MUSSOLINI'S ROMAN EMPIRE

BY G. T. GARRATT

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BY

G. T. GARRATT

WITH FIVE MAPS

Third Edition

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TO MY WIFE

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

MOST English people accept, almost as axioms, two ideas both of which are probably out of date. We have been taught that truth is great and will prevail. Our love of compromise makes us believe that truth lies somewhere between two extreme views. There is a natural prejudice against the writing of history by contemporaries whose feelings have been aroused by the events which they have seen. Unfortunately the comfortable conditions which led us to await the 'verdict of history' no longer exist. Up to 1914 men and women who wished to express views or publish facts irksome to those in authority might suffer from some persecution, but ultimately they could usually bring their evidence before a number of educated and independent people in Europe. We assumed, therefore, that time would bring a more balanced outlook. To-day this is no longer true.

Over the greater part of Europe the modern technique of mass suggestion, combined with the relentless use of force, has enabled totalitarian governments to ensure that no currency is given to anything but their own accounts of events, and their own reading of recent history. Even in democratic countries there are economic and other forces tending in the same direction. There is no certainty that truer history will be written after a score of years, no likelihood that valuable documents will be brought to light, no reason to believe that it will be easier to rescue the truth from the rising flood of propaganda and of history written to order.

This little book is put before the public without any apology for its appearance immediately after the events with which it deals. Some first-hand knowledge of conditions and events in Ethiopia and Spain have left me astounded by the distorted versions which are accepted by many of my countrymen, and will, presumably, be the basis upon which the future historian will have to work—unless perhaps the world will have accepted Mr. Henry Ford's dictum that 'history is bunk'. At any rate so far as it is the work of a partisan it is the fruit of experience rather than of preconceived ideas. It has been written in the hope of rousing the great mass of decent, kindly and freedom-loving Englishmen to some understanding of the series of tragedies for which they are partly responsible.

My special thanks are due to Mr. R. Cribb, who has made the sketch maps, and to my old friend Mr. Edward Thompson who was kind enough to read through the proofs.

G. T. G.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

APART from the correction of a few misprints the book remains as it was completed in the first week of January 1938. Its general conclusions seem to have been amply justified by subsequent events. Again we have seen Signor Mussolini emerging triumphant from a dangerous crisis, and once more he has been rescued by the same allies. By the middle of February his internal difficulties were considerable, abroad his Spanish and Abyssinian ventures were far from prosperous, and the German coercion of Austria marked a serious diplomatic set-back. A few days later he could claim to have deposed a British Foreign Secretary.

The resignations of Mr. Eden and Lord Cranborne have emphasised the ultimate predominance of our new internationalists, that queer class of wealthy Englishmen who are the friends of the Anglophobes in every country of the world. A friendly critic has accused me of writing a jeremiad, but Jeremiah was, alas, a true prophet.

G. T. G.

March 1938.

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

I HAVE added a short chapter to this edition. May I take this opportunity of thanking many correspondents, and especially Professor J. B. Trend who has suggested some corrections and variations in Spanish names.

March 25, 1938. G. T. G.

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TEMPTATION

THERE is nothing original in the idea that modern Italy should found an Empire as great and as powerful as that of which the decline and fall plunged Europe into the dark ages. It did not spring full-fledged from Signor Mussolini's active brain. The seed of Imperialism is latent amongst all European peoples, though the urge towards over-seas adventure is not equally strong. Ever since Cavour made Italy into a nation there have been politicians, like Crispi, and explorers, like the Duke of Abruzzi, who have dreamed of colonial expansion. But until the Great War Italy had not been fortunate in this respect. She was a late-comer in a field where three great Powers were already busily engaged, nor was there much tenacity and determination amongst the people of Southern Italy when the first tentative efforts were made. Crispi's government fell, while the remnants of the army defeated at Adowa were being hissed through the streets of Naples. Subsequent adventures, such as the conquest of Tripoli, were hardly likely to rouse great enthusiasm. Expensive and dangerous operations achieved little except great tracts of desert, the only value of which was strategic.

The immense importance to-day of this idea of a new Roman Empire is due to two factors, the development of totalitarian states, and Signor Mussolini's character

and capabilities. The new technique of dictatorship, involving the complete control of every form of self-expression, makes it easy to turn the will and energy of a people into any channel. It has not yet been proved whether it can turn into brave soldiers men who have little stomach for fighting. This is an unsolved question which will be considered later in this book. Dictators can undoubtedly make men work hard and endure discomforts. So far their rule partakes of a religious movement—*tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.* Il Duce, after ten years' rule, knew that he could get from his people the sweat if not the blood needed for building an Empire. Events at home drove him to take risks on the second point, and he soon discovered how effective a bargaining weapon was the threat of war in the Europe of the 'thirties.

From an orator as flamboyant as Signor Mussolini it would be easy to pick out statements to show that his imperial ambitions had developed long before 1930, but motives rather than states of mind are relevant. The lawyer's adage is sufficiently applicable. 'The devil alone knows the heart of man.' It will be enough to indicate some of the factors which undoubtedly encouraged Signor Mussolini to begin an aggressive foreign policy. Economically Italy was in a poor way. The lira had been fixed, in 1927, at an artificial height; even before the world slump her foreign trade was declining; the policy of large public works was beginning to lose its efficacy; the closing of America to emigrants kept the rising population pressing ever more heavily on the soil, and blocked the usual outlet for the more turbulent and adventurous amongst the working classes. Across the Mediterranean the Italian army had taken the best part of three years to reduce the rebellion in Cirenaica,

and accomplished little except more roads running through barren lands. Italy was growing dispirited.

Necessity makes psychologists of us all, and the Dictator saw that he had to do something drastic to remove that feeling of futility and inferiority which is apt to attack the Latin races when they are bored. The home situation called for a military adventure which would absorb the whole nation in its preparation and accomplishment. It must glorify fascism abroad, and also help to remove that suspicion of military incompetence which lurked in the hinterland of every Italian brain—vague unhappy memories of Adowa and Caporetto.

An important factor in the new orientation was the Concordat with the Vatican. The fear of alienating a small but powerful minority has deterred English politicians and the English press from any serious discussion of the agreement made by Signor Mussolini and the Pope in 1929, though it is impossible to understand much that has since happened without some knowledge of its terms. It was an overwhelming diplomatic victory for the dictator, won at the expense of the septuagenarian Pius XI.

Before his elevation Achille Ratti had shown a strong bias towards fascism. His experiences at Warsaw had made him a violent opponent of communism, and he was by upbringing a keen and loyal Italian. He naturally saw little objection to exposing Italian youth, and also the Italian clergy, to the full permeating influence of fascist teaching and propaganda. His admiration for the new Italian state led him to foresee no danger in accepting, as payment for long-standing and dubious debts, the sum of a thousand million lire in government bonds, with an undertaking not to dispose of those

bonds for a long period of years.[1] Contributions from other countries were beginning to decline, a process which became much more rapid after 1931. American Catholics had been showing an unamiable tendency to back their demands by references to the papal dependence upon their contributions.

At one stroke Pius XI settled a number of small outstanding disputes with his own beloved country, and made himself independent of the non-Italian world. His patriotism, his dislike of 'left-wing movements,' the absence at that time of any strong anti-fascist feeling abroad all combined to obscure the price he was paying, the price of basing his whole finances upon the stability of Signor Mussolini's fascist state. From time to time the Papacy was to play an important but not very consistent part in the events which followed Italy's bid for empire, while the Italian priesthood ranged themselves solidly and uncritically behind their Duce. It would be difficult for any impartial person not to trace some connection between the still operative clauses of the Concordat and the attitude of the Pope and Italian Cardinals towards the Abyssinian venture. To Signor Mussolini papal support meant that he could count upon the initial sympathy of a small but active minority in each of the democratic countries, an immense boon to a man who intended to use the threat rather than the force of arms.

In the preparatory years which followed the Lateran Treaty with the Pope, it was natural that Signor Mussolini should think primarily of colonial ventures, rather than of aggression within Europe. The Versailles Treaty

[1] For details see *Survey of International Affairs*, 1929, p. 466. Also W. Teeling, *The Pope in Politics*, p. 125. A further sum of about 700 million lire was paid in cash. A thousand million lire was equivalent to about £13,000,000.

had been a bitter disappointment to Italy, and a powerful factor in the rise of fascism, but she had obtained some extension of her northern frontier, she had been allotted Trieste and helped herself to Fiume. However much Il Duce might regret that the Dalmatian coast was given to Yugo-Slavia he could hardly envisage in 1930 obtaining any startling changes of frontier, and he has preferred to work by the gradual permeation of fascism into Albania. But outside Europe, Italy had a definite grievance, and he had been at pains to keep it before his people.

By the London Treaty of 26th April, 1915, Italy had been promised 'equitable' compensation in the event of France or Great Britain increasing their colonial territories in Africa at the expense of Germany. Like other War treaties, drawn up with a view to gaining allies, the drafting was vague, and bound to lead to trouble when the time came for dividing the lion's pelt.[1] By the Versailles Treaty, Great Britain and her Dominions took most of Germany's old Empire, France took Alsace-Lorraine and some smaller concessions outside Europe, Italy got no increase to her dull and sterile colonial possessions.

After much haggling, Italy obtained the cession of Jubaland from Great Britain in 1925, but from France she got nothing except some unimportant 'rectification' of frontier lines through uninhabited wastes. Prestige played an important part in keeping this question as a rankling sore, for it was closely bound up with Italy's

[1] Article 13. 'Dans le cas où la France et la Grande-Bretagne augmenterait leurs domaines coloniaux d'Afrique aux dépens de l'Allemagne . . . l'Italie pourrait réclamer quelques compensations équitables, notamment dans le règlement en sa faveur des questions concernant les frontières des colonies italiennes de l'Erythrée, de la Somalie et de la Lybie et des colonies voisines de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne.'

status as a world power. But behind it all was the still more fundamental question, which is at the basis of all our present troubles—'Did a new world begin after the Great War, and after the formation of the League of Nations, or is it just the same old world with some of the rules relaxed?' Signor Mussolini himself was later to argue *ad nauseam* that this particular point in history coincided with the end of England's colonial expansion and ambition. 'As soon as the British have sated themselves with colonial conquests, they impudently draw an arbitrary line across the middle of the page in the Recording Angel's book, and then proclaim: "What was right for us till yesterday is wrong for you to-day".'[1]

The colonial question obviously lent itself to propaganda inside Italy, and could be easily expanded to cover various internal economic troubles. There was the usual confused thinking about the value of tropical and semi-tropical colonies as outlets for surplus population, and the usual arguments, which were more germane, about Italy's difficulties in obtaining raw materials and the metals of which she had so great a need. Gradually other themes were added, some of which reflected the Duce's own personal dislikes. The two great Powers, which held so much land, and had meanly defrauded Italy, were themselves decadent. It was easy to produce evidence, during the troubled post-war years, that they were unable to use or even to keep order within their territories. It followed inevitably that Signor Mussolini began to take an interest in, and then to patronize and encourage the various Islamic and Pan-Arab movements in the French and British colonies along the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Algeria, and French Morocco all had their

[1] *Survey of International Affairs*, 1935, ii, 17.

nationalist and 'subversive' movements, while Italy could point proudly to Cirenaica, where, after three years' fighting, she had left a desert a desert, and could call it peace.

In 1930 the world situation was not suitable for violent and belligerent tactics on the part of Italy. England was in her least Imperialist mood, negotiating with Egypt, and engaged in a measure of self-government for India. In Europe she was whole-heartedly supporting the League, and, under Arthur Henderson's guidance, was taking disarmament seriously. In Germany democracy was functioning better than at any time since the war, and it seemed possible that Brüning might lead his people into a system of collective security based on general disarmament. Herr Hitler then had little more than a 'nuisance value,' and was not supported either by the army or by the older Conservatives.

France, under M. Tardieu, was less helpful than she was prepared to be later, when M. Herriot came to office. It has been a tragedy of the post-war years that England and France have tended to behave like the man and wife in the old-fashioned barometers—when one goes forward the other goes back. But taking Europe, and for that matter the world, as a whole there was a considerable movement towards a real recognition of international law, the revision of treaties, disarmament, and the gradual liquidation of the imperial rivalries which have been the continual menace of Europe for half a century.

Signor Mussolini can have gained little personal satisfaction from peaceful developments of this kind, but he was not in a position to disturb them. He was prepared to wait his time. Taking the lowest and most cynical view of politicians and their motives—perhaps the safest

long-term gamble in post-war Europe—he could foresee the collapse of this internationalist movement. He kept his weather-eye open for trouble in the Far East, where Japan pursued her way untouched by the idealism which was temporarily popular in the West. There were also the first murmurings of the great economic storm, which would drive all the nations to bolt and bar themselves into their own houses, and would bring governments into power with little inclination to negotiate or to cut down armament expenditure.

In the meantime Signor Mussolini could begin those delicate intrigues amongst the Mediterranean colonies, by which he could appear at once as the champion of Catholicism and also of Islam. The latter naturally predominated. The Dictator was pro-Arab in Palestine and in Morocco as against the Jews.[1] In Syria he had to support Islam as against Armenians, Druses and lesser breeds without the law. He could, however, be Catholic as against the Copts in Egypt and Ethiopia. It is significant that within two years of the Lateran Treaty the Ethiopian College was founded, and in 1935 was the only pontifical college in the Vatican city.[2] The Catholics were then an insignificant minority amongst the Christians in Abyssinia, but Signor Mussolini, still waiting for his opportunity, was determined to secure some religious support and sympathy for whatever aggressive scheme he might ultimately undertake.

By the spring of 1932 Signor Mussolini could be fairly certain that his patience would be rewarded. The economic storm, starting in America, had swept across the world. One country after another was giving up

[1] The author came across signs of Italian intrigues in Palestine during a tour of the country undertaken for the Zionist Organization in 1929.

[2] *Survey of International Affairs*, 1935, ii, 100.

the gold standard, an economic basis which, with all its failings, did seem to suggest an international basis for trade. It was a time of rising tariff walls, of 'business men's governments.' In England, which Signor Mussolini then watched most carefully of all, the Labour Government had been swept from office and Arthur Henderson was relegated to the futile chairmanship of a disarmament conference in which none of the leading Powers took any real interest. The general change was painfully clear when a new storm—military as well as economic—burst over the Far East.

Japan's aggression in Manchuria had an influence on Signor Mussolini and on the spread of Fascism which has not been appreciated in England. Coming at a time when the idea of collective security was beginning to get a real foothold in Europe it provided exactly the kind of issue which would destroy a very delicate and tender growth. Since then the very ground on which it was planted has been trampled and rendered sterile for at least a generation, but in 1932 the whole Manchurian affair was full of dangerous precedents, and of valuable evidence about the way democratic Powers would react to an aggressive policy.

First of all it showed that the League of Nations was feeble outside Europe. It would possibly have been better if the League had been originally less ambitious, and confined its membership to Europe and America, but the idea of a World Parliament had an irresistible fascination to Woodrow Wilson's academic mind. The French had never believed in it. They always considered the League as solely a factor in European politics, and from the first took little interest in a dispute so far away. To France the Geneva Protocol was a European instrument. Her interests in Indo-China urged her to keep

on good terms with the most powerful state in the East. For once she was ranged on the same side as Germany. Having lost her Chinese possessions after the war, Germany naturally tended to support Japan, which was showing the world how easy and legitimate was the carving of portions from the great pacifist Empire.

The Manchurian affair therefore taught Italy two important lessons—the impotence of the League in the face of open aggression, and the probability that France would connive at an attack upon a non-European League Power which was not of first-class strength. The attitude of England and the United States was more important. The latter took by far the most interest in the affair. It was a war at her back-door, and she still believed that somehow the world would help her to enforce the several treaties which Japan was violating with such cheerful carelessness—the Washington Nine-Power Treaty for the integrity of China, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, in which most Americans took a real pride, besides the Covenant of the League of Nations, and the Multilateral Pact of Paris. Events move so quickly now that we often forget how rapidly we have lost all belief in the value of treaties.

In 1932 the United States were prepared to interfere not only to protect her interests, but also in defence of treaties. Of course Japan put up some semblance of legal justification. In all these recent cases of aggression the lawyers and diplomats work busily behind the soldiers. Italy also learnt this lesson from Japan. Both in Abyssinia and Spain she attempted to make her invasion take the covering of a civil war. In the first case it was not a success, for the impossible Ras Gugsa failed her, but in Spain it worked admirably. This kind of intervention has the further advantage that no formal

declaration of war is needed, and we may take it that nearly all future wars will begin in the same way—intensive propaganda and bribery to build up some semblance of a party or of a minority in revolt, followed by a military expedition, or more probably by the sudden destruction of some large town. There are few countries in the world, the United States being perhaps the most important exception, in which some dissident movement could not be organized. Where there is no fascist movement, as in England or France, there is usually a racial minority with grievances.

This new technique of aggression was not well understood in the early 'thirties, certainly not by America. Mr. Stimson, in January, 1932, sent his identic note to China and Japan refusing to recognize any situation contrary not only to American rights, but also to the Pact of Paris. It was an invitation for direct combined action by the other Six Powers. The eyes of the world were now on Great Britain, the other great Power in the Far East. It was one of the decisive moments in the world's history. If England had joined America in insisting upon the sanctity of treaties we might well have had a decade of honourable peace, with the United States brought back once more to help in the settlement of European affairs. Instead the Foreign Office issued a *communiqué* in which no mention was made of treaties, but which referred only to the 'principle of equal opportunity, and the open door for the economic activities of all nations.' In other words we were not interested in anything but the safeguarding of our trading rights, which Japan had already guaranteed. *The Times*, of January 11th, 1932, published its apologia of the Foreign Office, which, we were assured, was not apprehensive lest 'the Japanese authorities would set up a virtually

independent administration in Manchuria which would favour Japanese interests to the detriment of the commerce of other nations.'[1]

On that dark January morning England told the world, and especially did she tell Signor Mussolini that, for a period at least, English policy would be guided by certain new and strange principles. *First.* The League of Nations offered no protection to its Members, unless they were exactly the right colour, physically and politically. The Chinese were too yellow, later the Ethiopians were to be too black, and later still the Spanish too red. *Second.* We were prepared to condone aggressive wars, and the invasion of territory so long as our commercial interests in that area were not affected. *Third.* We recognized that the only binding force of treaties was the power to enforce them.

What were the factors which drove England into a decision so disastrous? The first was the deadening of public interest in foreign affairs, and in internationalism which followed the slump of 1931 and the collapse of the second Labour administration. For some years, up to about 1935, when another General Election was in prospect, the great commercial interests and also the reactionary elements in public life felt themselves safer and freer from criticism than at any period since Gladstone broke up the Liberal Party over Irish Home Rule. They found in Sir John Simon their perfect exponent. Like many elderly converts from Liberalism he had developed a marked dislike for weak nations, and reacted as strongly as any 'die-hard' against the recent tendency to make concessions in India and Egypt.

The Cabinet, as always during the ensuing years, was divided on certain main principles, but the right wing

[1] See also *Survey of International Affairs*, 1932, 543.

was never so powerful as in those early days. Countless middle-aged men in comfortable positions felt with relief that all the disturbing internationalism and idealism of recent years would now end, and that we could return to those happy pre-war days when the masters of this world might "wallop their own niggers." Secretly there was also some pleasure at administering a snub to America which was felt to have landed us with a League of Nations and then run away from it. The United States had developed an unpleasant habit of lecturing the world about international morality while pointing out that we could all pay our debts to her if we only behaved ourselves better and gave up our armaments. Our Dominions, which later were to be far ahead of the Mother Country in condemnation of aggression, seem on this occasion to have accepted the isolationist policy. The later developments of the affair are little relevant to this book, though they confirmed the impression which Signor Mussolini received of a stage well set for his enterprise.

