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## The plunder of Ethiopia

William Lloyd Imes

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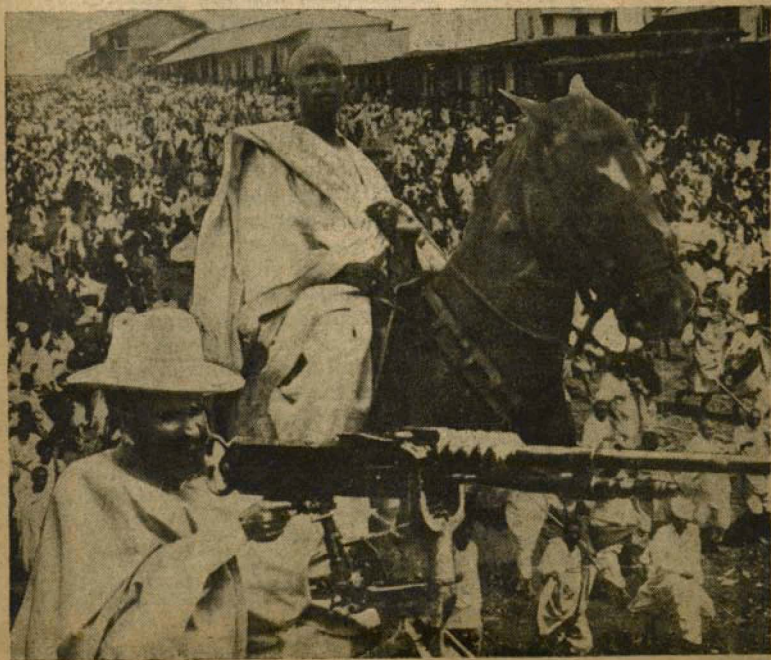
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# THE PLUNDER OF ETHIOPIA

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*Preface by* CAPTAIN GUISSeppe ALTIERI



## P R E F A C E

By CAPTAIN GUISEPPE ALTIERI

**A**MONG the many threats to world peace the most alarming is now the threat of Italian fascism of aggression against the only independent nation on the African continent—Ethiopia.

The Italian people have suffered eleven years of terrible oppression under the fascist dictatorship. But no amount of terror can break their spirit and force them to stop their opposition to fascism. They fought for their national independence, and the traditions of Garibaldi, Costa, Pisacanes, and thousands of others in Italy's struggles for independence and freedom, for social resurrection, are still treasured by the Italian people. We have an ineradicable love of liberty.

We, the political exiles, the millions of Italian workers sent wandering over the face of the world by fascism, the Italian members of trade unions and other organizations of labor, of the Italian Fraternal Associations, we are the pioneers and guardians of the noble traditions of freedom and justice which were incorporated in the Italian labor movement destroyed by Mussolini. We pledge our sympathy and support to the Ethiopians in their heroic resistance to fascist imperialism.

From our bitter experiences in the World War and the tragedy of Italy under fascism, and in wars against colonial peoples, we have learned that Italian workers and peasants have nothing to gain from a war against Ethiopia. We bind ourselves together with people of all other countries and races in a united front against war and fascism and for the defense of the independence of Ethiopia. Following in the footsteps of Joseph Garibaldi, who lent his aid wherever the independence of a people was threatened, we give our aid to American Negroes and all other Americans who extend their

### PHOTO ON COVER:

*Emperor Selassie learning to use a machine gun; the man on horseback is the leader of Ethiopian forces which defeated the Italians at Ualual. In the background are Ethiopians in Addis Ababa preparing to defend their country. . . .*

support to the struggles of Ethiopia against fascist aggression. We, Italian anti-fascists, more than anyone, desire the defeat of fascist imperialism.

## THE PLUNDER OF ETHIOPIA

By WILLIAM LLOYD IMES and LISTON M. OAK

- *What is the truth about Mussolini's plans for the conquest of Ethiopia?*
- *Will war against Ethiopia start next September?*
- *Will another World War result?*
- *Who are the real friends of the Ethiopian people?*
- *What can you and I do to help Ethiopia defend her independence?*

**A**LL AMERICANS who love peace, freedom, and justice, whatever their race, or religious and political views, must be horrified at the brazen, brutal and boastful manner in which Mussolini openly proceeds with plans to sacrifice the lives of hundreds of thousands of Italians and Ethiopians in order to add Ethiopia to the Italian Empire.

