

The War Office favoured a virtual protectorate, saying that, given the chaotic condition of the country and the incapacity of the population, close British control would be advantageous to both parties. The Foreign Office, however felt that emphasis should be laid on independence, rather than control, and agreed that it would set a bad political precedent to deny independence to the first country to be freed from Axis rule.<sup>77</sup>

OETA desired to convert Ethiopia into a military protectorate outright while the Parliamentary debate over Ethiopia hovered between limited autonomy and full sovereignty.<sup>78</sup> This confusion over policy may have frus-

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>77</sup> WALLACE MURRAY, "Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Murray)", in: *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers 1942*, 1963, p. 100.

<sup>78</sup> HANSARD'S, *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXI, 1942, col. 646–680.

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trated Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I in his dealings with the British when he noted in his autobiography,

Before and after We returned to Ethiopia, We declared the nature of the relationship between Ethiopia and Britain. But the British military officers and troops in Ethiopia, pretending that they did not know the nature of the friendship and alliance openly debated in the British parliament, began to portray Us and Our people as though we resented British assistance.<sup>79</sup>

However, those moments of confusion by the British also provided the emperor the opportunity to clarify his position on an issue and take advantage of British indecision. A prime example of this scenario was the speed Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I demonstrated in establishing his cabinet and securing the loyalty of the surviving provincial nobility throughout Ethiopia. Before the British could assign administrative, economic, political and agricultural advisors to his court, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I ensconced his bureaucrats into their positions. This lack of policy uniformity among his occupiers permitted the Emperor of Ethiopia to counter many British thrusts contrary to his goals.

The second reason Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I's strategy of resistance succeeded was because he wanted to remove the tendrils of British control over Ethiopia without entirely removing the British presence.

Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I realized that it was neither in his best interest nor of his empire to immediately call for the complete removal of all British troops in Ethiopia upon regaining his throne. He knew he needed the British Military Mission to help maintain order over his empire and train a new police force and army which would allow him to centralize his rule once the British departed. But the emperor acknowledged that he quickly needed to regain full control of his country lest the British arrive at a consensus which advocated the governance of Ethiopia as a military protectorate or crown colony. Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I employed a strategy of resistance designed to covertly and overtly counter in equal measure any challenge to his authority or his nation's sovereignty. During the currency debate, when the British proposed the establishment of the Ethiopian Currency Board, Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I countered them with the Ethiopian National Bank when the former threatened his nation's economic sovereignty. When OETA launched a propaganda campaign throughout Ethiopia to turn elements of the populace against him; Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase I countered them by relying upon Sylvia Pankhurst's *NT&EN* to enlighten the British and

<sup>79</sup> EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress*, 1994, p. 170.

the world about OETA's handling of the occupation of Ethiopia. And when the British military attempted to forcefully requisition the Ğimma sisal rope factory, the emperor authorized the local authorities in Ğimma to resist them. Emperor H̄aylā Śəllase I did not overreact to each crisis which emerged or committed himself to a course of action which would have compelled the British to forcefully or violently crush his resistance to their rule. Instead, the Emperor of Ethiopia assessed the threat he confronted, covertly or overtly countered it with a firm yet measured response equal to the level of threat he faced and gradually wore down his opponent's instruments of control until he achieved *de facto* control over his empire. By the signing of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1944 which guaranteed the independence and sovereignty of the Ethiopian Empire, the British Empire was exhausted by both the Second World War and Emperor H̄aylā Śəllase I's strategy of resistance which compelled them to concede their rule over the Ethiopian Empire.

Emperor H̄aylā Śəllase I was a master political strategist. In 1941 with the aid of the nation to which he was exiled, the Emperor of Ethiopia regained his throne although administrative, economic, informational, infrastructural and territorial control of his empire belonged to his liberators. By 1944 Emperor H̄aylā Śəllase I regained not only control and mastery over most of his empire but also the international recognition of his country as a sovereign and independent nation within a new world body created by the Allies to replace The League of Nations. By employing a strategy of flexible response to British rule, Emperor H̄aylā Śəllase I secured his nation's future in the post-war world.

#### Summary

This article examines how Emperor H̄aylā Śəllase I succeeded in removing the British military occupation of Ethiopia during World War II with only a minimum of bloodshed. It outlines the various strategies and tactics the Emperor of Ethiopia employed to regain control over his empire. The text also asserts that he engaged in a pre-Cold War variant of the policy of flexible response which permitted him to resist British military rule without provoking a violent response from his occupier. The text highlights a handful of the numerous tactics and strategies which were employed by indigenous leaders and their allies not only in Africa but also throughout the developing world to successfully resist European colonial rule during and after World War II.