Events in Germany were equally encouraging to anyone who was hoping to fish in troubled waters. Stresemann had died in 1929. Brüning, 'the best Chancellor since Bismarck,' had survived the difficult year 1931, and might have maintained the Weimar constitution if he had obtained from France and England the concessions on disarmament which he had almost achieved in that year. But England had changed her Government, and though M. Herriot succeeded M. Tardieu in May of 1932 it was just too late. Brüning fell before the intrigues of those two jackals, Röhm, the homo-sexual, and General von Schleicher, one of the few characters in history with a perfectly apt name. They were both to be shot two years later, but not before they had paved

the way for Herr Hitler by persuading the senile and semi-idiotic Hindenburg to commit his final act of treachery.[1]

Signor Mussolini knew enough of Germany to see that a real devil's broth was likely to be brewed there, and that with the dismissal of Brüning went not only the Weimar Constitution, but also the last possibility of European re-construction along peaceful orderly lines. The success of stark 'realism' in Japan and Germany was an example, and also an incentive. Signor Mussolini was probably ready in 1930 to play the game of politics according to the rules accepted by the great Powers, but when some began to insist that diplomacy was a game of poker rather than whist he joined them gladly, and with the more willingness because it was almost immediately apparent that it was most admirably suited for totalitarian states.

In the game of diplomatic poker, especially as played during the last few years, there are no rules. Threats of starting a general war between the great Powers, and direct action against weaker countries have become the normal method of winning the stakes. In a rough-and-tumble contest of this kind the advantage lies very clearly with a country under autocratic rule. The element of bluff is all important, for military adventures even against the feeblest adversary must be comparatively expensive, and may involve some risk.

Dictators begin with the immense advantage of secrecy. Until a democratic country is actually involved in a war, every move it makes in diplomacy is discussed by politicians, canvassed in the press, and the extent of popular support is made evident. The machinery of

[1] For a full account of these transactions see J. W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Hindenburg*.

democracy makes an artificial division in most cases. Signor Mussolini had special advantages in dealing with his two main adversaries, France and Great Britain. In each there were strong pacific groups to which there could be no counterpart in Italy, nor in Germany once Herr Hitler had gained control. In each there were many people of Italian origin, or with Italian connections who were free to carry on what propaganda they liked, or to make the necessary contacts with the more mercenary type of publicists to do their work for them. Anyone who is interested in such matters can think immediately of some half-a-dozen men, Italian or half Italian, who have been doing this work systematically, and in some cases professionally, for several years. There are many advantages in a free press, but it has its dangers. A newspaper in France or England is a commercial venture. It can be bribed, directly, as were many French papers in 1935, or indirectly. It can fall under the control of foreigners, or of men whose financial interests are international.

These initial advantages were, of course, entirely one-sided. An Englishman or an anglophile Italian, living in Italy, cannot express political views, much less obtain any publicity for them. No protestant clergy in Italy balance the great influence of the Catholic hierarchy in England. No keen enthusiasts in Rome for the League of Nations could offset the 'Colonel Blimps' who would welcome the rise of any continental leader, however hostile to England, who was also an enemy of the post-war internationalism and of new economic ideas. In England our 'drawing-room fascists' are active, noisy, and influential. The 'drawing-room communists', who might be their counterparts in Italy and Germany, are in prison or in exile.

Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini have both been at pains to organize their nationals in democratic countries so that they can be useful and well-placed pawns in any game that may be afoot. It will be seen later in the book how immensely important was this factor in the Spanish intrigue. When it is contended that democratic and totalitarian states can live easily and amicably together these diplomatic advantages enjoyed by the latter must not be forgotten. Ultimately they will tend to the setting up of undemocratic control in the democratic countries. It would seem as if a kind of political Gresham's Law must hold, and bad governments gradually but inevitably displace good ones.

In 1932 Signor Mussolini can only have guessed at the strength of the diplomatic weapons which he held. Ambition as well as technique were to grow with his easy success. Both could develop rapidly. The first nebulous idea of a great Mediterranean empire did not have to infiltrate slowly through countless unreceptive minds, but only to materialize in a single highly sensitive brain. The new methods of diplomacy open to totalitarian states did not have to be taught to numbers of semi-independent officials trained in different methods. The early successes of autocracy have always surprised the world. The Irish were not the first, nor will they be the last to feel

> ashamed
> To see themselves in one year tamed:
> So much one man can do
> That doth both act and know.

Early in 1932 General De Bono was sent by the Duce on a confidential mission to Eritrea.

I left for the Colony in March of that year, and I remained long enough to obtain a definite idea of its needs, which were many indeed. The military governors and commandants were doing their utmost to improve matters, and wonderful progress was being made, considering the extremely restricted financial possibilities. On my return I gave the Duce a succinct account of the state of affairs; an unvarnished account, but optimistic in spirit.[1]

This event passed completely unnoticed in the press of any country.

[1] De Bono, *Anno XIII*, 3.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST QUARRY

As conditions in Europe grew more propitious for a colonial venture, Signor Mussolini had to decide finally upon his objective. Ethiopia was the obvious choice. It was the only considerable area in Africa which still maintained its independence. There is some evidence that he considered the Portuguese colonies in South Africa as a possible alternative, but gave up the idea because it would be likely to cause friction with England. Probably at this time Signor Mussolini honestly believed that Ethiopia's independence, and her membership of the League of Nations, were matters unlikely to cause serious difficulties. There were other independent countries in the Near and Middle East, but none of them were attractive to the Empire builder. Saudi Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan all suggested barren lands and pugnacious men. They were also Moslem, and the Duce did not wish to alienate the Islamic world. Ethiopia had the advantage of being heretically Christian, it had a reputation as a fertile land, undeveloped and full of minerals, and its people had not the same recent experience of war nor the same skill in arms as races like the Afghans.

We shall never know whether Signor Mussolini himself believed in the fabled riches of Ethiopia. He may have trusted in the reports of the many Italian consuls, who were scattered about the country, without having anything to do except spy out the land and keep in touch with local dissident chiefs. Such expatriated

officials would naturally tend to encourage the idea of an invasion, and they, presumably, were responsible for those remarkable maps which were issued to the troops, and showed where everything—from pine-apples to platinum—could be obtained in this new Eldorado.

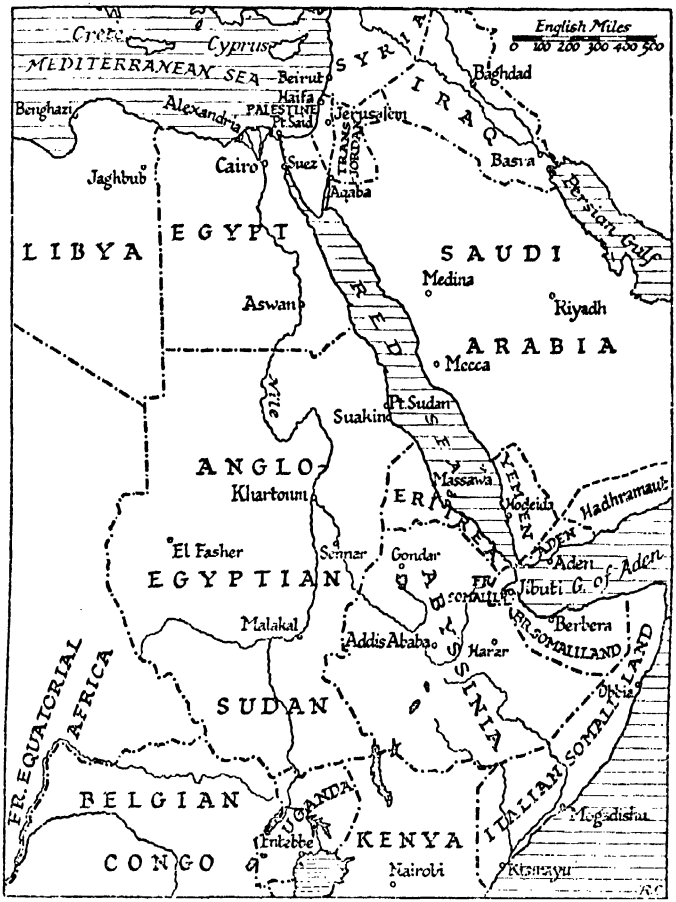
Much of Ethiopia is rocky desert, the low-lying parts of which are as uninviting as any parts of the globe. There are, however, large tracts of fertile table-lands, at a height of over 6,000 feet, where Europeans can live fairly comfortably. Parts of the heavily-wooded west and south have a kind of lush tropical richness. Coffee grows like a weed, and perhaps originally came from this area. Some millets and cotton could be cultivated more extensively, but there seems little agriculturally which would be worth exporting the five hundred miles and more to a Red Sea port, or by steamer down the Nile. Coffee at present is a drug on the market in more senses than one. The existence of minerals, worth working economically, has been the subject of innumerable discussions. Much of the country has been prospected without any very definite results except for the small platinum workings of the Prasso concession, in Western Abyssinia. Mountainous countries, like the Riff, are usually reputed to be full of minerals until they come under European control. If Ethiopia had contained any great possibilities for successful mining, neither the Emperor, nor his advisers, Mr. Colson and Mr. Hall, would have discouraged their development.

It is probable that Signor Mussolini hoped that the land would allow the settlement, on a subsistence basis, of a certain number of southern Italians, who are prepared to live at a standard far below most Europeans. He may have believed that it would produce some oil and a few precious metals. At any rate it had possibilities,

which was more than could be said for the rest of his African possessions. Apart from soldiers, the total Italian population of Libya, Eritrea, Italian Somaliland, in 1931 did not exceed 36,000, and the exports from these areas in 1934 amounted to under 150,000,000 lira (£2 million). The imports, consisting very largely of war material, were 550 million lira (£7 million).

The strategic importance of Ethiopia is apparent from the map. Without Ethiopia the two provinces of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland are isolated and valueless, the former barren and mountainous, the latter a hot and mostly desert area which cannot even be irrigated without control of the Shebelli river. Libya remains a vast formless expanse of territory. The empire was flat, stale, and unprofitable. The Abyssinian highlands knit the whole of the Empire together, besides providing a comparatively fertile core. Ethiopia could become a kind of fortress in which the Duce could place a garrison of Italian peasant-soldiers, and breed up a great black army from the courageous but lazy population. Even if the Sudan still separated the eastern portion from Libya, yet how easy it would be to squeeze the weak line of British rule along the Nile.

Ethiopia was the first stage in his Empire-building. There is every indication that Signor Mussolini did not expect any active opposition from England in its accomplishment. The weak point about his scheme was that, unlike the old Roman Empire, it would have to be entirely over-seas, and that he would be dependent on sea and air communications. After Ethiopia the next adventure would be, logically and inevitably, an attempt to gain command of the Mediterranean, and already he was beginning to think and talk in terms of the old Roman ideal—*mare nostrum*. Behind the Ethiopian



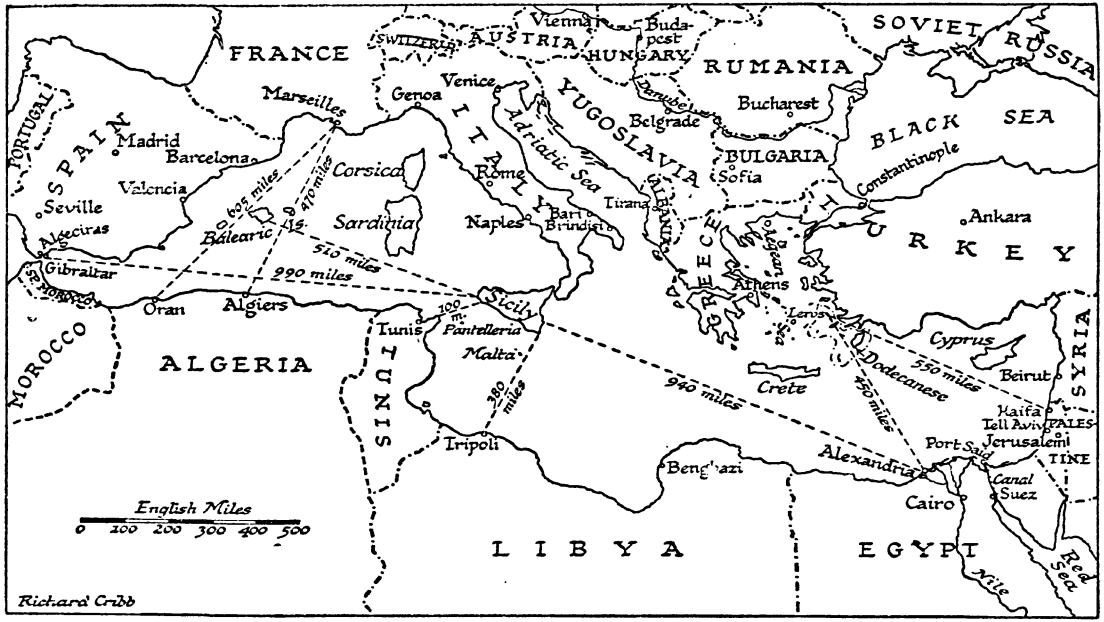
North-East Africa, 1934

venture lay an ultimate diplomatic struggle with England and France. The first country he believed to be decadent, hopelessly self-centred and determined not to fight. With the latter he thought he could probably come to terms.

The advantages and disadvantages of Italy's position in the Mediterranean are sufficiently clear. Southern Italy and Sicily are admirably placed for controlling 'through traffic.' Cape Bon, on the Tunisian coast, is a bare hundred miles from Marsala, Malta is about sixty miles and Tripoli under four hundred from Cape Passero. Air-craft, submarines, and the racing motor-boat enable the owner of Sicily to prevent any ships passing through the Mediterranean from east to west.

The route north and south between Marseilles and Algiers lies four hundred miles to the west of Sicily. The ownership of the Balearic Islands is necessary to put pressure upon the French in the same way as the English can be 'squeezed' on their imperial route to the East. Sicily and Majorca, between them, can make the Mediterranean useless to the two great democratic Powers of Western Europe. Even under the most adverse conditions the Mediterranean is a happy hunting ground for the submarine. During the European war, Italy was an ally, and the central Powers had very limited access to the Mediterranean. Yet our shipping losses in this sea were forty per cent of the total.

Signor Mussolini's ambition has always turned on the possibility of making the Mediterranean into an Italian sea, but his policy has also aimed at preventing it being turned into an Italian lake. The weakness of his position is the smallness of the two outlets, east and west—to the east an artificial canal, easily blocked, with banks exposed to attack from Palestine and



Sketch-map of the Mediterranean, showing distances between strategic centres

Egypt; to the west a narrow strait, some fourteen miles across, dominated by Gibraltar and Ceuta, with Oran about 150 miles to the east.

Italian imperial policy can be easily understood in terms of their strength and weakness in the Mediterranean. Their ability to prevent the passage of ships has been developed by the intensive building of aircraft, submarines, and speed-boats. At first these were intended for controlling the sea around Sicily. Later their range has been extended by obtaining control of Majorca. Italy's weakness was to be counter-balanced by an empire in North-East Africa which would enable pressure to be brought on Egypt, thus neutralizing the value of Alexandria; by intrigues in Palestine and Syria which would weaken the English and French hold on the eastern Mediterranean; and by Spanish intrigues which would enable Italy to control Andalusia and North Morocco, and might make Gibraltar untenable. It was an ambitious programme upon which Signor Mussolini began in 1934. The extent to which he has succeeded and the means which he has employed will form the main subject of this book.

After these strategic considerations certain historical reasons may have weighed the most in influencing Signor Mussolini's policy. A new terror has recently been added to international affairs. Our ancestors very wisely held that you cannot draw an indictment against a nation. Nowadays we are quite willing to submit a nation to psycho-analysis. Our publicists and politicians diagnose the neurosis of a race of fifty million people, and decide upon the treatment on evidence that would be insufficient in the case of an anaemic typist, emerging from an unrequited passion for the cashier. There is no need to discuss whether Italy had an inferiority complex, but

it is true that Adowa was an unhappy memory which the war and the ignoring of Italy at Versailles had only helped to make more bitter. Abyssinia was therefore far from being a blessed word, and the normal reaction to its mention would probably have been an expletive. It did not therefore need any great knowledge of psychology for Signor Mussolini to know that Addis Ababa would be a more popular objective than, say, Lourenço Marques.

In 1884, when England invited Italy to occupy Massawa, Ethiopia was two kingdoms. Tigre was under King John, and Shoa was ruled by the great Menelik. Italy played the usual imperial game, but without the technique or the drive of the other Powers. In 1889 she occupied Asmari, and began intriguing with Menelik against Ras Mangascia, who had succeeded John. This kind of interference is always risky, and when pressure from home led to the Italian advance seven years later, it was met by Menelik as the leader of a united country. General Baratieri advanced into Tigre, reached Lake Ashangi, but was forced back. A telegram of recall drove the Italian leader to risk a battle in March, 1896. At Adowa the Italians lost 6,000 dead, and retreated across their frontier.

This ended the first phase. Menelik assumed the title of Emperor, but made no attempt to dislodge the Italians from Eritrea. During the next few years France and England, bitter rivals in Africa—it was the period of Fashoda and the Boer War—seem to have regarded Ethiopia as an Italian sphere of influence, a cheap form of concession. The Anglo-Italian Protocols of 1891 and 1894 claimed an English interest in Lake Tana, but recognized an Italian interest in the remainder. Adowa did not alter this arrangement, and was merely looked

upon as an unfortunate incident which the gentlemanly Powers would not care to mention.

After the Boer War the increasing activities and demands of Germany drew England and France together. The Tripartite Treaty of 1906 was evidence of this new departure, besides being a typical product of pre-war imperial diplomacy. It has some importance to-day because Signor Mussolini based his claim to Ethiopia upon it. The three Powers began by declaring their intention of maintaining the '*status quo* in Ethiopia,' and then, with a delicate modesty regarding their ability to achieve this end, the remainder of the Treaty deals with the arrangements which should follow if the *status quo* should happen to be disturbed.

The three Powers would then co-operate in safeguarding their respective interests, and laid down at some length what those interests were. Great Britain claimed to control Lake Tana and the Ethiopian tributaries of the Nile. France would have obtained the hinterland of French Somaliland, and also a zone in which to build a railway from Jibuti to Addis Ababa. Italy was given 'the hinterland of her possessions and the territorial connection between them to the west of Addis Ababa.' The 'connection' meant the land between Eritrea and her new territory in Somaliland, and this is virtually the whole of Ethiopia which is of much value, though France might have claimed the Harar district on this loosely worded pact. Anyone who knows Abyssinia and reads through the various treaties connected with it, up to and including the Hoare-Laval agreement, cannot avoid feeling that they were all drafted by men utterly ignorant of the general features of the country, and without the faintest knowledge of its inhabitants, or regard for their interests and welfare.

England and France were not sufficiently concerned, and Italy was not strong enough to bring about that disturbance of the *status quo* which all three would have so deeply deplored. Pre-war Italy was a mere tyro in the game of empire-building, but both France and England had enjoyed a century of experience. They knew every trick and turn—the 'frontier incident'; the 'financial adviser'; the loan secured on customs; missions, military and religious; consuls and their escorts; the ambiguous treaty; the support of rival claimants to the throne; and even what used to be irreverently known as 'the policy of the unpopular babu.'[1] The whole trouble has been that Italy entered into this fascinating sport, with all the enthusiasm of the latecomer, after a war which was supposed to end wars, and also after the Powers had forsworn the game of empire-building. The Duce is heavy-handed as an Imperialist, and Italy showed little finesse in her dealings with Ethiopia.

By 1919 she had made no advance, actually or diplomatically. The only change since 1906 had been the vaguely worded Treaty of London to which we have already referred. From then onwards Ethiopia would occasionally be dragged into the diplomatic world. In 1923 she was admitted to the League of Nations, at the instigation of France. Italy considered, probably rightly, that this was a move aimed at her, but decided to support the candidature. Britain opposed it on the grounds that Ethiopia was still in a feudal state, and could not

[1] The last method was sometimes found useful in the Middle East. A Hindu clerk, not selected for tact or personal charm, would be sent as postmaster to some coveted town over the border. With any luck he would be at least 'beaten up' within a few months, and England could then send in a force to protect her nationals.

suppress the slave trade. None of the Powers treated her sovereign rights very seriously. Shortly afterwards Italy put forward a claim to build a railway through Ethiopia between her colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland, while Britain continued to press for the right to build a barrage at Lake Tana. In 1925 both exchanged notes agreeing to support each other's claims.

