



Abyssinia: Ethiopian Protest

Ringed about by British, French and Italian dominated territories, the quadruple Empire of Abyssinia or Ethiopia, comprising the Kingdoms of Tigré, Amhara, Gojam and Shoa, survives as the one potent aboriginal state in all Africa.

There human slavery still flourishes. There the most trifling jubilation provides an excuse for tearing out the entrails of a living cow, that they may be gorged raw by old and young, washed down with brimming cups of mese (mead) or bousa (beer). A yardwide French-operated railway climbs from French Jibuti on the Gulf of Aden 500 miles inland to Addis Ababa, the capital of Abyssinia. From this glorified dung hill, seat of an Imperial House which claims descent from the biblical Queen of Sheba, a formal protest reached the Secretariat of the League of Nations last week.

Prince Regent Taffari of Abyssinia declared in the name of the retired Empress Zauditu that he has seldom met with foreigners who do not desire to possess themselves of Abyssinia and to destroy the independence of the Ethiopian Empire.

Specifically he protested to the League that Abyssinia, a League member-state since 1923, should be obliged to tolerate the existence of a series of Anglo-Italian notes, exchanged last December, published recently, establishing: 1) The recognition by Britain and Italy, respectively, of Italian* and British+ "spheres of influence" encroaching upon Abyssinia. 2) The determination of League-member-States Britain and Italy to exert united pressure upon their "Little League Sister," Abyssinia to herself recognize this curtailment of her territories.

Prince Regent Taffari drew with dignity a conclusion: Britain and Italy have violated a cardinal principle of the League: that all League states are on a footing of equality within the League. Prince Taffari asked of the League justice, redress....

Dutifully an underling of the League Secretariat filed one more protest of the weak against the omnipotent for future reference.

"Abyssinians." While Prince Taffari protested 10,000,000 Abyssinians continued an indolent existence upon 350,000 square miles of territory, mostly fertile, very largely held in feudal tenure by innumerable rases (princes), subservant to the Empress.

The term "Abyssinian," corrupted from the Arabic Habesh ("mixed," "mongrel") well describes this people who shade in different parts of the Empire from white through reddish-brown to ebony, and from Christianity to Mohammedanism.

To the curious traveler's eye, Abyssinia presents a rural scene, picturesquely set off by civic stench. Camels jog up to French Somaliland with gum and ostrich feathers which are bartered there for cheap Occidental jewelry and clothing or for rock salt, lumps of

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which pass current as money in the interior, as do cartridges.

The Empress and a few nobles enjoy the exotic luxury of corrugated iron roofs upon their "palaces." The Prince Regent has but to mutter a command and the groveling object of royal displeasure is led away to have his hands chopped off, his wrists dipped in boiling oil, his back flayed by a U. S. barbed wire lash. Everywhere the timeless usages of Ethiopia are interwoven stressfully with Occidental permeations. But, like potent and perfidious Albion, the Little Empire "muddles through."

During the war the dissolute youthful Emperor Lij Yaser committed the disastrous dual stupidities of embracing the Islamic faith and the Germano-Turkish cause. Vexed, a majority of the feudal chieftains of Abyssinia, stout Christians according to their somewhat pagan lights, supported a successful pro-Christian, pro-Ally revolution. Prince Tafari, an able statesman but by lineage a mere great nephew of the revered late Emperor Menelik, was prudently installed as Regent for the Empress Zauditu, a daughter of the Emperor Menelik, and proclaimed heir to the Throne by the revolutionary feudal lords.

*Ultimate purpose to connect the Italian colonies of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland by a trans-Abyssinian railway tapping much fertile country which might thus be brought under Italian dominance.

+Eventual design to construct certain dams and waterworks among the Abyssinian headwaters of the Nile with intent to foster cotton growing in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The British dams would inundate numerous shrines held sacred by certain Abyssinian religious cults.

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