Seldom in the history of the world has the naked greed of the imperialistic plans of a nation been so clearly exposed before the world. Usually plans for conquest of foreign territory are concealed, camouflaged, hidden behind pacifist pretensions, covered with protestations of righteousness and humanitarianism. But it must be evident to everyone except a reactionary fascist war-monger, that Italy is completely in the wrong, and hasn't the slightest reasonable excuse or justification for waging a war against Ethiopia.

What Mussolini has said, with the tacit approval of the Vatican, about "bringing civilization to the backward, barbaric people of Abyssinia", and about abolishing slavery there, is too utterly ridiculous for belief by even the most credulous. This silly talk deceives no one; the hands of the fascist dictator are already dyed with the blood of thousands of Italian anti-fascists; he has reduced the Italian people to veritable serfdom; he has brought cultural and economic decline and decay to his own country. Yet this man, this

ruthless monster, has the audacity to talk of "civilizing" the Ethiopians!

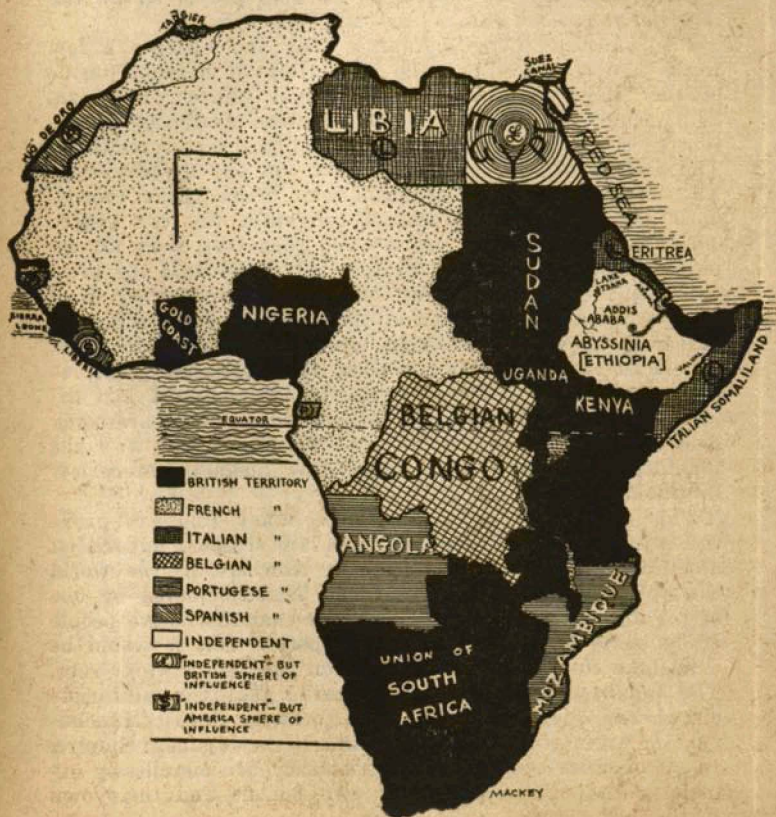
Italian fascist imperialism would enslave Ethiopia far more than ever; it would impose upon that country the same terrorism that Mussolini has imposed upon his own country; it would mean degradation, reaction, starvation, forced labor for the profit of Italian capitalists. Realizing this, it is no wonder that the Ethiopians have sworn that if necessary they will die in defense of their independence; that they will resist to the last man the invasion of their land rather than submit to enslavement under a fascist dictatorship, the most brutal, tyrannical form of government ever devised in the history of man!