In pre-war days the stage would have been now set for the kind of internal interference to which Persia was subjected after the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907. Haile Selassie, who was then Regent, was at pains to remind the world that these were not pre-war days. He had a genuine admiration for the League of Nations, which seemed to him to be the one simple straightforward factor in the tangled web of European diplomacy. All through the next ten years, there was one weakness which vitiated his foreign policy, and in the end destroyed him. He could never believe that a single Power could successfully defy the League, and until the enemy were at the very gate of Addis Ababa he clung to the idea that the other Powers, and especially Britain, would come to his rescue.

He was a man of clear intellect, who could be ruthless in keeping his feudal chiefs in order, and had risen to power by the deposition of Lej Yassu, Menelik's grandson, in 1916. But he seems to have felt real gratitude for his reception into the council of European nations, and he was probably deceived by certain early successes which he achieved by his League membership. In 1926 he protested to the League against the Anglo-Italian Notes, and Sir Austen Chamberlain solemnly assured him that there was nothing in them to suggest coercion, or the intention of dividing the country economically.

Two years later Italy, trying a new line of action,

suggested and finally concluded a Treaty of Amity, agreeing that any dispute should be settled by diplomatic means. Ethiopia was offered Assab as a free port, if a motor road was made into the interior. In 1930 Haile Selassie became Emperor, and his coronation, with its mixture of mediaeval and modern pomp, was attended by the Duke of Gloucester as well as by representatives of all the great Powers. It is not surprising that in the early 'thirties, when ambition and events were gradually impelling Signor Mussolini into his armed aggression, the Emperor had not got that completely cynical view of the great Powers which could alone have saved him. Haile Selassie and his advisers were keen students of Afghan history. There was an obvious parallel between the two countries, both of which had maintained their independence for so long though enclosed on two sides by the territories of great European Powers. Each owed its comparative immunity to its mountainous character, warlike inhabitants, and the absence of great natural wealth. Haile Selassie was specially anxious to avoid the unhappy fate of Amanullah, as enthusiastic a modernizer as himself, who had failed chiefly because he had insisted on unessentials. It was all very well for the Turkish Ghazi to make his Moslem subjects wear bowler hats, but Kemal Pasha is a law unto himself. In his domestic policy the Ethiopian Emperor achieved a fairly successful compromise.

In foreign affairs he did not learn enough from Afghanistan. He seems to have felt himself isolated in his country, and clung too much to any European connection which seemed hopeful. Of Italy he was always suspicious, the activities and pretensions of her consuls would alone have insured this, but he was not sufficiently cynical about the other Powers, especially Great Britain,

for which he and his chiefs had an admiration apparently inherited from the last decades of the nineteenth century. Dr. Martin, an Ethiopian subject who had served for over twenty years as a Government civil surgeon in India, undoubtedly encouraged this tendency to seek English advice. On retiring from India, he served first as a Provincial Governor in Ethiopia, and then, when the trouble began, he was sent to England as Minister. One way and another, Haile Selassie did not achieve the independent outlook of the great Afghan Amir, Abdur Rahman, who consolidated his country in the 'eighties while teaching it how to live 'as a goat between a lion and a bear.'[1] Haile Selassie's life was one long race to reorganize his country along modern lines, but all the time he was looking abroad for that disinterested advice and support which may sometimes be obtainable from individuals but never from governments.

Ethiopia has suffered in popular estimation because the war brought to the country hundreds of correspondents and authors who had little experience of the East. Many of the limitations and anomalies of Ethiopia are common to most of the desert zone between the Himalayas and the Atlantic. The habits of the people and their standards of living frequently remind the traveller of parts of North Africa and the Middle East, some of which have been many decades under European control. The writer only saw the working of the Government under war conditions, but a general impression, which was confirmed by men who had worked many years in Ethiopia, was that the administration was not

[1] For an amusing and frank account of imperialism seen from 'the other side,' Abdur Rahman's autobiography is worth reading. It was published in 1890 by John Murray.

as good as that of, say, Mysore, but better than that of at least two of the six largest Indian States. In this connection it must be remembered that the Indian States have been under English protection and tutelage for the best part of a century, and been spared most of the expense and all the strain of meeting pressure from foreign Powers.

The Ethiopian administration tended to be over-centralized, an inevitable weakness in a country where the Emperor had to train and build up his personnel. The physical difficulties of the government were very great. The highlands are gashed and scored by huge ravines, often dropping sheer for the first two thousand feet, while the low-lying areas to the east and south are 'camel scrub deserts,' as difficult and uninviting as any part of the world, and only inhabited by a few savage nomad tribes. Communications were therefore very slow, and the Empire contained large areas which were really 'no man's land,' left by the European Powers as they settled along the eastern coast of North Africa.

India has been described as 'progressing unevenly at every stage of civilization from the fifth to the twentieth century.' This was certainly true of Ethiopia. The Empire included Danakil tribesmen, who are little better than dangerous animals, and Amharic officials, who were excellent linguists, and would have been at home in any European capital. It is, alas, necessary to use the past tense of the second category, for those who were not killed in the war have been executed since. But by 1935 Haile Selassie had collected the nucleus of an efficient civil service, in touch with the outside world. He had his foreign advisers—Mr. Colson, an American, for finance, M. Auberson, from Switzerland, for foreign affairs, and General Virgin, the Swede. The Emperor

encouraged his intelligent young men to travel, while they had at home three good colleges, a number of mission schools, and abundant European contacts amongst the missionaries and the Greek business men scattered about the country. Their Coptic religion gave the Christian majority a very close relationship with Egypt. The head of their church, the Abuna, was normally an Egyptian. One way and another Ethiopia was not isolated culturally, certainly not as much as Afghanistan, or some other independent countries in the Near and Middle East.

The black spot in Ethiopian civilization was usually supposed to be slavery. The writer believes this to be entirely wrong, and that the real weaknesses were religious obscurantism, due to the Coptic Church having grown too strong and wealthy, the jealousy and selfish ambition of many older chiefs, and more generally a kind of conceited laziness, the result of their geographical isolation. But accusations of slavery and slave-trading have great effect amongst people ignorant of the East and forgetful of what is, after all, comparatively recent history. Some of our grandfathers made money out of slave-trading, and many of our fathers lived in a society which, during the American Civil War, mostly supported the South, though a Southern victory would have meant the perpetuation of slavery well into the last decades of the nineteenth century. Domestic slavery means little more than the keeping of unpaid feudal retainers round the households of chiefs. It is common all over the East, and is something entirely different from the plantation slavery of America, under which men were taken thousands of miles from their homes and made to work under masters of a different colour, race, and language.

It is difficult to abolish this kind of unpaid domestic service. The legal prohibition of slavery in Ethiopia, in 1924, had the immediate effect of up-rooting thousands of men, and leaving them to find a living in an area where the cash nexus hardly existed, and there was practically no industry. Ethiopia suddenly developed an unemployment problem, which the Emperor tried to meet by founding 'slave colleges' for their children. Most of the men came to some terms with their old masters who usually were not very anxious to have them back. This domestic slavery is rapidly dying out all over the middle East. The modern Ras, or chief, does not want retainers whose chief value in the old days was to accompany him about and give him greater standing. They used to run beside his mule, but they cannot run beside his motor car. Slavery of this kind does not fit in with modern ideas, but it involved little cruelty, and the 'slave' had his definite position and dignity. The retainer of an Ethiopian Ras or of an Iraq Sheik would consider himself far superior to a coolie working for a weekly wage in a shop or warehouse.[1]

Two features were bad in Ethiopia, a form of land tenure which made the tenant virtually a serf, tied to the soil as in mediaeval England, and the slave trade. The latter must be clearly differentiated from slavery, just as in our society we tolerate prostitution but punish the white slave trafficker. Slave trading has greatly fallen from its high estate of the days when America and the West Indies were being provided with labour, but

[1] The author modified his ideas on this subject when acting as political officer at the end of the Mesopotamian campaign. He had to visit the camp of a ruling chief who had died. The Sheik had left a will and appointed two trustees—his brother-in-law and an elderly and quite negroid 'slave' who had been his personal servant. The arrangement was accepted by everyone, and obviously considered quite normal.

it remained endemic in large stretches of North Africa. Gordon tried but failed to suppress it in the Sudan. It lingered on into this century, though the only external market—Arabia and Iraq—for negroid slaves was rapidly disappearing, and there was little internal demand for forced labour. A few old slave-trading families still operated, and they made use of Northern Ethiopia and the Danakil desert. A glance at the map will show that they must have passed through either English, French, or Italian territory to ship their human cargoes across the Red Sea. For practical and administrative reasons British Somaliland and the small French territory round Jibuti were out of the question.

The traffic, as was well known to people in those parts, was through the southern part of Eritrea, and was winked at by Italian officials, and financed by two European adventurers, both now reputed dead. The case against the Ethiopian government on the slave-trading business is only effective in so far as there is proof of weak administration in the outlying and especially in the desert areas. British officials in the Sudan would agree that there is occasionally trouble of this kind in certain areas under their control—the old tradition is in the blood of some families, and the slaves are by no means always taken forcibly, but are sometimes derelicts and nondescripts who are prepared to sell themselves.

Haile Selassie understood the weaknesses of his country and his people far better than any of his critics. He was a reformer who knew only too well the poor tools with which he would have to work, the strength of the Church and the old feudal system, the possibility that at any moment a disgruntled Ras might try to overthrow the government. He began to build up his

new state along three main lines. On the whole he tended to leave the old chiefs alone. They could not be educated, could not be overthrown, and it was useless to alienate them, as Amanullah had alienated his Afghan feudatories, by interfering with their habits.

Haile Selassie was more interested in the younger generation. Some of the cleverer men he sent abroad to study, others were being brought up in his own colleges or in the mission schools. He wanted such Western ideas as were suited to Ethiopia to percolate down from this group of intelligent men in the civil and educational services. At the same time h developed a standing army of about 40,000 men, trained on European lines by Swedish and Belgian officers. By this he hoped to end the worst features of the feudal system. The new 'Imperial Guard' was intended to make the central government far more powerful than the most important Ras. Its existence would avoid calling up the feudal levies except for an external war, and its higher ranks would provide a suitable and dignified calling for the more enterprising and virile of the chiefs' sons. Those who have worked in India will know that a similar problem faced the Indian government. The children of a privileged class need some collective discipline.

An administrative corps, in touch with the outside world, a regular army, officered by the sons of the feudal chiefs, and the gradual spread of general education—these were the three main constructive ideas. Haile Selassie had achieved little but the foundations when his work was all swept away. His great need was for personnel, especially schoolmasters. As in so many backward countries the Church had retained a monopoly of education, and although the monastery schools

were not totally inefficient, there was a tendency to train boys chiefly for the priesthood, and to oppose any idea of universal education as weakening the priestly caste. In the early thirties therefore Ethiopia had reached the stage when the critical foreigner is apt to assume that all the reforms are superficial. It is the judgment which is superficial, because this is a necessary stage in the development of a backward race unless reforms are to be undertaken by those mass revolutionary methods, of which the world outside Russia has little knowledge, or are imposed from outside by foreign personnel, in which case the growth is likely to be along unnatural and ultimately unsatisfactory lines.

In Ethiopia, then, was a definite and indigenous civilization. Like everything in Ethiopia it was mixed, chiefly because the population was made up from the many races who from time to time have taken refuge in its mountains. Abyssinia is merely a name given to the area to express 'chaos,' and was not used by the inhabitants. One might easily meet ten racial types—Somali, Galla, negro, Amharan etc.—among the first twenty people seen at Harar, Addis Ababa, or any largish town. It is absurd to be sentimental about Ethiopia, as if it was a kind of unspoilt garden of Eden, but it is equally ridiculous to judge and condemn it by the standards of western European countries.

It is probably harder to be objective to-day than at any period of history, but the writer feels that he learnt most about the country from three people whom he met in Ethiopia, and who by the accident of birth and upbringing could nearest approach a properly balanced outlook. The first was a Syrian, educated in an American college, who had worked as a schoolmaster in Kabul and then at Addis Ababa. The second was an extremely

intelligent lady, half German but proud to be an Ethiopian subject. She had spent most of a long life in the country, but travelled much in Europe. The third was an Indian Mahommedan, member of a famous firm which has traded for many years in every part of Ethiopia. The firm has now been expelled by the Italians, an act which in itself will ultimately do them as well as the country great harm. All three helped to clarify the first rough impressions of Ethiopia while it was still independent, and of its rough, decent, lazy and courageous people. They certainly convinced me that the destruction of the government and the reduction of the people to the dead level of a subject race was a complete tragedy—'one wrong more to man, one more insult to God.'

CHAPTER III

WALWAL

DURING the three years which followed De Bono's first visit to Eritrea, Italy worked up a clandestine campaign against Ethiopia. This was intended to culminate in December, 1934, with the carefully staged 'frontier incident' at Walwal. Even before 1932 the Italians had been arming some of the nomad tribes in the Ogaden, amongst whom weapons and ammunition can buy some measure of support.[1] But intrigues by the consuls within Ethiopia and by political officers on the frontiers became steadily more intensive throughout 1933 and 1934. Neither England nor France in their most acquisitive periods had ever worked the consular business as blatantly as Italy. No one who was in Ethiopia before the war has ever questioned the accuracy of the complaint which the Emperor ultimately placed before the League.

> . . . . At places where there is not a single Italian national, a consul establishes himself in an area known as consular territory with a guard of about ninety men, for whom he claims jurisdictional immunity. This is an obvious abuse of consular privileges.
>
> The abuse is all the greater that the consul's duties, apart from the supplying of information of a military character, take the form of assembling stocks of arms, which constitute a threat to the peace of the

[1] G. L. Steer, *Cæsar in Abyssinia*, 15.

country, whether from the internal or the international point of view.[1]

The other great activity of the consuls was to encourage and keep in touch with any dissident elements amongst the feudal chiefs. There is evidence that the consuls reported far greater success in this respect than they really achieved. The one important person they won over was Ras Gugsa, a drunkard and a coward, but son-in-law of the Emperor, with whom he had quarrelled, and a Governor in Tigre. He went over at the beginning of the war, but he only took a few personal followers with him, and none of the chiefs whom the consuls had been courting so assiduously followed him into the Italian camp.

The demoralization, which was evident amongst the Emperor's personal staff in the final stages of the war, seems to have had nothing to do with these early Italian intrigues, and was probably due to a failure of morale at the end of a long period of defeats and strain. It was not reflected amongst the feudal chiefs, many of whom continued the struggle long after the Emperor had left. The one community which fulfilled Italian hopes by their attitude during the war was the Wallo and Azebu Gallos, whose territory included Dessye, and lay across the road between Addis Ababa and the Northern front. Their quarrel with the Amharan tribes was of long standing, dating at least to their forcible conversion to Christianity sixty years earlier. The troops raised in this area deserted during the important fighting round Ambi Alaga in February, and thus repaid some of the considerable sums expended by the Italians during the previous two years.

[1] *League of Nations Official Journal*, 1935, 1601.

General De Bono shared the optimism of the consuls, and undoubtedly encouraged Mussolini to think that he could win the war with very little fighting.

> It was the autumn of 1933. . . . I put the following considerations to the Duce: 'The political conditions in Abyssinia are deplorable; it should not be a difficult task to effect the disintegration of the Empire if we work it well on political lines, and it could be regarded as certain after a military victory on our part.'[1]

Certain hesitancies in the early part of the campaign were probably due to this belief, and the failure of the consular intrigues may have been partly the cause of De Bono's supersession, and his replacement by a tougher kind of soldier. For the time, however, permeation in Ethiopia and preparation in the two Italian colonies were the order of the day. Both activities were quite well known to British officials in the Sudan and in Somaliland, and through them to the Foreign Office.[2] In England they were certainly not known to one person in ten thousand.

Signor Mussolini was probably justified in thinking that the British Government as well as the local British officials would not raise any objection to his picking a quarrel with Ethiopia, so long as England received the share agreed upon in the 1925 Notes. Sir Austen Chamberlain's formal *démenti* had not altered the situation, and those Italian political officers who operated near the Sudanese border used to talk openly to their British colleagues about their plans, and their

[1] De Bono, *Anno XIII*, 13.

[2] The Sudan is directly under the Foreign Office. The author discussed this question with officials when in the Sudan in 1936.

future arrangements for frontier incidents, etc. It so happened that a confidential report was produced about this period, and gives the official English point of view. It was afterwards allowed to get into Italian hands, and excerpts were printed. The Maffey Report, the publication of which will be mentioned later, is interesting as showing what was the Foreign Office and Colonial Office attitude towards Signor Mussolini's ambitions. It also proves, incidentally, that both offices were fully aware of his intentions, and believed that his aggression was likely to be wholly successful.

The second and third 'conclusions' contain the gist of the Report.

> (2) There are no vital British interests in Abyssinia or adjoining countries such as to necessitate British resistance to an Italian conquest of Abyssinia. Italian control of Abyssinia would on some grounds be advantageous, on others disadvantageous. In general, as far as local British interests are concerned, it would be a matter of indifference whether Abyssinia remained independent or was absorbed by Italy.
>
> (3) From the standpoint of Imperial defence, an independent Abyssinia would be preferable to an Italian Abyssinia, but the threat to British interests appears distant, and would depend only on a war against Italy, which for the moment appears improbable.

The last sentence is extremely interesting, for it shows that it did not even occur either to the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, or to his Committee of experts, that the conquest of Ethiopia would be likely to entail breaches of treaties which might make a war with Italy not altogether improbable.

Clearly the British Government did not take Ethiopia's membership of the League seriously, nor did they consider that Treaties made with Powers of her calibre were of much importance. No international complications were expected to follow such a conquest, though there may have been some slight fear of individual English activities, for a curious Order in Council was issued towards the end of 1934 so unobtrusively that it was unnoticed in Parliament or the press. This enabled the government to control all activities of their nationals with respect to Abyssinia, so that when fighting began it was illegal to volunteer for service in the Ethiopian army under this Order though it was not illegal under the Foreign Enlistment Act.

From the point of view of the British Government everything was well set for an Italian march into Ethiopia, with ourselves as the benevolent neutral, advancing Italy the money which 'the city' was certain that she would need, and finally accepting the Lake Tana concessions which was as much as we either desired or deserved. There may have even been a lurking feeling that it would do Signor Mussolini good, as his manners were getting a bit bombastic, if he was involved in a colonial campaign which the experts prophesied would take a year or two to conclude. Whitehall is apt to look upon the world as a naughty family, and England as the all-seeing Mother who arranges that each member ultimately gets what he deserves. It is a flattering conception which the Kipling school of writers have done much to popularize—'the British Government is slow, but its arm is long.' Unfortunately during the last six years we have failed lamentably in the part of the 'mills of God.' The grist has been diverted elsewhere.

Signor Mussolini, justifiably satisfied about his British front, began slowly to work up enthusiasm at home, and to stiffen his attitude at Addis Ababa. In October, 1933, he warned off another possible poacher by violent protests against some proposed economic concessions to Japan. Three months later he objected to a suggested marriage between a nephew of Haile Selassie and a Japanese lady. The objection was presumably on grounds of policy rather than of miscegenation. At any rate it was sufficiently forceful to break off the match.

