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CHRISTIAN CARNEVALE, Sapienza—Università di Roma

Dissertation Abstract

La guerra d'Etiopia: una crisi globale

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deserted and depopulated the region. Slave raiding in the region wrought suffering, damage, insecurities, chaos, deep psychic scars, and feelings of inferiority for the local inhabitants. It also encouraged a loss of control over corporate ethnic destinies and the cohesiveness of families and personal rights and freedoms. The thesis approaches these patterns from perspectives of oral memory and history. During its brief period, Italian colonialism introduced the region's political, administrative, and social reforms. Most importantly, it abolished slavery and the *gäbbar* system. Nevertheless, the official claim the colonial government made of having uprooted slavery and the actual number of emancipated slaves in the region appear patently in contradiction. After the Liberation and the reinstatement of imperial power, Emperor H̱aylä Śəllase, legally banned both institutions. As a result, formerly enslaved people became tenants of their former masters. However, the past hierarchies and exploitation of formerly enslaved people persisted in the post-liberation period. Eventually, the outbreak of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974 transformed the social and economic structure of the country. As a result, formerly enslaved people became tenants involved in the politics of the socialist government. They transformed their life, but their slave origin survived all dramatic changes and is still stubbornly rooted in the perception of Wälaytta society. The thesis ends with an exposition of Wälaytta as a post-slavery society in which taboos, e.g. in marriage choices or social and political participation based on slave descent, are still heavily ingrained in the local hierarchies and stratifications based on the social memory of their ancestors' status.

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The narration of the Italo-Ethiopian war as a global crisis has always been taken for granted in all works attempting to explain what was actually the most important international dispute, preceding the Second World War. To prove this required a distinctive approach to the problem, quite different to any mere description of the facts or political choices made by a particular country during the eighteen months from the Walwal incident to the fall of ʾAddis ʾAbabā. Such a crossroad in world history is only conveniently portrayed via a 'global' point of view to emphasize how and why the international scene changed so much to initiate the process that led to the apocalypse of a new world conflict.

Understanding deeply why the Italo-Ethiopian war unleashed a global crisis, a situation completely different from previous disputes as the Manchurian imbroglio, necessitates a daily account of what happened between December 1934 and July 1936, using printed documents and, most of all, unpublished material from

Italian, British, French, German, American and League of Nations sources. The dissertation is composed of ten chapters and is over one thousand one hundred pages long. Such length is needed to give a clear framework of space and time through which the major actors were forced to outline their decisions and actions.

The prodromes of the Fascist 'out of time' adventure are rooted in Liberal Italy's colonialism. The defeat of ʿAdwa gave Mənilək II the possibility to resume his campaigns that were to shape Ethiopia in its present form. Neighbouring powers had to face his conquests through border treaties but frontiers with Eritrea and Somalia in Danākil and Ogaden remained unsettled due to Rome's will to apply pressure on ʾAddis ʾAbabā. The Tripartite Treaty of 1906 formalized the status of Ethiopia as an 'object' of colonial designs by Italy, France and Great Britain and this did not change even following admission to the League of Nations in 1923.

A few years later Mussolini began to plan an invasion which would have been enabled just after the January 1935 agreement with Laval: the latter would have implicitly given him a free hand in Ethiopia to obtain his friendship in Europe against Germany but only if the dictator were to respect the international status quo. However, Mussolini needed a prestigious victory and did not understand how an adventure in East Africa could unleash a global crisis by providing the opportunity for concomitant unleashing of more dangerous revisionisms such as those of Germany and Japan. Before the outbreak of the war, every effort to limit Hitler's expansionism failed due to the Italian commitment in Abyssinia. As a result, the Nazi dictator improved his international position without lifting a finger and alongside rearmament (formalized through the law on mandatory conscription) Germany was now able to exploit the world crisis, becoming the country that could decide the fate of the continent.

British interests all around the globe could be defended only through maintaining the status quo and that was the significant reason Great Britain supported the League of Nations' efforts to avoid conflict in East Africa. Hāyla Śəllāsse believed in both London and Geneva and, without appropriate armaments to defend Ethiopia, hoped the international community would safeguard his country: for every member of the League of Nations, an organization which actually connected the world, the real issue was to avoid the acceptance of aggression or appeasement as means to resolve international disputes immediately.

For this very reason the United States became deeply involved in the crisis, even after the establishment of the Neutrality Act, because Roosevelt understood the destructive effect of Mussolini's adventure. This explains why the war was followed by sanctions and even the proposition of an oil embargo on Italy but also why the presentation of the Laval-Hoare plan was so devastating to world public opinion and the international scene. For their inherent weaknesses in the Mediter-

ranean and in Europe, Great Britain and France accepted a reward to the aggressor, to which Mussolini's friendship appeared the only solution. The dictator was always ready to negotiate because from the beginning of the war he wanted just to proclaim his victory at the smallest political price possible.

Faced, in January, with the practical impossibility of reaching this aim he turned to Germany for a better ally than the Western powers: although democracies had tried to discuss a new relationship with Hitler, he was the only one who could provide something concrete i.e., Austria as a satellite state. Moreover, this attempt to attain friendship provided the occasion Hitler required for the remilitarization of the Rhineland, which would never have taken place without the global crisis initiated by Italy, and from that moment on Germany was the power of reference in continental Europe.

The total war Badoglio conducted over the Abyssinian army was the other side of Mussolini's diplomatic failure, but Italy's subsequent conquest of Ethiopia was followed by a complete reshaping of the international scene. The Italian Empire challenged British imperial interests from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, the League of Nations began a process of self-dissolution and Europe saw the birth of the Axis. In that landscape France became even weaker and its allies in the east, above all the Soviet Union, came to be more distant to collaboration with democracies than ever. The United States was the only power which decided for a shift to a more international commitment, beginning the process by choosing to guide world democracies against totalitarianisms, especially after Japan exploited the destruction of the world order and resume its path of war in China. As a result, the Italo-Ethiopian dispute and the following war became a global crisis by deeply changing the international scene and every country was compelled to modify its policy to the point by which its very consequences inevitably led to the Second World War.