Look at the map of Africa. It has been carved up and divided among various European nations. The lion's share went to England. France, also, seized a vast area. Italy, Belgium, Portugal and Spain all took possession of African colonies. Germany had colonies in Africa, but lost them by the terms of the treaty of Versailles which ended the World War, (the German Nazis today are seeking to get these colonies back again.) Liberia is supposed to be independent, but actually is dominated by American capitalists, just as Egypt is controlled by British capitalists. *The only remaining independent country in Africa is Ethiopia, otherwise known as Abyssinia.*

Mussolini says to the English: You have conquered many African countries and made them colonies; Nigeria, the Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Rhodesia, Zanzibar, are all parts of the British Empire. You have conquered India and numerous other countries. *We Italians are only following your example.* We were cheated in the division of colonies, and we demand the right to conquer Ethiopia and make it an Italian colony.

Luigi Pirandello, the Italian writer now visiting the United States, says to Americans: You conquered the American Indians and seized their land. You made colonies of Cuba, Hawaii, the Philippines, Haiti, the Virgin Islands. We have the same right to conquer Ethiopia as you had to conquer these countries. We are doing exactly the same thing as every other big nation has always done in the past.

Always and everywhere, imperialist powers use the same old slogan—to civilize backward countries. Under this pretext they have enslaved millions of colonial people, mostly people of the dark races. They claim to bring the benefits of a superior civilization to a more primitive agricultural country, to establish "law and order," to build schools, railroads, factories, and thus contribute to social progress.



But what is the truth? If you investigate conditions in India, in Liberia, in any of the hundreds of countries dominated by the big imperialist powers today, what do you find? A peaceful, happy, prosperous people enjoying these "benefits of civilization"? No, you do not. *Instead, you find stark poverty, intolerable living conditions, starvation wages, unemployment, forced labor—just exactly as you find these same conditions among the masses of working people within the imperialist nations themselves—but even worse.*

The American League Against War and Fascism a few weeks ago sent to Cuba the Rev. Herman Reissig, pastor of the Kings Highway Congregational Church, Brooklyn, as a member of a delegation of seventeen Americans representing twenty organizations, to investigate conditions there. The delegation was not permitted to do any investigating. The members of the delegation were immediately imprisoned and treated like common criminals, the two Negro delegates were brutally beaten, and then they were all deported back to the United States. Why? Because the present semi-fascist dictatorship of Cuba, controlled by Wall Street capitalists, was afraid that they would bring back the truth about the intolerable conditions existing in Cuba. American capitalists do not want the American people to know how the Cuban people are being oppressed and exploited. They do not want us to know that Cubans are being bled to death to enrich American capitalists who own the plantations, banks, factories and other business enterprises in Cuba.

This example could be multiplied many times to prove the injustice of American, British and French imperialist dictatorship over colonial peoples. Nowhere in the world can you find in a colony that has been conquered by one of the big powerful capitalist nations that the native people enjoy peace and freedom and prosperity. But it would be a mistake to blame this injustice on the entire white race. The Japanese militarists are no better than the militarists elsewhere. They have conquered Formosa, Korea, Manchuria, and are now adding North China to the Japanese Empire. In all of these conquered countries they are mercilessly exploiting the natives for their own benefit and their own

profit. The dark-skinned colonial peoples can find no aid and friendship from Japanese imperialists any more than they can expect help from the reactionaries in any country.

### The Myth of Racial Inferiority

The dark-skinned folk of Ethiopia claim no superiority to white people. Neither is there a shred of evidence that they are inferior. The Negro people of America who have gone through two and half centuries of the cruelest slavery, know the use made by the Southern ruling class of that cynical theory of racial inferiority. White scientists have declared that there is no proof that any race is inferior to any other. The differences are due to social and material conditions, to traditions, to education, to environment, to causes that can and should be controlled. *The theory of racial inferiority is merely a weapon in the hands of those who want to exploit the dark races of mankind.*

The fascists who talk of the backwardness of Ethiopia have no desire to aid social progress. As a matter of fact, under fascism Italy has gone backward toward barbarism. While Ethiopia has not yet *completely* abolished slavery, real progress has been made in that direction. When Ethiopia joined the League of Nations in 1923, the Emperor made slave trading punishable by death. However, the insincerity of the charge of slavery in Ethiopia is shown by the fact that nowhere can you find worse slavery than in Italian and English mills and factories, in their colonies, and in the southern United States. American Negroes who have suffered every possible form of persecution, disenfranchisement, color-segregation, lynching, peonage, and discrimination, are forced to laugh at the hypocrisy of those who use the remnants of slavery in Ethiopia as an apology for conquest by Italy.