In Italy Signor Mussolini's speeches took a very definite trend. Early in 1934 he began to talk about 'the natural expansion which ought to lead to a collaboration between Italy and the peoples of Africa.' He reminded a gathering of Fascists that it was Italy's mission to civilize Africa, and that her position in the Mediterranean 'gave her this right and imposed this duty upon her.' He dropped a not too gentle hint to France and England by adding that he 'did not want earlier arrivals to block her spiritual, political, and economic expansion.' The order of these aspirations is interesting. At this period Signor Mussolini was apt to stress the religious aspect of his ambitions, for he was carrying the Pope along with him and it was only during the height of the trouble with the League that he lost the Vatican's open support. While his consuls were intriguing with Ras Gugsa the Italian missionaries were sending their brightest converts to the Ethiopian College at Rome.

By 1934 the Abyssinian venture had become an open secret in all the chancelleries of Europe, but had not aroused much public interest anywhere outside Italy and, of course, Ethiopia itself. In July, 1934, Marshal Badoglio visited Eritrea to study its 'defences,' and by

September the war preparations were so obvious that the Ethiopian Minister at Rome, Mr. Jesus Afewerk, called on the Italian Government to ask for reassurances. They were of course given, but only on condition that Ethiopia expressed her friendly intentions. So these solemn and meaningless exchanges were made.

An interesting book, with a moral hidden somewhere in it, could be made by studying the little places which have suddenly become famous, have caused international complications, and have then sunk into complete obscurity—Penjdeh, Fashoda, Agadir, etc. Fashoda, which has changed its name, would be quite hard to find, and possibly Walwal may have suffered a similar fate in forty years' time. It is of all the least salubrious, a watering place for animals in the rough stony desert of the Ogaden. It lies a good fifty miles inside Ethiopian territory according to every official English map, though the frontier had never been demarcated. There is evidence that Italian patrols had occupied this area from time to time during the previous six years.

Towards the end of November, 1934, a Commission, English and Ethiopian, came to Walwal after having demarcated part of the British Somaliland frontier. They found the place occupied by 150 Italian native soldiers. Colonel Clifford, who was in charge of the English side of the Commission, foresaw a possible clash, especially as Italian aeroplanes made what was considered a provocative demonstration. The next day the Ethiopian as well as British members withdrew, but the two guards were left opposing and inciting each other at a few yards' distance. For ten days after the Commission's departure, 'the Ethiopian and Italian troops remained in their positions facing each other at

a distance which in places was not more than two metres, their loaded rifles in their hands, challenging, insulting and provoking each other.'[1] On December 5th the Italians brought up two tanks and three aeroplanes, and finally drove back the Ethiopians, with considerable losses on each side.

Events then followed the precedents of many pre-war frontier affairs, when a European Power was encroaching on some weaker or more backward state. The Italians immediately formulated the most preposterous demands, and refused the Ethiopian request for arbitration according to the recent Treaty.[2] The real interest of the affair did not lie in the ownership of a few hundred square miles of bad land, but in the attitude of Ethiopia. The Emperor had already given way, and apologized for an incident at Gondar in which the Consul's guard had been involved. He now departed from all the old procedure. He invoked a new and little-tried authority—the League of Nations—but an authority which up to the present had served Ethiopia rather well. On January 3rd, 1935, the Ethiopian Government sent a telegram in which they reported the massing of Italian troops, and the commission of aggressive acts. Finally they asked for the application of Article XI of the Covenant in order to safeguard peace.

It seems possible that the synchronisation of Mussolini's plan had not gone quite perfectly, and that the first important frontier incident had been intended to occur a little later. The early arrival of the Anglo-Ethiopian Commission may have been unforeseen, and precipitated the affair. Some trouble was bound to

[1] *League of Nations Official Journal*, June, 1935, 726-7.
[2] The demands included saluting the flag, recognizing Italian territorial claims, 200,000 dollar indemnity, etc. etc.

follow soon from the continual Italian incursions into the Ogaden, but probably the Duce intended the first public advertisement of his intentions to have become known just after rather than exactly at the same time as he was coming to terms with France. Negotiations between M. Laval and Signor Mussolini had been proceeding all through 1934. Italy was still pressing her Libyan colonial claims, though their intrinsic value was unimportant. Some other bargain was in the air. Throughout the year French and Italian forces were being ostentatiously strengthened along their European frontiers.

M. Laval's personality was to be an important factor in Signor Mussolini's career. A lawyer of peasant stock, he was the last man in the world to throw away the chance of a good bargain for his client by adherence to vague ideologies. Like most Frenchmen of his class, he had regarded the League of Nations chiefly as a body useful in maintaining the settlement of Europe which had been reached after the war. The admission of Ethiopia to the League would probably have seemed to him a good trick played upon Italy. Now, towards the end of 1934, he had found Signor Mussolini unexpectedly willing to come to terms, terms which would enable him to bring back his troops from the South of France.

The chief bargaining counters were the Italian claims to some territory on the Libyan-French frontier to which the London agreement of 1915 gave her every right. Italy also demanded a strip of land connecting Libya with Lake Chad, and some extension of her colonies in East Africa. There were also old grievances about the position of the Italian settlers in Tunis. M. Laval was far too astute not to have understood the reason for Italy's sudden compliance, but he looked upon Signor Mussolini's absorption in her new enter-

prise as a pleasant gift of fortune. By January 7th, four days before the Ethiopian appeal to the League, M. Laval had reached full agreement with Italy at the expense of a valueless strip of French Somaliland, and some shares in that not very economic undertaking, the Addis Ababa—Jibuti line. Signor Mussolini, on his side, agreed that Italian subjects in Tunis should give up their nationality, and with mutual protestations of friendship both sides began moving troops—the French northwards and the Italians towards their ports of embarkation. The terms of this agreement were drawn up in writing, but have not been published.

This then was the position on January 11th. The French were delighted that they could now turn their attention to checking the growing truculence of Herr Hitler's Germany. The British Government had, as it were, written Ethiopia off the map, sure of a fully occupied Italy, and of an ultimate settlement from which England would gain some small territorial advantages. Germany was certainly not going to interfere in any Italian aggressive activity, as she was already planning one for herself. Russia did not seem likely to interest herself actively in the affair. Italy, as well as the great Powers, had forgotten that the League might function, if only to make a nuisance of itself, even without their august support, and the government of at least one of the Great Powers had forgotten that the platitudes of a Foreign Office may seem like the most cynical paradoxes to the common run of people.

While M. Laval was taking the train to Geneva determined at all costs to prevent anything being said or done which would offend Italy, and spoil his admirable new arrangements, De Bono was on board a ship bound for Massawa. He arrived on the 16th of January

with Signor Mussolini's instructions in his pocket, and began his work as ' High Commissioner for East Africa, a title which sufficiently suggested the object of his mission. Possibly he still hoped that Ethiopia would fall into his hand like a ripe apple. As he himself wrote—

> About this time the conversations with Laval took place in Rome, which gave us reason to hope that if we did have to take action in East Africa France would put no obstacle in our way.

There was then no intention of immediate action. If consular and diplomatic activities had been successful Signor Mussolini would probably have accepted some form of economic and political ascendancy in Ethiopia which would have made the country into a dependency. But if this was not possible then a military demonstration would be necessary, and this could not well be started until after the rains—i.e. in October. The general ' tempo ' was excellent in theory, except that the Walwal incident was a little premature, and that Haile Selassie had broken all the rules of the imperial game by invoking the League.

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATION FOR WAR

SIGNOR MUSSOLINI started the critical year 1935 with everything in his favour. He knew that the French and British Governments had both 'written off' the Ethiopian affair, and he recked very little of peoples as opposed to Governments. In Italy the Government controlled the newspapers and the wireless, which in turn had little difficulty in swinging public opinion. In several interviews which he has given to journalists it would seem that he believes that something of the same process works in England, though far less efficiently.

A few Italian propagandists were already working in London, and they increased their activities. Our press is very tolerant of the foreigner in our midst, and anyone interested in this question can trace the work of about half-a-dozen Italian agents in articles, letters to *The Times*, meetings, etc. In France the press has a reputation, not undeserved, for venality. There the Italian agents probably found their work easier though possibly more expensive. In both countries they had the early support of various enthusiasts—people with Italian connections, 'drawing-room fascists,' politically-minded Catholics, and certain business men. Opposition had not yet been aroused, and Signor Mussolini's agents must have been able to report that everything was going smoothly in France and England.

The rapid emergence of Germany as an aggressive Power made the Duce's task much easier. Herr Hitler was now well in the saddle, and his neighbours were

uncomfortably aware that a considerable part of his armament had already been accomplished. It is impossible to understand and certainly impossible to justify French and English policy during 1935 without remembering this factor. Both Governments were pre-occupied with getting some form of security—as apart from the League—which would meet this new menace.

In February, M. Laval's visit to London resulted in the Anglo-French Memorandum which sketched out a plan of regional Pacts, including a Western Air Pact of mutual assistance by the 'Locarno Powers'—France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy and Belgium. With this was a contemplated 'Eastern Locarno' which would have guaranteed the *status quo* in central and eastern Europe. The scheme was ambitious enough, but came to nothing. The whole proposal was defeated by Germany. Herr Hitler was not going to tie his hands in Eastern Europe, and the rest of the Simon-Laval edifice soon came toppling down. Subsequently we aroused great resentment in Germany by a White Paper announcing the failure of disarmament, and our intention to rearm. Herr Hitler immediately countered this by restoring conscription and increasing the Reichswehr to 550,000 men. It was an open breach of the Treaty of Versailles, and the three Western Powers—Italy, France and Great Britain—met at Stresa to face this new situation.

Everything was combining to prevent the Ethiopian case receiving serious consideration. In March the Emperor sent a further appeal to the League for protection against Italy's aggressive intentions, which were becoming more obvious every week. There were ever the first signs of some outside unofficial sympathy with her case amongst the smaller Western democracies Ethiopia had friends in Sweden and in Belgium, for both

had sent military advisers—General Virgin and the Belgian Mission. There was also a Swedish medical mission functioning at Harar. A few people in England, of the type who are always ready to take up losing causes, were beginning to watch events in North Africa. But Sir John Simon and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald went to Stresa with their minds entirely set upon European affairs, and there was then no body of opinion, inside or outside England, which was capable of forcing them to put, as it were, the Ethiopian question 'on the agenda.'

Probably our delegation was an unfortunate choice for personal reasons. Both were elderly politicians who had changed their political views very late in life, and in doing so had failed to take any large body of opinion along with them. Neither was trusted by the bulk of the 'National' party, and if they had wished to take an independent line they could not appeal to any mass of non-political people outside. Such a position inclines men to cautiousness and to sticking closely to their brief. Our representatives were intent on building up the 'Stresa front,' and did not see that they were incorporating materials which would ultimately bring it down in ruins.

They achieved their immediate object, and for a few months the Stresa front made a brave enough show. Germany was condemned, Austrian independence reaffirmed, and military treaties were made by Russia with France and Czechoslovakia. But the Foreign Office expert who had accompanied the two politicians as adviser on the Ethiopian affair seems to have been left kicking his heels, waiting for a summons which never came. Some months later, when the 'Stresa front' was broken beyond repair, there was some bitter criticism of this failure to include the Ethiopian

question. By October it seemed almost incredible that what had then become a major question should have been completely ignored, but in March very few people, outside the Foreign Office, had begun to take an interest in the subject, and Sir John Simon obviously felt that the rights and integrity of a 'black' country should not be allowed to confuse the serious consideration of European politics.

Signor Mussolini, in an interview, subsequently stated that he had been prepared to reopen the question of Italy's position with regard to Abyssinia.[1] This may or may not have been true, but undoubtedly he was never put to the test. Our own avoidance of the subject was subsequently established by some questions put to Mr. Eden by Mr. Lloyd George, on October 22nd.

Mr. Lloyd George: 'Does that mean that there was no discussion between our Prime Minister and our Foreign Secretary and Signor Mussolini?'

Mr. Eden: 'No official discussions at all.'

Mr. Lloyd George: 'Were there any discussions?'

Mr. Eden: 'Not between heads of delegations.'

Actually it was not the Ethiopian question which struck the first serious blow at the Stresa agreement. Any real hope of European security, based on the common action of France, Italy, and ourselves, was ruined by the speed with which we entered into a Naval Pact with Germany, a Pact advantageous to ourselves, but which recognized, and by inference condoned, the German violation of the Treaty of Versailles. The devastating effect of this action, taken without consulting France, has never been fully appreciated in England, where the greater part of the press and the B.B.C.

[1] *Morning Post*, September 17, 1935.

combine to keep us happily ignorant of what is said about us abroad. Although Sir Samuel Hoare had become Foreign Secretary on June 7th, and the naval agreement was signed on the 18th, yet it really represented the crowning act of Sir John Simon's cynical and short-sighted policy. It was an invitation to the nations to go their own way, and it was undoubtedly the most important cause of our many subsequent misunderstandings with the French, just at a time when everything in our tortuous policy depended upon complete and cordial co-operation with them.

To Italy it was an additional incentive to push on with her Ethiopian venture. By the summer of 1935 Great Britain and France had lost that collective superiority which might have enabled them to coerce Italy into accepting some comparatively mild settlement of the North African question, a settlement which would certainly have meant some sacrifice of Ethiopian territory or sovereignty, but could have been put before the world in such a way as not to damage too severely either the League of Nations, or respect for international law.

Mr. Eden, newly appointed Minister for League Affairs, began at once upon an optimistic attempt to reach a compromise along such lines. It is possible that at first he did not appreciate the nature of our commitments or the full implications of our policy since 1931. A strip of British Somaliland was offered to Ethiopia on condition that she made some concessions of territory to Italy. This gift of a barren and intractable piece of land to Ethiopia was valueless unless a railway was built down to the little port of Zeilah, thus giving Ethiopia access to the sea. There is some evidence that the transference would have included a condition that no railway was to be built, making the strip merely a

'corridor for camels,' but even if that condition had not been inserted a new railway would have been a hopelessly uneconomic affair, for which it was unlikely that any capital would have been forthcoming. The existing French narrow-gauge line from Jibuti has never carried much traffic through its five hundred miles of barren country, for Ethiopia's natural communications are westward from her fertile areas towards the Sudan and Europe.

For this poor gift from England the Emperor was expected to hand over a large block of territory in the south—the comparatively low-lying Ogaden. This land is of no great value, but would have been useful in developing Italian Somaliland. It was all too late. England had got herself into a hopeless tangle when she entered into her new 'realist' policy, and Italy saw this clearly enough not to be fobbed off with a new desert. The negotiations came to nothing.

Our policy had now become a Foreign Office affair without any popular basis of understanding and support. A very large proportion of educated as well as uneducated people were totally unaware that we had embarked upon a course of 'power politics,' in which the sacrifice of a small and backward country would be a matter of little moment. It was necessary to keep up, for England, a kind of *façade* of the new post-war internationalism in order to content those supporters of the National Government who did not take the ultra-Conservative point of view. The opposition at that time did not count for very much.

This *façade* was to be the work of Mr. Eden, representative of the new and youthful outlook, while Sir Samuel Hoare continued along the lines which had been laid down by Sir John Simon. It was the kind of

fiddling on the political strings which pleased Mr. Baldwin's subtle but rather lazy mind. Thus while Mr. Eden was trying to restore belief in the League and in English disinterestedness by offering a piece of entirely valueless territory, Sir Samuel Hoare was quietly acquiescing in the virtual disarmament of Ethiopia which Italy was able to accomplish from April onwards. One country after another was warned that it would be an unfriendly act to send munitions to Ethiopia.

The French and British, who controlled the only means of ingress into Ethiopia, placed an unofficial ban upon all armaments—the French along the Jibuti line, and the English in the Sudan and in British Somaliland. Germany as well as France and Great Britain refused licences to export munitions from May onwards. In July, Sir Samuel Hoare, with some humour, announced his intention of withholding all licences for export of arms to Italy as well as to Abyssinia, though he would allow the transit of arms through British territory. By that time nearly every country had agreed not to export arms, and in practice very few rifles slipped into the country except through illicit and extremely inefficient channels. The railway remained closed, and every possible official difficulty was placed upon the disembarking of arms at Berbera. This attitude of the two Governments, which controlled Ethiopia's connections with the outside world, was to continue right through the war, even during the time when we were applying sanctions against Italy, and had declared her an aggressor.[1]

[1] Mr. Hall, an Ethiopian of German extraction, and a man of remarkable character and intelligence, had a great deal to do with the buying of munitions abroad. From what I learnt from him and saw in Abyssinia I have not the least doubt that the arms prohibition was enforced unofficially but most effectively through the greater part of the war, both by England and France.

The French and English Foreign Offices, however much they might disagree about the handling of Germany, were still in general accord about Italian affairs. Signor Mussolini was to be allowed a fairly easy triumph, and they hoped to intervene at the right moment, safeguarding their own interests, and preventing Italy from being too blatant and too greedy. Such opposition as Signor Mussolini might meet in Ethiopia must not be strong enough to ruin Italy's future effectiveness in Europe if her aid was needed against Germany. 'We may still want the ice-cream wallahs on the Brenner Pass' might be an irreverent summary of our official attitude. In spite of many unhappy vicissitudes this has remained as the most important guiding principle of our real, though not of our declared policy during the last three years. It has been, possibly unfairly, connected with the name of Sir Robert Vansittart, but the ultimate responsibility lies with Mr. Baldwin, and his successive Foreign Secretaries, Sir John Simon, Sir Samuel Hoare, and Mr. Eden.

There were two great dangers in this policy. The first was that by treating Italy as a rather second-class Power compared with Germany we encouraged Signor Mussolini to become more intransigent and more insistive upon his country's status. Ordinary sensible men in America, England, and the smaller Western democracies always find great difficulty in appreciating the force behind this mass feeling of inferiority which appears to be endemic in certain countries. The theatrical gestures of a Mussolini, the antics of a Hitler, the perfervid oratory of an Indian nationalist seem slightly comic, but they may be as clearly the signs of an organic disease as the 'walk' which Charlie Chaplin borrowed from an old cab-driver.

There was something almost pathetic in Sir Samuel Hoare's efforts, which it is hard to believe were entirely insincere, to persuade Signor Mussolini to talk a little less wildly during the summer months, when the Duce was working up a war atmosphere, chiefly by attacking England and playing on the familiar theme of our old imperial egotism. 'We will imitate to the letter those who are lecturing us. They have shown that when it was a question of creating an empire, or of defending it, they never took any account at all of the opinion of the world.' Italian propagandists continually harped on the Boer War, when we certainly flouted world opinion, and on the Amritsar massacre, when we disregarded it.

Public opinion, however, was to prove the factor which ruined the plans of the French and British Governments, and made it difficult for them to allow Italy a free hand in Abyssinia. The lesser Powers, especially the smaller Western European democracies, did not easily accept the 'black and white' ideas of Sir John Simon. They could see the ultimate danger to themselves, once it was allowed that collective security was not to be taken seriously in connection with the lesser non-European Powers. They began to express their alarm in the League of Nations. Equally important was a movement in England. The British public, even those of the comfortable classes who were then very much in control, had not been given enough time to accustom themselves to the new *real-politik* of the British Government. There was a definite time-lag for which Mr. Baldwin had not allowed, and it had been accentuated by the activities of a number of semi-political bodies in what might be called the 'peace campaign.'

Many educated people, of all political parties, had been disturbed by the rapid re-armament of Europe, some of them had begun to mobilize public opinion in favour of disarmament and collective security. The most spectacular and important event was the 'peace ballot,' organized by the League of Nations Union. During 1934 this body, with its considerable following amongst moderate Conservatives, collected some eleven million replies to a questionnaire. The voting showed an overwhelming proportion in favour of remaining inside the League, forbidding the private manufacture of arms, and using economic pressure to prevent and punish aggression. This result had an immediate effect in changing the tone of the Government's references to the League and to the principle of collective security, though, as has been seen, it had no influence on the general policy in the spring of 1935. In the summer this movement became more vocal, and was reinforced by some popular sympathy with Ethiopia, the sentimental Englishman's feeling for the 'under dog.' The official Opposition, the Labour and Liberal parties, was also beginning to recover from the disaster of 1931, and to win by-elections.

It was unfortunate that the propaganda in favour of the League of Nations and of collective security was confused with a mass of purely pacifist teaching, and the advocacy of one-sided disarmament. The general effect was to produce a vague impression, amongst a not much interested electorate, that collective security was a good idea, but could be obtained without any risk of war, and in the face of the growing armaments of the aggressive Powers. The Government, faced with the prospect of a General Election within a year or two, did not relish a possible split inside their not very homogeneous

party. They were in a difficult position. It was too late to change their general policy of acquiescence in Italy's absorption of Ethiopia, a policy in which France was even more deeply involved than ourselves, though this was being made every day more difficult to justify by Signor Mussolini's truculent speeches, and his disregard of those conventional gestures with which the older Imperial Powers had been accustomed to preface the act of swallowing up some backward race.

Towards the end of August the Cabinet, or at any rate its principal members, decided upon a policy which was certainly astute enough with respect to the domestic issue, but exceedingly precarious abroad. They determined to take a strong line about collective security at Geneva, thereby rallying to their side Lord Robert Cecil and his followers, and possibly encouraging Signor Mussolini to come more rapidly to terms about Ethiopia in the triangular negotiations which were continually proceeding between France, Italy and Great Britain. It seems probable that our Foreign Office was obsessed by the idea, based on pre-war economics, that Italy was financially unable to face a long colonial campaign.

This was the real prelude to Sir Samuel Hoare's famous speech of September 11th, the day after he had come to an agreement with M. Laval about Anglo-French foreign policy. The speech was simply part and parcel of the general plan which led up to the Hoare-Laval proposals in December, but in form it was a wholehearted proclamation of England's loyalty to the Covenant and to the idea of collective security. Professor Arnold Toynbee's general conclusion about this speech cannot be controverted.

When Sir Samuel Hoare immediately proceeded to speak, as he did speak, in the League Assembly, and when thereafter Mr. Baldwin and his political associates took this proclamation of loyalty to the League as the main plank in an electioneering campaign through which they obtained another four or five years' tenure of office, the most charitable account of their conduct would be that they were bluffing, while, on a harsher interpretation, they were deliberately throwing dust in the eyes of the electorate of the United Kingdom and of the Governments and peoples of all the states members of the League whom they persuaded to participate in the imposition of economic sanctions.[1]

Both interpretations are probably correct. There was in this remarkably dishonest speech an element of bluff towards Italy, a bluff utterly futile when directed against a gambler whose whole instinct is always to 'go bank.'

The chief victim of the dust-throwing was Ethiopia. The Emperor had watched the steady progress of Italian preparations during the summer, the period of tropical rains when all transport and movement is difficult in the Abyssinian highlands. On August 14th he had appealed to the League in a Note, of which the truth must have been clear to every foreign diplomat.

The Royal Italian Government is continuing to send troops and ammunition to East Africa. It is ceaselessly manufacturing arms and implements of war, with the openly avowed intention of using them against the Ethiopian Empire. There is no manufacture in Ethiopia, either public or private, of arms and

[1] *Survey of International Affairs*, 1935, ii, 185.

munitions of war. The Imperial Ethiopian Government to-day finds it absolutely impossible to obtain means of defence outside its own frontiers. Where ever it attempts to obtain them it meets with prohibition and export embargoes.

It is a little difficult to understand why the British Government, apart from the strong pro-Italian and Catholic elements in the Foreign Office and Cabinet, should have continued to accentuate this difference of treatment during the period of late summer, about the time of Sir Samuel Hoare's speech. Possibly we were merely continuing automatically our general policy of the previous months. But throughout August and September the supply of military accessories poured into Massawa and Italian Somaliland from Britain, as well as from every other country. The neighbouring British colonies were especially active. Aden supplied quantities of distilled water, Kenya was almost denuded of cattle, tinned goods, oil, etc.

In the meantime everything was done to keep Ethiopia quiet. Dr. Martin, the Abyssinian representative in England, now proved in some ways an unfortunate choice. He had a great admiration and affection for England, and inclined to an old-fashioned and slightly Anglo-Indian belief in our omnipotence abroad, and in the probity of our foreign policy. His fundamental honesty and his loyalty to the country which he had served made him an easy victim to the blandishments of Mr. Eden, and the cheery exhortations of Foreign Office officials who told him not to worry, and assured him that England would 'see him through.' All through this period when Ethiopia should have been raising loans, buying arms, and organizing a foreign legion,

each of which was then possible, her Ambassador in England was being urged by our Foreign Office not to do anything which might 'complicate the international situation' and 'make our task more difficult.' Our country may be forgiven some of our sins of omission and commission during the last few years, but not this particular form of meanness.

The real attitude of the Foreign Office was apparent when there was any suggestion that Dr. Martin was not taking their advice. By the middle of September a very large number of men had offered their services to the Ambassador. When the obvious undesirables had been weeded out, it would undoubtedly have been possible to have collected a force of about five thousand men somewhat on the lines of the international brigade in Spain, but of a rather different type—more Irish and Germans, more old soldiers and a larger mixture of sheer adventurers.[1]

The first intimation through the press that such a force might be raised produced an immediate announcement from the Foreign Office calling attention, not only to the Foreign Enlistment Act which was not then relevant, but to the completely unknown Ethiopian Order in Council, of which it was almost impossible to obtain a copy. A section of this enabled the British Government to prevent its nationals from undertaking any activity, even remotely connected with war, not only in Ethiopia but also in surrounding countries. The Order had been slipped through Parliament without any one calling attention to its purpose or to its remarkably wide provisions. The strongest possible pressure was brought to bear upon Dr. Martin, and

[1] Personal knowledge. The writer worked through a number of these applications at the Ethiopian Embassy.

the idea was abandoned. A block of 'old stiffs,' and of young German and Irish adventurers might well have blocked the road to Dessye as effectively as the French volunteers and British communists were to hold up Italians, Moors and Spaniards a year later, outside Madrid and on the Jarama river.

Other efforts to raise loans in France, England, and the United States were prevented or delayed by various international influences. The business of the oil concessions, usually connected with the name of Mr. Rickett, was a mysterious affair, the effect of which was to discredit Great Britain's ostensible motives in the new line she was taking at Geneva. Actually none of these attempts led to anything. Many of the seedy adventurers who went to Addis Ababa, negotiating for concessions, were palpably Italian agents. The war was financed chiefly from the personal accumulations of bullion and foreign exchange which were controlled by the Emperor. As in most semi-feudal countries, the public and private accounts of the ruler were not rigidly divided. These accumulations were small compared with the fortunes of many Indian princes. Ethiopia had never been a rich country, and her currency was the silver 'Maria Theresa' dollar, a bulky but not very valuable form of specie.[1]

Thus September and the end of the rains drew slowly on, with the Emperor making frantic efforts to put his little regular army on some sort of war footing, and to collect rifles and ammunition for the feudal levies on which mainly he would have to rely. General Virgin knew that war had changed entirely since 1914, and

[1] The dollar exchange varied between about twelve and eighteen to the pound sterling before and during the war. These dollars, famous all over the East, were being minted right up to the war at Trieste. They always bear the same date—1780.

so did a few officials at the head of affairs, but the mass of Ethiopians did not understand that their old sporting rifles, and the rows of cartridges that all able-bodied men wore round their bodies and used as currency, were now utterly useless in battle.

At Geneva there were great alarums and excursions, and talks of 'sanctions' against Italy. Sir Samuel Hoare on the 24th asked the French Ambassador about support if England was attacked when enforcing Article 16 of the Covenant. It was all very exciting, and it completely drew public attention, both at home and abroad, from the really basic facts. These may be re-stated.

1. France and Great Britain had known about Italy's intentions for some years, and had acquiesced in them.

2. Up to the end of September, when we knew that Italy was about to start her campaign, we had combined with France to see that Ethiopia was totally disarmed, and incapable of meeting the attack of a modern army, or even of carrying on a successful guerilla warfare.

3. By the end of September Italy had completed the preparations she had begun two or three years earlier, and was fully equipped, except possibly for reserves of oil, to carry out, without any further purchases from abroad, all the fighting which was then thought likely to occur. (English officials shared the Italian belief, though perhaps not with so much confidence, that Ethiopia would develop a civil war internally as soon as the war began.)

4. Both France and England were waiting for a suitable moment to bring forward proposals for a settlement, which by September they knew would have to be very favourable to Italy. The date of the intervention was

uncertain, for it would have to be after a General Election in England, owing to the strange scruples some people in that country had lately been developing.

It was still assumed that Signor Mussolini would be a perfect gentleman and accept intervention, and it was also assumed that in a month or two he would be more amenable to suggestions. In the meantime we were helping him in his internal troubles, for all this talk of sanctions, and even their ultimate imposition, was just what he needed to pull the Italians, who were getting a bit restive, into a colonial enterprise in which many of them did not believe. On October 2nd, the summer rains being over, Signor Mussolini ordered his 'National Mobilization,' and on the following day his troops crossed the river Mareb and the war had begun.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST CAMPAIGN

ITALY began the war in accordance with the new technique, but an important part of her plans miscarried. There was, of course, no formal declaration of war, and no notification of her intentions to the other Government. The campaign started by an act of violence, but Signor Mussolini undoubtedly expected some kind of internal rising which would have enabled him subsequently to plead that he had merely intervened in a civil war.

Ras Gugsa was no General Franco, and failed lamentably to play the part assigned to him. Many chiefs had taken Italian money, and there was still a section which had never been reconciled to the deposition of Lej Yassu twenty years earlier, but no Ras of any standing whatever followed Wolie Gugsa when he fled over to the enemy with a few hundred personal followers. The civil war misfired so completely that Signor Mussolini never attempted to use this argument outside Italy, and our generation has seen the end of a decent convention—the formal declaration of war—which has governed international relations for centuries. We are apt to forget how fast and how far the civilized world has travelled downhill during the last few years. It is now generally accepted that the next European war will begin by the unannounced bombing of some great city or of some military objective, but that would have been considered an act of barbarity until 1930.

It may be argued that orders of mobilization are the equivalent of a declaration of war, but such orders are a

purely domestic affair, have entirely different meanings in different countries, and may be a protective measure or necessitated by internal conditions. The absurdity of this argument is illustrated by the beginning of the Ethiopian war. Italy had been mobilizing for months. The formal mobilization order was merely an opportunity for a mass demonstration at home. Haile Selassie had no method of supporting large armies in the field, and his regular troops did not number 40,000 men. There is some doubt when he actually ordered the Rases to summon their feudal levies, but there is obviously not the slightest parallel between the two orders. Signor Mussolini subsequently argued that the Ethiopian order was prior to his, and it is so given in Professor Toynbee's chronology, but it would seem that Mr. Colson, the financial adviser, succeeded in persuading the Emperor to withhold his order until the first act of aggression had been committed, and the earlier date was due to the exuberance of an American journalist who wished to be first with the news. On the evidence Mr. Steer's view would appear to be correct.

'The Ethiopian general mobilization was not ordered until five hours after the Italian bombardment of Adowa.'[1]

The Emperor's modern ideas had sunk deeper into the minds of his civil than of his military advisers. A century or two lay between men like Bilatengeta Herrouy or Dr. Martin, with their sons at English public schools, and the older school of military chiefs, like Ras Mulugeta, Ras Seyum, and Ras Kassa, who still felt that men would fight better if they wore their lion skins when they went into battle, just as a certain type of English army officer feels a little unmilitary without

[1] *Survey of International Affairs*, 1935, ii., 530. Steer, *Cæsar in Abyssinia*, 130.

his spurs. Similarly the foreign advisers, Mr. Colson and M. Auberson, had had more influence on the Secretariat and the conduct of foreign affairs than General Virgin and the Belgian officers had ever managed to exercise over army organization. The few regular soldiers had a veneer of European training—about as much as the troops raised and equipped by Indian States, though less than the regular Indian army. The levies, on whom inevitably the bulk of the fighting would fall, were no more organized than their fathers had been a generation before. A good civil administration can be developed quite cheaply and with a small personnel, but a modern army needs more than brave men, it requires the backing of an industrial country, and future wars will be decided by weight of metal rather than by courage. The Englishman, incurably sentimental about other people's difficulties, has a sneaking feeling that David is bound to win against Goliath, unless there is something wrong with David. Alas, the modern Goliath has no intention of exposing himself to the slinger's stone.

The feudal levies were summoned. The 'men of fifty' and the 'men of a hundred' brought their little groups of lithe fast-walking men, most of them with a few days' supply of grain hidden in the folds of their loose clothes, a bandolier or two of cartridges, and an old rifle. Many had no rifle, but only a sword or spear. They were decent men, with an elementary courage, believers in a simple form of Christianity, tough, superstitious, frugal and unambitious. Those Europeans, who watched them hastening to their death, knew what our civilization had prepared for them. Perhaps it is as well that the Ethiopians themselves did not know, for their minds would have been totally unable to understand the subtle intrigues, the mixture of feeble human-

itarianism and cynical egoism which had so brought it about that when they reached their chieftain's camp there were no modern rifles and modern ammunition waiting for distribution. Wood would have to go out against steel, the sling against the tank, and overhead would be the Italians' four hundred bombers, and the 'pursuit planes' which had nothing to pursue. It is not pleasant for an Englishman to look back upon all this.

David, calm and brave,
Holds his ground, for God will save.
Steel crosses wood, a flash, and oh !
Shame for beauty's overthrow.
(God's eyes are dim, His ears are shut.)
One cruel backhand sabre cut—
'I'm hit ! I'm killed !' young David cries,
Throws blindly forward, chokes . . . and dies.
And look, spike-helmeted, grey, grim,
Goliath straddles over him.

It is still less pleasant for an Englishman to remember that while some of his countrymen had helped to ensure that Goliath should not be too much harassed by the rattle of slinger's stones against his armour, there were others getting ready to extol the courage and endurance with which he rolled his way to victory.

Much has been written about the failure of the Ethiopian as a guerilla fighter. The Amharan tribesman had neither the practice in mountain warfare, nor the incentive to personal independent fighting which the Pathan has acquired from years of raiding, counter-attacks and private vendettas. Gun-running had never been a Red Sea industry as it was in the Persian Gulf, and there was no North-East African equivalent to the rifle factories of Kabul and elsewhere. The Ethiopian

learnt more about guerilla fighting during the last month or two of the war than he had in the whole previous century, but it was only after the fall of Addis Ababa that he has begun to put that learning into practice, and of this later war the world learns and cares as little as it does about the contemporary campaigning in Waziristan. So long as Ethiopia was 'in the news' her totally untrained levies fought as their fathers had learnt to fight during the latter half of the nineteenth century. They were led by men who had no other tradition of warfare except the mass attack and closequarter fighting with swords.

The Emperor himself would have liked to have used both his regular troops, and also the levies as a purely delaying force. Both he and his Foreign Minister, Herrouy, still clung to the idea that the League would save Ethiopia, and that the slow-moving British Empire only needed a month or two in order to get ready for the final suppression of the upstart Italy.[1] It is doubtful whether different tactics would have greatly affected the speed of the Italian advance as far as Addis Ababa, or from the south to Jijiga and Harar. To-day any modern army, with plenty of mechanical transport and complete command of the air, can advance from point A to point B on the earth's surface with very few casualties if it is only opposed by ill-equipped and lightly armed troops. The real difficulties begin when it has to take possession of the country, and spread its forces from point B, and leave little groups scattered in outlying towns and villages.

Haile Selassie might possibly have let the Italians advance without serious opposition as far as Addis

[1] As late as February in the following year the writer found that the Foreign Minister, Bilatangeta Herrouy, at Addis Ababa was still obsessed by this idea of British intervention.

Ababa along the two lines which they ultimately followed —through Makalle, Lake Ashangi, Dessye, from the north, and through Jijiga, Harar, Diredawa and up the railway line from the south. If he had still kept most of his levies, and his forty or fifty thousand regulars intact, the Italian position during the rains of 1936 would have been almost untenable. But this would have required a far more disciplined nation, and a more loyal and understanding group of chiefs.

Haile Selassie was admirable as a bridge between his people and Europe, but he lacked the toughness of a Menelek or even of his father, the Governor of Harar. Physical and moral courage he showed in abundance, but hardly those qualities which would have kept his chiefs working independently but obediently under a ruler without a capital and without a throne. His people also would probably not have played their part, for their loyalty to Ras or Emperor is of the personal kind which impels them to group themselves round his person, so that the presence of the Emperor encouraged that massing of the fighting men which so helped the Italians in the later stages of the war. Ethiopia could only have raised her standard of living and culture under a single ruler, but she will probably have to win back her freedom as a collection of fighting clans making the country too difficult and expensive for foreign occupation.

It must also be remembered that for some weeks, during the time that De Bono was in command, the Italians made very little progress, and showed a lack of enterprise too flattering to the Ethiopians. It would seem that Signor Mussolini waited some time for the expected internal revolt, by which he hoped to become master of the country without a casualty list. The Northern offensive did not begin seriously till after

Badoglio had taken charge on November 28th, and after Graziani's first southern campaign had ended ingloriously with the loss of some tanks in the Ogaden.

Marshal Graziani's failure remains a mystery. He had no serious opposition against him. For various reasons the Harar district was not mobilized like other parts of the country. Its people are largely Moslem, and their loyalty was considered doubtful, though they fought well enough some months later. According to Abyssinian standards the Harar country is rich and prosperous, and Harar itself is in easy reach of Diredawa, the Swindon of the Addis Ababa railway. Graziani's Italian and Somali army turned back from a task which an Indian army brigade would have accomplished easily. The sadistic hatred which he vented on the Ethiopians after he became Governor may have had its origin partly in memories of this unhappy exhibition of Italian military incompetence.

> The Somali *bandas*, who had always believed that tanks could lead anywhere, refused to move in the Ogaden sector. Graziani's white troops were then too poor to go ahead, so he thought. With the wretchedest troops properly armed, he could have pressed on to Harar. There he could have lived on the rich country and smashed the railway. He dared not. He thought the Ethiopians a hundred thousand strong.[1]

Up to the beginning of December the Italians had shown such very poor fighting qualities, and made such little use of their overwhelming weight of armaments that poor little David was tempted to go out and meet Goliath in the open. The undisciplined levies in the Northern sector tended to mass together, affording

[1] G. L. Steer, *Cæsar in Abyssinia*, 177.

good targets for bombers, and with Badoglio in charge the machine began to move forward—aeroplanes and native *askaris* ahead of the tanks and artillery to clear a way for Italian troops and road-makers. Once the machine was set in motion under a leader who dared risk a few casualties there was nothing in Ethiopia which could hold it up. It was only vulnerable by ill-equipped men either on its lengthening lines of communication, or when it came to some great natural obstacle as at Amba Aradam. It might have been overwhelmed if the machine had been very small compared with the Ethiopian forces, but the Italians were seldom in a numerical inferiority. Theirs was no tiny force, like that of Clive at Plassey, marching into a great and thickly populated country.

At the beginning of October the Italians had about 200,000 white troops and some sixty thousand natives under arms. In addition a large number of Italians were employed under semi-civilian conditions in making roads and doing other engineering work. In a European war these would have been reckoned combatants. About twenty thousand more Italian soldiers were sent through the Suez Canal in October, and 38,000 in November. On the other side Haile Selassie had his Imperial Guard, the beginning of a *corps d'élite*, intended primarily for internal security. It had been partially trained by a few Belgian and Swedish officers, but they were no more equipped for fighting against European troops than were the Indian 'Imperial' regiments in the last war. They numbered at most thirty-five thousand men. The levies were drawn from a possible manhood fighting strength of over a million, but they had no transport or commissariat arrangements, and, like the Boer commandos, returned home when their supplies were finished, and local resources failed. It is doubtful if two hundred thousand were ever

in the field at one time. Most of the Imperial Guard and about one in ten of the levies had modern rifles, the rest were not as well armed as the Italian non-combatants.