Nor is the fact that Ethiopia still maintains an Emperor at the head of a caste of chieftains and has a semi-feudal form of government and economy any excuse for Italian aggression. Emperor Haile Selassie is relatively an enlightened and progressive ruler as compared with rulers of some



other countries. Certainly he is no such ruthless tyrant as Mussolini. We who believe in democracy and in the republican form of government wish to see Ethiopia make progress toward this ideal; and our interest lies not in defending the throne of the Ethiopian Emperor but in defending the independence of the Ethiopian people. We believe in the right of self-determination, in the right of the Ethiopians themselves to decide their own form of government without foreign interference. All the history of the world proves that domination by a conquering nation such as Italy will not bring progress to that unhappy land.

Ethiopia has vast undeveloped resources—oil, iron, gold and coal; its fertile soil could raise far greater crops of cotton, coffee, sugar-cane, rubber, grain, tobacco, potatoes, etc.; its water-power is unused. It needs railroads and modern machinery of all sorts in order to progress from a comparatively primitive agricultural community to an advanced industrial nation. But no European nation which has conquered land in Africa has yet made a modern industrial country of its colonies. The black people, the rightful owners of these lands, have not been helped. Italy would develop the resources of Ethiopia, but not for the welfare or progress of the natives. Italian fascists would rob Abyssinia of its riches and independence for the profit and benefit of Italian capitalists.

Nor would the Italian workers and peasants gain any benefit, any more than the American people are benefited by the exploitation of Cuba. It is the capitalists, those who support imperialist conquest and who get the spoils (the same bankers and manufacturers who made enormous profits from the last World War), who always reap whatever benefits there may be from imperialist conquest.

It seemed for a while that Great Britain would prevent Mussolini from carrying out his war plans. But it has become clear that England seeks only to advance or safeguard her own interests in Africa and Europe. Clarence Streit, correspondent of the New York Times in Geneva, has dug up a secret treaty made in 1891 between Britain, France and Italy:

"By these protocols Great Britain agreed that Italy should have as her sphere of influence the whole of Ethiopia, except small fractions to the west and south. . . . It placed within Italy's sphere of influence Lake Tsana and the headwaters of the Blue Nile.

"Out of these protocols grew two subsequent agreements regarding spheres of influence in Ethiopia; that of Britain, Italy and France in 1906, and that of Britain and Italy in 1925. And out of these arises the present Anglo-Italian situation. The existence of these protocols explains a curious weakness characterizing the British policy toward Mussolini and the bitter aggressiveness of his attitude toward London."

England's alibi is that this 1891 agreement was nullified when Ethiopia entered the League of Nations, but Italy does not see it that way. France has practically given up her "rights" under the treaty of 1906 which leaves Italy free to demand that Britain live up to her bargain of 1891. In return France hopes to secure Italy's cooperation in Austria to prevent Nazi Germany from seizing control, and Italian support for French imperialism generally against Germany. Thus the European situation approaches an alliance of France and Italy against Britain and Germany. But the imminent war against Ethiopia would strengthen Germany, and Hitler has given Mussolini assurances and encouragement and seeks to break up the Franco-Italian alliance. If the fascists win in France they would not only support Italy in her African adventure but also support Germany in a war against Soviet Russia. British reactionaries have aided Germany in rearmament and encourage Hitler's anti-Soviet war plans. So the Ethiopian question is linked up with the whole question of peace in Europe. Peace is indivisible.

Italy has sent about 250,000 armed men to Africa. If the Italian army is occupied with a long-drawn-out campaign on the plateaus and mountains of Ethiopia, Germany may seize the opportunity to get control of Austria, and a general European war would be the almost certain result. Sooner or later there is every probability that the United States would be drawn into that war for the same economic

reasons we were involved in the last war. Therefore every American is concerned; everyone opposed to war should make every possible effort to prevent Italy from attacking Ethiopia.