This was the position at the end of November. Two large and independent forces had entered Abyssinia from the north and south. The former had captured Makalle, little more than fifty miles over the frontier. The latter had advanced and then retired. Both were numerically superior, and infinitely better equipped than any forces opposed to them. There is evidence to suppose that Signor Mussolini imagined that this military demonstration would be sufficient, and he telegraphed to General De Bono on November 16th that his mission 'had been completed in extremely difficult circumstances.' According to the calculations of the French, British and Italian Governments the time was approaching for a settlement in which most of Ethiopia would have been divided into 'spheres of influence' and other useful synonyms for the gradual and peaceful disintegration of backward countries. That the plan miscarried was partly due to the unexpected unity of the Ethiopian people, but it failed chiefly because the League of Nations and 'public opinion' in England and elsewhere began to play a confused but temporarily effective part in the affair.

The political repercussions in England of Sir Samuel Hoare's September speech had been unexpectedly favourable. The Government was immensely helped by the Labour Party's representation in the House of Commons. It was not only numerically weak, out of all proportion to the strength of the Party in the country, but its fifty members were hopelessly divided on such subjects as armaments, collective security, and foreign policy generally. This was abundantly evident at the Party Conference which met at Brighton in the week that Signor

Mussolini started his offensive. Nearly all the old Cabinet had been defeated in the 1931 election, and the leadership of the Party was in the hands of Mr. George Lansbury, with Sir Stafford Cripps as a very independent lieutenant.

It so happened that both had individual ideas about the Ethiopian crisis. Mr. Lansbury belonged to the small but very vocal group of extreme pacifists. According to him force could only be met by passive resistance, and his advice to Haile Selassie was to submit—advice which seems slightly comic in 1938, when some of the chiefs, who would have seized power at the very hint of such a policy, are still carrying on what the French like to describe as *dissidence*, some eighteen months after the Emperor himself has left the country. Sir Stafford Cripps took the line that we should not interfere in struggles between 'capitalist' countries, a view which also had its humorous side to anyone who saw Abyssinia while it was still independent, and has any knowledge of conditions at the English Bar.

Neither of these sections represented more than a tiny proportion of the Trade Union and Labour movements, the bulk of which was definitely in favour of supporting the principle of collective security, even at the risk of war. But the standing of the two leaders in the country, and in the Party, gave an impression of hopeless division, and Conservative headquarters astutely recognized that they could achieve a certain victory if a General Election could be hurried on, and if Sir Samuel Hoare and Mr. Eden could keep up the *Schauspiel* of loyalty to the League until it was over. The Liberals, with their thunder stolen, were not a serious menace. The extreme right was hardly likely to become obstreperous on the eve of an election. These calculations proved completely accurate, and on November 16th Mr. Baldwin was returned to office with an overwhelming majority.

Meanwhile at Geneva Mr. Eden had been playing his anomalous part with such a will that it lent some colour to the quite incredible suggestion, which was made in December, that he was the innocent victim of the guileful M. Laval and the secretive British Foreign Minister. The League acted with commendable speed. On October 7th the League Council unanimously adopted Committee reports that Italy had resorted to war in disregard of her covenants under Article 12 of the Covenant. Four days later the Assembly acquiesced in these findings, only four out of the fifty-four states dissenting. A Co-ordination Committee immediately began to consider measures for co-ordinating the sanctions which each member of the League was bound to apply against Italy under Article 16 of the Covenant. Geneva displayed a kind of mass enthusiasm for the Covenant. This was not reflected amongst most of the Governments which the delegates represented, and still less amongst the various business communities in the League countries. While the Co-ordinating Committee sought gradually to extend the scope of prohibited exports, every form of obstruction was applied locally. 'Not one of the forty-nine states members concerned ever carried out its undertakings under Article 16, paragraph 1, in full at any time between the setting up of the Co-ordination Committee on the 10th October, and the taking of the Committee's decision of the 6th July, 1936, to recommend the abandonment of the application of the sanctions against Italy.'[1]

The doctrine of 'gradualness' crept into the administration of sanctions as easily as into the theory of socialism. The gaps in the system became obvious. One or two South American States immediately joined

[1] *Survey of International Affairs*, 1935, ii, 217.

Austria, Hungary, and Albania in abstaining altogether.[1] Germany's League membership expired on October 19th, Japan's had expired long before, and both traded fully and actively with Italy. The United States placed an embargo on arms, which Italy no longer needed, but like other countries she continued to export large quantities of oil, which was the one essential to keep the military machine moving in Ethiopia. Business men in 'sanctionist' countries soon learnt to send their goods through states which were abstaining, and this led to undignified recriminations behind the scenes. The development of the prohibited list from raw materials to semi-manufactured articles became the subject of continual wrangles, while the one vital question of oil was deferred, on one pretext or another, until the middle of December.

Until the end of November, while Italy was still pecking delicately at Ethiopia, Geneva was full of bustling activity, and Mr. Eden was able to pose nobly as the Bayard of the League, the young man terribly in earnest. It was like one of those short Shakespearian scenes acted before the curtain, while behind can be heard the muffled tramping of men preparing the greater battle scene which is to follow. Sir Samuel Hoare and M. Laval continued their negotiations with Italy, preparing the way for the settlement which they expected to make some time before Christmas. An important meeting with Signor Aloisi occurred on November 1st, and it was probably then that the three Powers agreed roughly upon the settlement which Great Britain and France would promulgate six weeks later—after the General Election in England.

[1] 'It is a well-known fact that when sanctions were imposed the Pope's envoys in South America used all their influence with the South American Governments to induce the latter to vote in Geneva to have sanctions raised.' W. Teeling, *The Pope in Politics* 253.

CHAPTER VI

SANCTIONS

SIGNOR MUSSOLINI was probably surprised as well as annoyed by the unanimity of the minor States in condemning his aggression, but he soon appreciated the fact that 'sanctions' were a gift from heaven. He was having considerable trouble in raising the expected enthusiasm inside Italy for his venture, and serious disturbances occurred in the Tyrolean districts, where the German population showed no desire to leave a healthy country, and fight for an uninviting tropical area. In the south economic conditions are harder, and the appeal for new land to cultivate was more convincing, but all over Italy there were unpleasant incidents which could only be hidden from the world by using the resources of a totalitarian government.

The tentative half-hearted imposition of sanctions did Italy little harm, and had no effect on her fighting strength. She had all the arms she needed, and only wanted oil, of which she was able to collect larger reserves during the doubtful autumn months. But Signor Mussolini had a glorious opportunity of posing before his people as Ajax defying the Geneva lightning, *Athanasius contra mundum*, of employing all the stock heroics in building up the flattering legend of 'Italy against the world.' Above all, Mr. Eden's excess of zeal and his unfortunate habit of dressing rather too well, provided Signor Mussolini with an easy object of attack—the decadent English, selfishly hanging on to an Empire which they no longer deserved to hold, and

sheltering themselves behind the ridiculous League of Nations.[1]

Our naval demonstrations in the Mediterranean remain something of a mystery, and it is probable that they were little more than a part of the general *façade*, a stirring up of excitement in view of the November elections. Vague rumours of war help the Conservative agent as much as they encourage the recruiting sergeant. A more generous interpretation would be that we were really worried by the growing wildness of Signor Mussolini's talk, and feared that he might go berserk. When Italy sent a quarter of a million men to the far side of the Suez Canal, into a district where they could hardly get enough drinking water, and certainly not enough food, she had given hostages to any Maritime Power that chose to attack her. This was as obvious to the English Government as to Signor Mussolini. The comings and goings of the British fleet, the huddling into Alexandria harbour, and the posting of reinforcements in the Libyan desert had little real significance, except that they produced the necessary atmosphere; first of all at home, where Conservatives had to be kept quiet; next at Geneva, where we could pose as the weary Titan with the world's troubles on our shoulders; and finally at Rome, where we may have felt that a show of bellicosity would hasten the December negotiations.

It was on this last point that we had a difference of opinion with France. M. Laval was already getting rewarded for his part of the intrigue by the withdrawal of Italian troops from the French frontier. He was quite determined that his excellent relations were not to be jeopardized by any definite step being taken on the

[1] See Beatrice Baskerville, *What Next, O Duce*, for a good account of Italy's internal reactions to sanctions.

question of oil sanctions. A series of arguments, in which the availability of the French fleet and of French ports played an important part, ended in Sir Samuel Hoare agreeing to a postponement of the whole question until an attempt had been made to settle the affair by direct negotiation.

Everything was now well set for the completion of the year's diplomacy. Mr. Baldwin was back in office, and his party safe for some years. M. Laval sat a little uneasily in his double throne (he was Premier as well as Foreign Minister), but he hoped to re-establish himself by a successful intervention in the Italian affair. The Co-ordination Committee might be a bit restive, but had learnt how difficult it was to apply sanctions, and some of its members were secretly opposed to the proposal for an oil embargo.

The chairman, M. van Zeeland, was prepared to be helpful. He formally accepted the suggestions of M. Laval and Sir Samuel Hoare that France and England might be 'entrusted with the mission of seeking, under its auspices and control and in the spirit of the Covenant, the elements of a solution which the three parties at issue—the League, Italy and Ethiopia—might find it possible to accept.' The Committee was less complacent, but it 'took note of the desire expressed by the Belgian delegate,' and thus accepted without enthusiasm the delicately worded and obviously insincere surrender.

The greater part of the French and British press followed the line suggested by their Foreign Offices. They began talking about the 'moral mandate' which their representatives had received to continue what many people suspected they had been doing for some time—the arrangement of terms with Italy which they could cajole Ethiopia into accepting. Actually the

Foreign Office expert, Mr. Peterson, and his French counterpart, M. de St. Quentin, had settled down on November 21st to the congenial task of putting the finishing touches to the Plan. They drew bold lines across the map, dividing tribes and territories, and setting future boundary commissions the most delightful switch-back rides across watersheds, valleys, and rivers. One expert suggested a boundary along the 40th degree of longitude, and the other countered by proposing the 38th. The situation of Greenwich and the idiosyncrasies of two officials seemed likely to decide the future of many thousands of people, about whose lives, desires, religion and loyalties nobody in England can claim any real knowledge.

Such was the genesis of the 'Hoare-Laval plan,' the fruit of a year's intrigues. Roughly the terms were as follows. Apart from Axum, which Ethiopia was allowed to retain—a possible concession to English religious opinion—Italy was granted all of and more than the territory she had invaded, certainly far more than she had occupied. In the north she was given a large part of the Tigre, a comparatively prosperous and populated area, containing many of the most enterprising and intelligent Ethiopians.[1] This was an integral part of the Amharan country, so that the proposal cut across the Italian claim that the outlying parts of Ethiopia were wrongfully acquired territory to which the ruling Amharan race had no real claim. On the southern front Graziani's retreat did not invalidate his country's claim to most of the Ogaden.

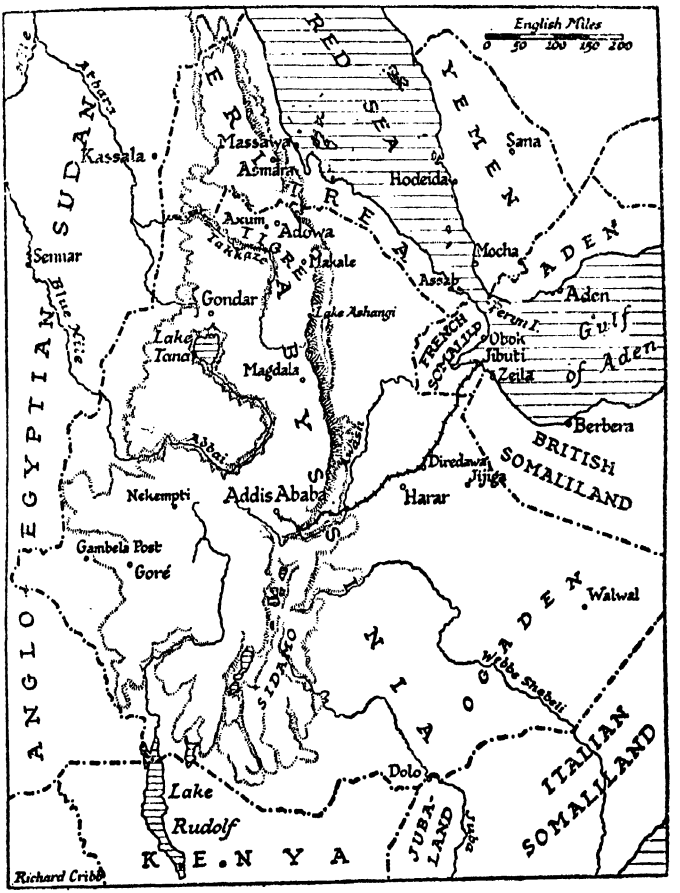
In return for these concessions to an aggressor Power

[1] When visiting one of the Colleges at Addis Ababa the writer was told that the 'head boy' was usually a Tigrean, though few attended schools in the Capital.

the Emperor was offered another strip of land stretching to the Red Sea, but this time it was a desert way to Assab, and hence at Italy's expense. This new proposal was even more uneconomic than the earlier offer of Zeilah. The strip was to the north of the existing railway line, and hence would be further from the Harar district, the only productive part east of the Hawash river. It was specifically and rather unnecessarily stated that there would be no objection to a new railway being made in this corridor.

Undoubtedly the most important and fatal proposal in the 'plan' was the proposal to constitute a further huge area in the south as a 'zone of economic expansion and settlement reserved to Italy.' The terms laid down for the control and administration of this area showed that it was merely the old pre-war method of absorption in two gulps. Mr. Peterson could have found plenty of precedents in our own Colonial Office. The first draft would have restricted the area to a proportion only of the most prosperous highlands, but Sir Samuel Hoare would have no niggardly discussions about the 38th or 40th degree, either of which would have run through the fertile and populous coffee-growing districts. Like the unjust steward he took his pen and wrote quickly. He substituted the 35th degree, leaving nothing of Southern Ethiopia except the dismal and uninhabited swamps between the uplands and the Sudan.

The plan was then agreed upon, and each statesman acted according to national tradition. Sir Samuel Hoare despatched his copy to London, and departed to enjoy his Sunday in the Engadine. M. Laval hurried back to Paris, and a full account of the proposals appeared in the French papers some time before the first British Cabinet minister had seen them. In the long run the


English Miles
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Adowa
Axum
Takkaze
Makale
Semar
Blue Nile
Gondar
Lake Tana
Lake Ashangi
Magdala
Mocha
Assab
Aden
Perim I.
Gulf of Aden
FRENCH SOMALILAND
Obock
Jibuti
Zeila
Berbera
BRITISH SOMALILAND
Abbai
Awash
Diredawa
Jijiga
Harar
Nekempti
Addis Ababa
Gambela Post
Goré
Walwal
OGADEN
Webbe Shebeli
Sidamo
Dolo
Lake Rudolf
JUBALAND
Juba
ITALIAN SOMALILAND
Richard Cribb

Ethiopia

British method proved the most effective. When the storm came, it was M. Laval's Government which fell a month later, while Sir Samuel Hoare's Government survived, and he himself merely retired from office for a few months.

The Hoare-Laval 'Peace Plan' was, to use Mr. Max Beerbohm's phrase, an 'instantaneous failure.' The violence of the opposition which it aroused in the smaller democratic countries and amongst all sections in England was a measure of the distance travelled by our Government away from those post-war ideals which centred round the League of Nations. M. Laval had partially educated his public, and his fall in January, 1936, was chiefly due to other causes. Mr. Baldwin had deliberately misled the English electorate throughout the summer on the patriotic grounds that a little modifying of the truth was essential to prevent the tragedy of his party being defeated at the polls. Later he was to disclose all this with the disarming frankness which is so disconcerting to his lieutenants, but has proved so effective in the country. In July, 1936, he explained to the House of Commons that adherence to the Covenant would have entailed a risk which he was not prepared to have taken without re-armament, and that he did not dare propose the latter course as he could not 'think of anything which would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain.'

The reaction in England against the Peace plan was extremely interesting. It may possibly have been the last purely altruistic expression of public opinion in our generation. During the following two years Germany, Italy and Japan were to teach us in Spain and China that Covenants and treaties were valueless unless backed by force and that international law was a subject of

merely academic interest. By the end of 1937 that queer entity the 'non-political voter' was prepared to accept almost any redistribution of territory under threats of war, or to consider the partition of unoffending countries by their powerful neighbours as part of the normal method of arranging an international settlement, or even a temporary truce. But future historians will record that in December, 1935, the overwhelming majority of English people rebelled spontaneously against being made parties to a proposal, not because it endangered their own safety, nor that of the Empire, not because they were shocked by some physical brutality, as in the case of the Armenian atrocities, but because their idea of public morality was outraged; at that recent but happier era in our history such things 'were not done.' We have learnt, partly owing to the lame and impotent conclusion of this revolt, that such things are done, and will continue to be done, and that no amount of moral indignation will prevent them.

The Premier made a last attempt to save the situation by forcing Ethiopia to accept the terms out of hand. On the evening of December 10th he informed the House of Commons that, *as far as he knew*, no communication of any kind had gone to Rome or Addis Ababa. The qualification is interesting. All through this curious affair there were hints that the Cabinet, and even the Prime Minister himself, were in ignorance of negotiations upon which the whole future of European civilization might depend. The public now knows, that on the same evening as this assurance was given to Parliament two telegrams were sent from the Foreign Office to Sir Sidney Barton, our Minister in Ethiopia. The first gave the terms, and was identical with a communication addressed to Sir Eric Drummond at Rome,

except that the Minister in Ethiopia, having clearly the more difficult task, was told to inform the Emperor 'in whatever manner you consider most suitable and expeditious.' The second was the most definite.

London, 10th December, 1935.

My immediately preceding telegram.

You should use your utmost influence to induce the Emperor to give careful and favourable consideration to these proposals and on no account lightly to reject them. On the contrary I feel sure that he will give further proof of his statesmanship by realizing the advantage of the opportunity of negotiation which they afford, and will avail himself thereof.[1]

In view of the growing opposition in England and abroad, only the immediate and grovelling acceptance of the terms by Ethiopia could have possibly kept the negotiations alive. Even if Haile Selassie had agreed to the dismemberment of his country, and won over his chiefs to such a policy, it is probable that Signor Mussolini would have merely taken the Plan as a basis of negotiation until he could see whether the opposition in the League and in England was strong enough to force the British Government to disown the whole scheme.

The deciding factor in the Emperor's decision, and in the advice given to him by Mr. Colson, seems to have been the feeling that Ethiopia as a protected State would no longer be a member of the League of Nations, and hence would be entirely at the mercy of further Italian aggression or permeation. Mr. Colson was an American of the most admirable type, honest, hard-headed, and terrifically in earnest. He had a full measure of his

[1] Cmd. 5044 of 1935, p. 19.

countrymen's distrust for British imperialism and diplomacy, but he had a lingering faith in the League of Nations, and international law. With the Emperor this belief almost became an obsession. Long after he had left his country he clung to the idea that England and the League would ultimately restore him to his full authority.

Probably the Ethiopian refusal of the terms made no practical difference. For reasons of English domestic politics the plan was born dead. Mr. Baldwin, partly from sheer carelessness, had offended our English pride, our old and quite unjustified idea of ourselves as defenders of international law and justice. Sir Samuel Hoare resigned, saying, with considerable justification, that from the Ethiopian standpoint the terms suggested were the best that Italy would be likely to accept. Mr. Baldwin remained in office, and Mr. Eden became Foreign Secretary. Both had been fully cognisant of the year-old intrigue, both knew that they intended to sacrifice Ethiopia, but the English conscience was satisfied, the press helped to smother any more manifestations of disapproval, and we settled down to the Christmas holidays with little more than a vague feeling of uneasiness and disapproval. Mr. Eden's previous activities at Geneva stood him and his Government in good stead.

The actual position at the end of 1935 was that Italy was left a free hand to advance in Ethiopia. No negotiations were in progress, and no diplomatic pressure was placed upon her except the slow and ineffective 'sanctions' applied by Geneva. The one sanction which might have embarrassed her, that on oil, had been deferred at M. Laval's instance. It was now to be postponed until March, by which time the British as

well as the French object was to get the war finished as soon as possible. In March the question was again postponed, this time until the Greek Kalends. The English protest against the Peace plan turned out to have been little more than sound and fury, it had signified nothing. A wave of feeling can accomplish little to-day against a Government which is well entrenched, has the support of moneyed and Catholic opinion, the control of the B.B.C., and the backing of most of the press. The whole of the agitation did not save a yard of Ethiopian territory, or even provide an Abyssinian soldier with a rifle with which to defend himself.

CHAPTER VII

CIVILIZATION REACHES ABYSSINIA

WITH the collapse of the Anglo-French intrigue it became Italy's policy to accelerate her advance from the north. It seems that Signor Mussolini did not yet envisage the conquest of all Ethiopia in a single campaign, and the war can be divided into two periods. Up to March, 1936, Badoglio moved comparatively slowly, taking care to avoid Italian casualties. His aeroplanes went ahead, bombing towns, villages, the little circles of *tukuls*, and any concentration of levies. From January onwards the Italians habitually used gas. The bulk of the land fighting was done by native troops, sometimes with the help of armed Danakils and tribesmen from the desert 'no man's land.' Behind these troops followed the tanks, and heavy artillery. Very few European troops came within dangerous fighting distance of the Ethiopians, except when there was some miscalculation, or the levies won an unexpected success, as at Abbi Adda, or when scattered groups, in the rear of the Italian forces, attacked the lines of communication.

All through this first period Signor Mussolini was still hoping to achieve his ends by the break-up of the Ethiopian Empire. He had taught his people that Abyssinia would collapse before a military demonstration, and that he would be able to impose what terms he wanted without any serious casualties. By March his generals had learnt that the Ethiopians would go on fighting, and that the amount of internal treachery was

not likely to be considerable. On the other hand the combined effects of complete control of the air and of poison gas were proving greater than had been expected, and the levies had exhausted their meagre supplies of arms, ammunition, and food. The order was given to push on to Addis Ababa, even at the cost of some Italian casualties. The northern campaign was then finished off within a few weeks, and before the beginning of the summer rains. The southern army took Daggahbur, but never reached its real objective, Harar, until the Emperor had left the country.

For the purposes of this book the war need only be considered 'by and large.' Its real history will never be written. Ethiopia was inarticulate enough before the fall of Addis Ababa. Since then the Italians have systematically exterminated the few men who had European education and connections, and most of those who displayed an independent outlook. They have expelled all foreigners, European or Indian, including those missionaries and business men who had the best knowledge of the Ethiopian people outside Addis Ababa. The remnants of the Abyssinian population are completely cut off from any contact with the West, and from any means of expressing their views.

Even those Europeans who were in Abyssinia during the war knew little of what was really happening. None of the two hundred foreign correspondents, who rushed out to Addis Ababa at the beginning of the war, saw more than scattered glimpses of the actual fighting. Most of them did not get past Dessye in the north, or Jijiga in the south. After a month or two nearly all of them had been recalled, and by the end of February there were less than fifteen in the country. Our knowledge of the actual conditions under which the Ethiopians fought

and suffered must, for the most part, be acquired from Red Cross workers—some of whom, like John Melly and Major Burgoyne, did not survive the war—and from foreigners serving in the army. Of these latter only a few, like Colonel Konovaloff and the Turkish leaders in the south, Wehib Pasha and Farouk Bey, were really genuine and reliable soldiers.

The history of the war is the history of mechanized force used against a primitive people. It has little interest because we know so little of the Ethiopian side. On the Italian side we know that the only real obstacles to the advance of the mechanized force were the Italian excessive cautiousness, their inexperience, and the difficult nature of the country. At first the Italians had a slight numerical advantage, but latterly, when they had orders to push forward to Addis Ababa, their numbers were almost as overwhelmingly superior as their equipment. Badoglio has written a workmanlike account of his campaign which is a remarkable contrast to De Bono's feeble book.[1] Its value as an historical document is, however, spoilt by his exaggeration of the part played by Fascist regiments, by his descriptions of Ethiopian soldiery and their resistance as if they were normally equipped troops, and above all by an under-estimation of the importance of bombing and gas attacks upon lightly-clad soldiers and civilians.

The first use of gas seems to have been on December 22nd, within three days of the final collapse of the Hoare-Laval peace plan, when Badoglio was beginning his advance, and found himself held up by Ras Imru in front of Adi Quala. Owing to De Bono's unhappy disposition of troops he was even exposed to a counter-attack.

[1] Pietro Badoglio, *The War in Abyssinia*, Methuen.

> On Sunday, December 22, squadrons, I do not know how many, rained yperite on Imru's advanced party. For the first time in the history of the world, a people supposedly white used poison gas upon a people supposedly savage. To Badoglio, Field Marshal of Italy, must be attributed the glory of this difficult victory.
>
> Some were blinded. When others saw the burns spread upon their arms and legs and felt the increasing pain, whose source and end they could not understand and for whose cure they had no medicine, Imru's men broke and fled. The moral effect was even more terrible than the material. From their easy perches in high heaven the Italians could see with their own eyes, and with a feeling of rich treasure trove, an Ethiopian force jerked suddenly backward, horrified and scattered. Bombing had never shown such fine aesthetic results. Total dispersion.[1]

Bombing with explosives had little moral effect on the levies in open country. They had an obscene jest about the aeroplanes which showed no great respect, and the Ethiopian has always endured ordinary gun-shot or shell wounds with a stoicism which no European could equal. Heavy artillery fire had no great terrors for them. Two things got 'under their skin.' One was the bombing of villages and of groups of women working in the fields. The tribesmen had a savage's belief that women were not fair game. The other was the use of gas, which seemed to them a kind of physical contamination like leprosy. From their simpler point of view the Ethiopian had evolved rules of war similar to those which nineteenth century Europe had codified, and

[1] G. L. Steer, *Cæsar in Abyssinia*, 233.

which twentieth century Italy has now taught us to despise. You warned your enemy before you began a war, you left his womenkind alone, you did not poison him.

The Italians were not long in breaking a fourth rule of war and of civilized conduct. It is a little difficult to understand the systematic attacks made upon European, Egyptian, and Ethiopian Red Cross units. The Swedish Red Cross was bombed at Dolo on December 30th, the Ethiopian Red Cross at Amba Aradam in the north and at Daggahbur in the south, the British Red Cross at Alomata on March 4th. The last attack, in which Signor Mussolini's son Vittorio took part, was perhaps the most deliberate of all. The British unit, under Dr. Melly, were then treating each day a considerable number of poison-gas cases.[1]

The attacking aeroplanes came down very low. This they had learnt to do, because there was hardly a weapon on the Ethiopian side capable of sending a projectile more than a few hundred feet upwards. The Red Cross units in all cases were very well flagged, and their general equipment, tents, etc., marked them out conspicuously. The attacks were so deliberate, and later became so persistent that in the final stages of the war it was found safer not to put up Red Cross signs, especially on lorries. They merely attracted the fiercest bombing.

It may be interesting to quote the verdict of a well-known Italian apologist, closely in touch with Italian opinion, Mr. G Martelli, correspondent in Rome of the *Morning Post*.

> It is generally assumed that the Italian motive in destroying the unit was to eliminate European wit-

[1] For Melly's own account see K. Nelson and A. Sullivan *John Melly of Ethiopia*, 212 ff.

nesses of the use of poison gas. Dr. Melly and his companions had been treating gas cases at the rate of eighty to a hundred a day, and it was evidently undesirable from the Italian point of view that they should continue to accumulate such damaging evidence. And yet short of killing every white member of the unit, which was unlikely, it was impossible to prevent the truth from coming out, so that the commonly accepted explanation is not really very plausible. It seems more probable that the raid was just a sheer piece of 'frightfulness' with hatred of the English as an additional motive.[1]

Beginning a war without notice, and bombing inhabited towns had almost become accepted as part of our post-war civilization, and created less stir in Europe than the attacks on hospitals, and the use of poison gas. The latter was a definitely retrogade step. Italy, with most civilized countries, had sworn not to employ poison gas—under the protocol of June 17th, 1925. The reactions in the various democratic countries to this breach of a solemn agreement were more interesting than encouraging. The class of individuals, whom Signor Mussolini likes to describe as 'humanitarian spinsters' did their best to call attention to the enormity of Italian behaviour, but they had comparatively little success outside a few countries, like Sweden, which had not yet accepted the return to 'realist' politics.

[1] G. Martelli, *Italy against the World*, p. 256. We also have Vittorrio Mussolini's own account in his *Flying over Ethiopian Mountain Ranges*, the purpose of which is to have Italian youth learn to be above War's sorrows, seeing only its beauties. Il Duce's twenty-year-old son found the War a period of 'magnificent sport'—e.g. 'one group of horsemen gave me the impression of a budding rose unfolding as the bomb fell in their midst and blew them up. It was exceptionally good fun.'

Both the French and British Governments had decided that Italy must be allowed to win the war. They might dislike her methods of fighting, but this was a minor affair compared with the German danger, which all through the early months of 1936 dominated our Foreign Office as much as it did the Quai d'Orsay. M. Flandin had succeeded M. Laval, but on the relative importance of Ethiopia and the Rhineland there was no change in the French attitude. Two events occurred towards the end of February which helped in the process of 'writing off' the Abyssinia question.

The first was the unauthorized publication of the Maffey Report, a full account of which appeared in the Italian press. A considerable mystery still surrounds the manner in which Signor Gayda obtained a copy of a confidential state paper. Mr. Eden suggested that it was 'through an indiscretion or a deliberate breach of confidence.' Its obvious lack of interest in Italy's aggression ran somewhat counter to the orthodox Italian propaganda in which we were shown as the scheming Imperialist power refusing to let Italy have a share of the booty. But the great prominence which Signor Gayda gave to his 'find' showed that he understood its real importance. If it made Signor Gayda's propaganda absurd it also showed the insincerity of Mr. Eden's activities at Geneva during the previous year. It was a good prelude to the postponement of the oil sanctions.

The American Neutrality Act, which was passed on the last day of February, had an equally disheartening effect on the 'sanctionists.' M. Flandin found no more difficulty than his predecessor in keeping the Committee of Eighteen and the Committee of Thirteen engaged in discussing vague generalities. On March 3rd Mr. Eden agreed to the indefinite postponement of the oil ques-

tion. On March 7th Herr Hitler denounced the Locarno Pact, and began the military re-occupation of the Rhineland zone. No two events could have been more closely connected.

Presumably a sense of proportion is necessary in diplomacy. Italy had attacked an unoffending country, a member of the League. In the process she had broken every canon of international law, every rule of decent conduct. Germany had re-occupied an area which she already administered and owned, and she did so 'without the taking of a single life or the dropping of a single explosive, or incendiary bomb or poison-gas container.'[1] But from the Foreign Office standpoint the first was a matter of minor importance, the second was an event which altered the whole European situation, and which made it necessary to restore some semblance of the old and broken 'Stresa front.' The contrast between our attitude towards Italian and German aggression showed how completely we had abandoned the moral for a material basis in our Foreign policy.

The word therefore went out to the press to smother down Ethiopian news, and Italy was given a broad hint to finish off her war as quickly as possible. The march into the Rhineland was the signal for Badoglio to chance some Italian casualties and push on to Addis Ababa. The new type of campaign started immediately after March 7th. The position in England, and to a lesser degree in France, had changed considerably since December, when the Hoare-Laval plan was published. The intention of the two Governments was still definite and realist, a matter of power politics, and each being more or less democratic had to take some notice of public opinion, but in England this factor was now far

[1] *Survey of International Affairs*, 1935, ii. 340.

less likely to be embarrassing. The wave of feeling which had been roused in December had subsided. The outburst had been futile, for there was no constructive thought behind it.

The British Government was helped immensely by the development of a strong pro-Italian movement. It is important to consider its constituent sections, for they were to continue their support during the Spanish affair. First there were powerful groups in the Conservative Party, and in the 'City', which were opposed to the League of Nations, though they had concealed their dislike at the time of the 1935 election. They had the support of most of the London newspapers and also of the provincial press. Their general attitude was that the Ethiopian campaign was a 'colonial' affair in which the rules of war and of relations between civilized Powers could not be made applicable. They hated the idea that international law, with the possible control of commercial exploitation, should spread over the whole world, and that any collection of black men should be able to put their case before Geneva. To these politicians and publicists must be added the growing section of 'drawing-room fascists,' to whom the idea of a totalitarian state makes an immediate appeal, though few of them have much sympathy with the extravagances of Sir Oswald Mosley.

The next important section, both in England and on the Continent, was the Catholics. After some unhappy wavering in the early days of the Ethiopian affair the Catholic hierarchy settled down to a solid support of Signor Mussolini.

It is a significant fact that when Italy was comparatively moderate, and condescended to put forward some arguments to justify her aggression, she had far

less general support than in the later stages when her objects were made plain, and she openly defied every rule of God and man.

It will be best to quote a well-known Catholic writer on the general policy of the Vatican towards the Abyssinian affair. No serious student can question the conclusions reached by Mr. Teeling.[1]

> There is no need to go into lengthy detail about the history of the development of the Abyssinian War. A well-known Catholic cleric in Great Britain, who was a personal friend of the Pope, referred to him as a poor old man, sitting in the Vatican, surrounded by Italians, and in a sense this was true. . . .
>
> He could not have wanted war, and he said so as clearly as possible. It is true that he kept silent—many people think for far too long a time. It is equally true that he wanted to see the spread of Catholicism in Abyssinia, and he felt that would only be possible with the support of Italy.
>
> It is equally true that he has thrown his weight on the side of the totalitarian leaders, and he has felt that the imperial policy of Italy must mean an advance for his own Church in the conquered countries. But he did not altogether satisfy Mussolini, since the latter brought all possible pressure to bear on the Pope to induce him to bless the Italian armies and come out wholeheartedly for Italy. The Pope did not do this himself, but he raised no finger to stop Italian bishops up and down the country from going on Fascist platforms and doing everything possible to support the Italian arms.

[1] William Teeling, *The Pope in Politics*, 128-9.

The attitude of the Vatican was naturally reflected in the Catholic hierarchies of every country. In England and France a group of Catholic propagandists, including a number of young writers who had recently joined the Roman Church, began to support the more official apologists with all the enthusiasm and lack of responsibility which marks the newly-converted.

The demarcation of English political parties since 1918, and still more since 1931, has immensely increased Catholic influence. Up to the European war the Liberal Party were almost independent of the Catholic vote, and even gained some support by opposing its claims. To-day the Liberal Party has lost all influence, and the Labour Party, which has taken its place on the official opposition, is dependent for many of its few safe seats upon the votes of immigrant Irish Catholics, a class specially susceptible to the political suggestions of their priests. When the Catholic hierarchy finds itself in agreement with the class controlling the present Government a combination is formed which gives political Catholicism an authority out of all proportion to the number and voting strength of its adherents.

The Government could also count on support from those politicians and publicists who habitually follow the successful side. The conquering cause does not only please the gods. Sir Timothy Tadpole, M.P., and Captain Taper, M.P., are English types who can always be relied upon to drift quietly over and range themselves with the winners in every contest. The Catos of this world have no jobs to offer. With the Tapers and the Tadpoles will always go a motley crew of hack journalists and second-rate publicists. In this case, as with the Spanish war a year later, there was money behind the propaganda. Big business interests were

affected by the limited sanctions already imposed, just as similar interests were anxious for a renewal of trade with Spain and the protection of capital invested in that country. The Government's task was not really difficult, though Signor Mussolini did nothing to make it easier. For the most part they could rely on the growing cynicism and indifference of the British public towards a world in which all the old standards and the old values were disappearing. It was only necessary to adopt the same tactics of delay, equivocation, and demands for further evidence which had proved so successful at Geneva.

The question of poison-gas provides an admirable example of this smothering process. Protests against the use of yperite began to come from Ethiopia soon after the Italians started to use it in December.

> On December 31st, 1935, three months before the debate in the House of Lords, Captain R.H.R. Taylor, R.A., Assistant Military Attaché at the British Legation in Addis Ababa, visited the wells of Bulale in the Ogaden, which had just been bombed. Either an unexploded bomb, or part of a bomb, was sent to Aden, and from thence to the Gas Experimental School at Porton, where it was proved to contain crude mustard-gas—the forbidden yperite.[1]

Evidence from Red Cross workers, correspondents and other non-Abyssinian sources reached England in the first months of the year, and increased rapidly in volume as the Italians developed their technique, and began to spray large areas with mustard-gas. All through March *The Times* printed accounts of the use of poison gas from their correspondents, and on the 25th they published

[1] G. L. Steer, *Cæsar in Abyssinia.* 283.

a telegram from Mr. T. A. Lambie, the distinguished American who was acting as Secretary to the Red Cross organization in Ethiopia.

> The bombing of country villages around Kworam and Waldia, the permanent blinding and maiming of hundreds of helpless women and children, as well as the infliction of similar injuries on soldiers with that most dreadful of all dreadful agencies, yperite, or so-called mustard-gas, should cause us to ask ourselves the question—whither?

The question was raised by Lord Robert Cecil in the House of Lords at the end of March. By that time the Government had received an account of the use of gas from Sir Sidney Barton, the very able and open-minded Minister at Addis Ababa. The evidence, direct and accumulative, was by then overwhelming, but it was obviously more embarrassing to the British Government than to the Italians, who had openly declared the passage of 260 tons of yperite through the Suez Canal before the end of February. The unfortunate Viscount Halifax was put up to state that 'he had no information,' that 'it would be wrong and quite unjust to prejudge a matter so grave and so vitally affecting the honour of a great country.' Finally he said that he thought that information had been asked for from our representatives in Addis Ababa, but 'would make sure.'

Great is the force of inertia. Those few people who felt keenly about the Ethiopian tragedy struggled hopelessly against the solid determination of the Government not to hinder a rapid Italian victory. While Badoglio was collecting an enormous army for his final march to Addis Ababa, the British were holding up the passage of a few thousand rifles through Berbera

and the French were making it impossible to take even revolvers and gas-masks into Ethiopia by railway or aeroplane.[1] Many people in England have been misled by newspapers, like the *Observer*, and believe that the last part of the campaign was a great feat of arms. Some of the correspondents on the Ethiopian side contributed to this misunderstanding by a natural but mistaken optimism during the early part of the war. It may, therefore, be as well to state the extent of the Italian forces which undertook the final attack. The figures, which can be checked from Italian sources, are given in Mr. Steer's *Cæsar in Abyssinia.*

Amba Aradam. 2 Army Corps, supplies of 22,000,000 cartridges, 219,000 shells, over 200 cannon, between 200 and 300 aeroplanes, with bombs and poison gas.

Tembien. 2 Army Corps, 7,000,000 cartridges, 48,000 shells, and over 100 aeroplanes. Some artillery.

Shire. 2 Army Corps, 10,000,000 cartridges, 50,000 shells. Some artillery and aeroplanes.

Against this there were, according to Badoglio's very generous estimate, the last remnants of the levies and the small regular army.

The enemy, with about 5,000 men, was holding positions at Aia, and with 30,000–35,000, positions at Agumberta-Assel Gherti; among these forces, in second line was the Imperial Guard, consisting of 6 full battalions of infantry and 8 battalions of artillery, with some 30 guns, all with modern arms and equipment; solid units, trained on European

[1] Passengers were not allowed to take any arms from Jibuti to Addis Ababa. A Red Cross 'plane was delayed for several days in France because seven gas-masks were discovered for the four occupants.

lines, with high morale and an aggressive spirit, to which the personal presence of the Negus added additional force.[1]

Actually the Imperial Guard, of which the writer saw something, was considerably below the Indian army standard in training, and far below it in equipment. The few European officers had been recalled early in the war. By March the Imperial Guard had practically no ammunition for their rifles or artillery. The Emperor never had any real transport service, so that it was impossible to keep many troops in the field for more than a few days at a time.