It is evident that England regretted her 1891 bargain with Italy and had it modified in 1906 and 1925, forcing concessions from Italy. Today the British want to repudiate the treaty altogether. When in 1923 the British talked of establishing a protectorate over "slave-ridden Ethiopia," France and Italy brought Ethiopia into the League of Nations to prevent the British from making Ethiopia a colony. In 1925 Britain agreed to support Italy's demands in Ethiopia in return for concessions at Lake Tsana. France was opposed. Then in January of this year France surrendered her "rights" in Ethiopia to Italy, and Mussolini began sending troops to Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, her two African colonies. England objected because she was afraid Italy would interfere with British ambitions at Lake Tsana and elsewhere. The English negotiated a deal with Emperor Selassie for a dam at Lake Tsana, the source of the Blue Nile upon which the cotton plantations of the Sudan are dependent. Britain is also afraid that war against Ethiopia might cause a revolt of Africans generally against European imperialism.

Beside the pledges under the treaties outlined above, the Allies promised Italy territorial expansion in East Africa as the price of Italy's entering the World War. Thus the conflict developed between Britain's obligations under these various treaties, and her colonial interests and the interests of Italy and France, the League of Nations Covenant, and the peace pacts signed by all the powers. It proves once again that treaties and peace pacts are torn up when they stand in the way of the realization of imperialist ambitions, and the capitalist greed for colonies, markets and sources of raw materials.

Whatever the outcome of the present secret negotiations, whether the three nations, Britain, France and Italy, reach a compromise agreement or not, it is certain that they are all willing to sacrifice Ethiopia. Any settlement between them will be at the expense of that country. In this welter

of despicable intrigue, blackmail and diplomatic maneuvering, the Ethiopian people cannot trust the diplomats, cannot expect help from Britain or any other imperialist power.

The masses of people throughout the world who are opposed to war and fascism are the only real and trustworthy friends of Ethiopia. The same people, of all races and all countries, who are opposed to Japanese aggression in China, who are fighting against Hitler's plans for a war against Soviet Russia, who are opposed to all war preparations and to fascism everywhere, are today the greatest force opposed to Mussolini's plans for the rape of Ethiopia.

If we can arouse the moral sentiment of the world against Italian fascism, if we can form a gigantic united front of all forces opposed to reaction and war, we can offer real help to Ethiopia in her fight for independence. Every argument is on our side. Every sincere Christian ought to give his sympathy and moral support to Ethiopia, the oldest Christian nation in the world. A group of churches have already called for "*a day of prayer and protest*" on August 18, to the end that all who love peace and brotherhood, of all creeds, may unite and direct their religious fervor against war and all the evils that flow from it. In addition to religious groups, we can count on moral support from many workers' organizations such as the trade unions and fraternal clubs. There is a strong movement throughout the country, initiated by the American League Against War and Fascism, to bring together in one great united front all individuals and organizations opposed to this threatened war, all who love peace, freedom and justice.

*All those Americans, white or black, who treasure their own liberty, all who do not want another war which might cost millions of lives, which might destroy civilization, should here and now unite in this great crusade for peace.*

### **Join the Fight Against War and Fascism**

The American League Against War and Fascism has carried on for two years a campaign against fascism in Italy and elsewhere. In cooperation with other organizations opposed to war and fascism we have brought together thous-

ands of Americans of all races and of diverse religious and political views, in protest meetings, demonstrations before Italian and German consulates, anti-war parades, lectures, etc. We are working for the defense of the independence of Ethiopia in cooperation with the Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia, sending joint delegations to the Italian consul in New York and the Italian Ambassador in Washington, and a combined declaration to the U.S. State Dept. We endorse the sending of Prof. Willis Huggins to Geneva where he will be aided by the World Committee Against War and Fascism. We are holding big meetings in Harlem and the Italian section of New York.

Such mass meetings and demonstrations bringing together Negroes and whites, uniting people of all races in the fight against war and fascism, are being organized throughout the country. Mussolini told the editor of a St. Louis newspaper that he was very much interested in the opinions of the American people. Let him hear our voices!

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