Goliath rolled forward to an inevitable victory. No other great European Power would have used such a huge force against such an opponent.

[1] Pietro Badoglio, *The War in Abyssinia*, 143.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM ETHIOPIA TO SPAIN

IN the end Italy achieved her original object, but not until her troops were within two or three days' march of Addis Ababa. On April 29th Haile Selassie, with the broken remnants of his army, reached his capital. Three days later he renounced control, and left the country with his family, taking with him about a hundred Ethiopian notables. The Ethiopian Empire had collapsed, and the country returned to its old feudal condition, but with a foreign power in occupation of its capital and holding the two main routes from Addis Ababa to Eritrea, and to Jibuti. The attempt to build up a country on European lines had been destroyed by a European Power, and with the collusion of the European League of Nations.

It was only during this last phase that the old feuds and tribal differences became acute. There were chiefs who had never quite accepted Haile Selassie's regency and his later elevation to the throne. There was the old quarrel between the Amharan and Galla tribes, which cropped up from time to time during the war, but the importance of which was frequently exaggerated. Certain lawless elements in the population, notably the *Shiftas*, who are really hereditary bandits, regained their old importance. Such divisions and such lawless elements exist in any rather primitive country which is evolving a unitary system of government—such as Afghanistan, Persia, Iraq, or Mexico.

Haile Selassie when he reached his capital had as

difficult a decision to make as has ever faced any man. Unfortunately he was physically tired to the point of exhaustion, and morally disheartened by his defeats, by the overwhelming strength of the Italian army, by disputes and recriminations amongst his own advisers. The one foreigner in whom he placed implicit confidence, Mr. Colson, was suffering from that form of heart disease which attacks so many people in the Ethiopian highlands, and he was not present to advise the Emperor. The Empress, the priests who were attached to the royal family, and his cousin, Ras Kassa, who had served him faithfully if not always wisely, all counselled him to leave the country. His position was not unlike that of Napoleon III after the battle of Sedan, when he vainly hoped to meet a Prussian bullet, but in the end had to surrender.

The alternatives were a flight to Jibuti or a withdrawal to Gore in the west. Bilatangeta Herrouy, the Foreign Minister, Igezu, the Military Governor of Addis Ababa were both in favour of the bolder course. They proposed sending the royal family out of the country but wished the Emperor to go into the West country with the 'archives' in order to set up the nucleus of a Government and reassemble his army in the less accessible mountain districts. Gore is a small town with road connections to Gambela Post, and thence by river to the Sudan. In the end a few lorry loads of papers, and such insignia of a modern government were sent westwards by lorry, and with them went Ras Imru, some of the chiefs and a few of the younger officials, but the Emperor joined his family and went to Jibuti, where he was taken on board a British man-of-war.

There were probably two factors which drove the Emperor to take a decision which many have since

regretted. Personal safety was certainly not one of them, though this may have weighed with his immediate entourage. Haile Selassie had the courage of the intellectual, who seldom enjoys fighting but bears himself bravely when faced with physical dangers. At this time he probably did not 'set his life at a pin's fee.' But he still held on to the illusion that his country's case had not been properly set before Europe, and above all before Great Britain and the League. Long after the astute Herrouy had been converted to a more realistic view of British and French policy the Emperor clung to his idea of a just and omnipotent British Government which would ultimately restore him to his throne.

The other factor may have been hesitation about his own suitability as a guerilla leader operating in the West. From what happened later there is little doubt that if he had gone into the Galla country he would have had the loyal support of Hapte Mariam, ruler of Nekempti. But he knew that wherever he was his subjects would tend to congregate, and probably he felt that his presence would only be an embarrassment to any Ras who was prepared to carry on the war. No foreigner, least of all an Englishman, has the right to criticize his decision.

The departure of the Emperor was like the drawing of a curtain between Ethiopia and the rest of the world. Addis Ababa gave itself up to an orgy of looting and self-destruction. The town was full of refugees and of tribesmen, separated from their chiefs and out of all control. It was an orgy that began fairly cheerfully, but drink and desperation led to a reversion to complete savagery. The Italian troops marched in to find the smoking remains of the city. They wasted little time.

The carrying of arms or the possession of some smattering of a foreign language were equally damning. The 'machine-gun massacres' of the natives began, at the same time as every unofficial foreigner was being expelled. Greeks and Gujarati shop-keepers, Armenians and British Somalis went equally with New Zealand missionaries and French newspaper correspondents.

Signor Mussolini had won his first objective, and intended to have no spectators of his second task, the subjugation of a country of which he only held two thin strips, joining at Addis Ababa. For some months, until the rains were over, the Italians were content to hold a few towns and their lines of communication to Massawa and Dolo. They made no attempt to enter the West of the country, where life went on much as before. Colonel Sandford, one of the Emperor's few British advisers, continued to function for some months at Maji in the extreme south-west. A provisional government was formed at Gore. The Italian troops settled down to the discomfort of spending the rainy season in a ruined city boycotted by the surrounding peasants, and very short of supplies. There for the time we can leave them.

Having drawn a thick curtain across the Abyssinian scene, Signor Mussolini could step before it and receive the plaudits of a divided and rather bewildered audience. Some at least were his good friends. Germany was unstinted in her praise, even if her professional soldiers were slightly amused by the enormous force that Badoglio had found necessary for his enterprise. She was to be the first country to recognize the annexation a few months later. The Vatican was equally decided in its enthusiasm. Ten days after the Emperor had left Addis Ababa the Pope, at an exhibition of the Catholic

Press, went out of his way to allude to the pleasure of the Vatican in 'the triumphal happiness of a great and good people in a peace which it hopes and confidently expects will be a prelude to that new European and world peace of which the exhibition seeks to be, and is, a clear symbol.' A little later the Pope presented his Golden Rose to the Queen of Italy when she became Empress of Abyssinia, while in Rome priests vied with each other to bless even the taxi-cabs which were being sent out to Addis Ababa. Austria and Hungary followed Germany.

From the English and French sides of the house Signor Mussolini was dependent on his usual *claque* who certainly did their duty with a will.[1] Undoubtedly he had won a great diplomatic and economic victory, a victory far more striking than any achieved by his soldiers, and he had won it at the expense of the British and French Foreign Offices. He had not—overtly at any rate—had to come to either for any assistance. He had mobilized an unnecessarily large army, fought a war regardless of proportion and expense, and he had not had to ask either the City of London or the Bourse for a half-penny. It was a complete triumph for the new totalitarian finance as well as for the new diplomacy.

[1] E.g. *The Observer*, April 19, 1936. J. L. Garvin. 'The Italians are sweeping into the heart of Abyssinia proper. The victories in the last few weeks have been beyond their dreams. It is a wonderful tale. The true account should help the British people to realise how they have been bamboozled and misled.' Then follows an inaccurate and one-sided account of the campaign. Finally Mr. Garvin concludes—'The remnant of our sanctionists are as mistaken as before when they vociferate that the Italians owe their advantage chiefly to poison gas. The Italians owe it rather to epic road-making, unmatched in military history—to air force—to machine guns—to mechanical transport—to consummate political direction and military leadership together—and to the prowess and endurance of the troops, both Europeans and Askaris.'

Though ominous sounds occasionally issued from behind the curtain, and must certainly have been audible to Signor Mussolini himself, these merely urged him on to new diplomatic adventures in other fields. A dictatorship is a dynamic not a static form of government; movement is its life. Signor Mussolini had got all that he wanted from England and France, and saw no reason for gratitude to either. In both there was some change of attitude on foreign affairs soon after the fall of Addis Ababa. M. Blum and M. Delbos succeeded M. Sarraut and M. Flandin on June 4th, and the Popular Front Government did not promise that easy bargaining which had obtained in the days of M. Laval. On June 5th—the coincidence of dates is remarkable—Sir Samuel Hoare was received back into the Cabinet. Only four days later Mr. Neville Chamberlain made a calculated indiscretion when he referred to the 'midsummer madness' of maintaining sanctions, and thereby forced Mr. Baldwin's hand.

With a maddening reiteration history was repeating itself. As France went left, England moved to the right. Signor Mussolini, seeing that sanctions and the League of Nations were now safely put on one side, looked for a more enterprising Power to go hunting with, and a more promising field than Abyssinia. Germany was the obvious partner, and Spain a heaven-sent opportunity. Signor Mussolini's two first ventures in empire-building dove-tailed neatly into each other.

In the meanwhile Haile Selassie trod his *via dolorosa* to Palestine, to London, where the police cleverly side-tracked a popular welcome, to Geneva, where he moved two resolutions and found himself in each case in a minority of one, and then back to obscurity and penury in the south-west of England. The one gesture made by

the smaller Powers was to insist on Ethiopia's right to be represented, and her credentials have never been rejected. The chief effect of this has been that Italy, from May, 1936, until her withdrawal on December 11th, 1937, has only been represented at Geneva by the bad manners of her newspaper correspondents.

A movement to the right in England during the last three or four years has meant a movement friendly to Italy. The new imperialism is something which few foreigners can understand. During the last six or seven years we have watched the extreme Conservative elements in England, as represented in the press by the newspapers of Lords Rothermere, Beaverbrook and Astor, and in Parliament by Conservative critics of the present Government, not only receding supinely before the Japanese and Italian challenges, but taking a perverse pleasure in each act of inhumanity and in each broken treaty. Dislike of the League and fear of any entanglement with peoples who have unorthodox views about property have proved to be motive forces much stronger than any fear for the safety of the Empire. The Abyssinian venture left Italy straddled across North Africa, and controlling the shorter route to India. The Spanish affair has had strategic results still more important and far more dangerous to England and her Dominions, but every effort is made to keep from the public what has happened and is happening in the Mediterranean.

We have to recognize the existence of a new type of internationalism, a reply perhaps to the rather vague left-wing internationalism of the post-war period. It is pro-fascist and anti-communist. It has the support of the Vatican, of many capitalists, and of the old European landed aristocracy. The working of this new

internationalism has been clearer over the Spanish war than over Ethiopia, but we can see something of its effectiveness in the campaign to rehabilitate Italy which began a month after the fall of Addis Ababa. Not only were sanctions removed by July 15th, and Sir Samuel Hoare signalized his return by withdrawing the fleet from the Eastern Mediterranean, but every effort was made to persuade the world to forget Ethiopia.

The British Foreign Office, controlling through the Sudan the only practical way into Gore and western Ethiopia, deliberately obstructed any attempt to keep alive resistance to an Italy which had not yet made even a formal entry into the western provinces. The passage of arms and ammunition was completely forbidden, on the grounds that it might encourage civil war between the tribes, a ridiculous and mendacious 'gloss' on the report of the British Consul. Ethiopians and Europeans were forbidden to go to the parts of Ethiopia which were still free.

The western chiefs would at that time have accepted a British mandate, and wrote to the League suggesting it.[1] Those who came through western Ethiopia that summer gave the impression of a country which was very peaceful, and only wanting to be left alone, and carry on its usual coffee trade with the Sudan.[2] They were however prepared to fight against an Italian invasion, and this the Galla tribes seem to have done. Of this later war we know little except from refugees into Kenya. The younger educated Ethiopians, who had

[1] This, of course, was not a practical proposal, but the British Government did their utmost to conceal the fact that there were still organized groups of independent chiefs in Ethiopia.

[2] The coffee trade was through Gore, down to the British Post at Gambela, thence by steamer to Khartoum. It only functioned during the rainy season.

gone westward with the Government—including the three sons of Dr. Martin, and the young Herrouy,—have all been either killed or executed.

Ethiopia is still a corpse which all Mr. Eden's efforts have failed to bury properly. The Italians replied to our good offices by appointing Marshal Graziani, who has a reputation for cruelty all over North Africa, to succeed Badoglio as Viceroy of Abyssinia. He keeps the curtain carefully drawn, allowing no foreigners into his country except officials, or those whose good opinion can be guaranteed in advance. Occasionally a corner is lifted. Those who have still some channels of communication would probably agree with the very remarkable account which appeared in *The Times* on October 8th, describing Abyssinia after eighteen months' occupation.

> With the exception of the bigger towns and the provinces, where the means of communication are such that military aid can be secured quickly in cases of emergency, Abyssinia is governed by Abyssinian chieftains who carry on guerilla warfare against the Italians, harassing them at every opportunity.

The article stated that several attacks had occurred on posts at Adowa and elsewhere. These confirm the common report that Signor Mussolini's roads are 'Italian by day and Abyssinian by night.' Perhaps the most surprising part of the report is the account of economic conditions.

> No cereals have yet been cultivated in an effort to meet the needs of the country. Whereas before the Italian occupation millet was being exported from Abyssinia in large quantities, it is now imported into

the country *via* Jibuti. The Abyssinian population have almost entirely abandoned their lands, and agriculture is a thing of the past. At present there is a scarcity of Jimmah and Sidamo coffee, though these provinces formerly had the biggest production in Abyssinia. . . . The morale of the Italians is not high, in view of the privations and difficulties they have to face. Another considerable handicap for the Italians is, of course, their lack of capital. Their financial embarrassment is evident,[1]

The Times does not state the source of this very damaging report, but probably it is sufficiently accurate to explain why Signor Mussolini is determined to distract all possible attention from his first great venture. Communications are said to have broken down very badly during the first rains, and by the middle of 1936 most Italians must have learnt that isolated highlands, situated in the tropics and hundreds of miles from the sea, are not likely to be a very valuable investment, even if the original inhabitants have not any say in the matter. Once Signor Mussolini understood that Abyssinia was not an Eldorado, he turned immediately back to Europe, determined to use his diplomatic victory, and the strategic importance of his North-East African empire, to start upon a new venture nearer home. He could trust Graziani to hold Abyssinia down while he tried his luck in Spain.

Some evidence is now available about early German and Italian activities in Spain. They began about 1934, and followed the now familiar lines of permeation through industrial, political, and religious propaganda. Some years ago Signor Mussolini remarked that 'fascism

[1] *The Times*, October 8, 1937.

is not an article of export,' and ever since then his supporters in England have quoted this remark as if it was a great and permanent truth. The fact that anyone could now take such a statement seriously shows the extent to which the average Englishman is cut off from knowledge of what is happening on the Continent. To anyone in Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Albania, or even in Belgium and France it would seem merely comic to suggest that fascism is not always trying to form groups and 'cells' outside the totalitarian countries. The latter have adopted in their external propaganda, as in so many other ways, the technique of Russian communism. This form of permeation is not really new, in essence it is the old imperialist method applied to Europe. There is little difference in principle between the advance guard of prospectors and business men, who were our pioneers in so many parts of the Empire, and the fascist agents, who spread their new political doctrines over Europe, and work in close touch with their more definitely commercial fellow-countrymen abroad.

While communism and fascism are both 'articles for export' and superficially have certain points of resemblance, it may be as well to emphasize their differences. International communism had a period of great activity immediately after the war. It had very little success once Europe began to settle down to a more normal existence. The Marxist view of life appeals primarily to working-men and students who lack money, leisure, facilities for travel and for learning foreign languages, all of which make it easier to develop an international organization. Communism continues to exist independently in different countries, but Russia, for all practical purposes, went out of the international

business before the end of the 'twenties.' Some five years later Italy and Germany began to take her place while Russia has become almost chauvinistic, and Stalin talks about the 'Fatherland' as frequently as any old-fashioned sentimental German.

The first great difference is that fascism appeals to a wealthier class—not necessarily in its own country but abroad. The authoritarian gospel attracts the successful business man, the keen Catholic, the man of leisure, and a certain type of intellectual. All four are likely to be far more internationally-minded than the average working-man, especially if he is not much interested in religion. Though the fascist propagandist appeals to a smaller class, it is more pervasive and far more dangerous. Its converts do not require the elaborate organization which is necessary to keep any working-class movement alive. Above all, they are well represented in, and are closely connected with the governing and official classes. They are not continually hampered by lack of funds and by police interference.

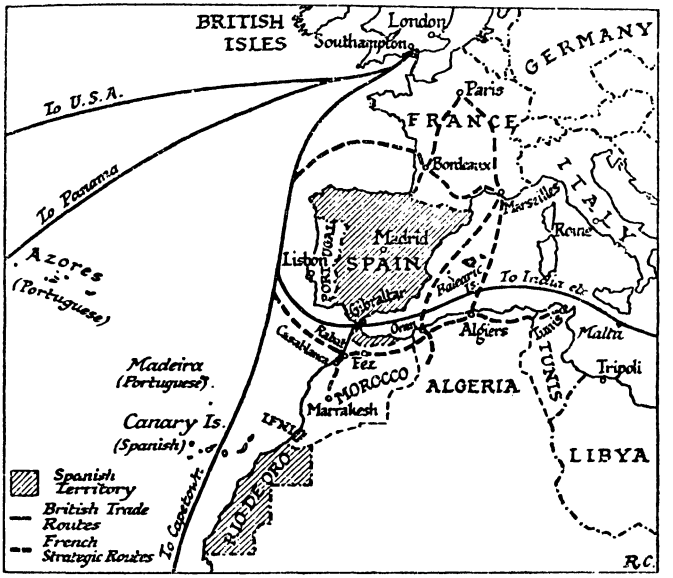
There is another important difference which may be either harmful or beneficial to the working of fascism. Communism at present is essentially Russian, a unitary religion. Fascist ideology takes two separate forms, and its two chief exponents have not yet come to terms. Political Catholicism, while closely connected with one, is extremely suspicious about the other. It dogs the footsteps of Italy, but is inclined to growl at Germany. Fascism and Nazism, though preaching a very similar doctrine, have not yet begun to combine their propaganda. A fourth partner has lately joined the group, but Japan will, presumably, be expected to confine her missionary zeal to the Far East. It may be remembered that only three years ago her tentative bids to

get a foothold in Africa were severely discountenanced by Italy.

A multitude of reasons made Spain interesting to the two dictators, and both began, about 1934, to get in touch with organizations which might be useful to them. It was comparatively virgin land for the type of interference which they contemplated. For some decades our own Foreign Office had been inclined to act as if Europe ended with the Pyrenees. Spain's little revolutions were not taken much more seriously than a change of government in Portugal or Paraguay. She had played an inconspicuous part in European politics during and immediately after the War, and we were inclined to accept Señor de Madariaga's description of his country as an old imperial power retired from the business, a kind of elder statesman amongst the comity of nations, but an elder statesman whose domestic affairs were in rather a tangle.

Nothing is more dangerous than to consider nations as if they were human beings, subject to man's doom of growing old and dying. Spain had not lost a generation in the war. She was full of young men, and teeming with new life. The country was ready for a war of ideas, for a struggle between the privileged classes—feudal, clerical, military, and capitalist—against the unprivileged —manual workers, peasants, and liberal professional workers. It was split by powerful separatist movements, cutting across these divisions. Her people had not had their belly-ful of fighting. For these reasons Spain was a more hopeful field than Austria, Czechoslovakia, or Jugoslavia with their disillusioned and hard-bitten populations.

Spain's strategic position has become immensely important since the development of the submarine and



Spain in relation to trade and strategic routes

the bombing aeroplane. She is now the best country from which to 'squeeze' both France and England. The Balearic Islands lie athwart the sea route between France and her North African colonies. The part assigned to her African troops in the event of a mobilization is well known. The Pyrenees are no longer an insuperable obstacle. Marseilles and the manufacturing centres of the south are at the mercy of air squadrons in the north of Spain.[1] Andalusia and Spanish Morocco, in determined hands, control the western entrance to the Mediterranean far more effectively than can Gibraltar, which may easily become untenable. Finally Galicia

[1] A few years ago France moved some of her most important munition works into the south-west.

and the Asturias, with their indented coast-line, can form a base for submarine and air attacks which in the next war may make the Bay of Biscay impossible for our merchant shipping.

The prizes were great. To Italy intervention in Spain opened possibilities of the Mediterranean at last becoming *mare nostrum*, a Roman sea. To Germany it meant the chance in any future war of making an effective blockade of England, as well as of forcing France to keep large armies on her southern frontier. Both countries began their Spanish intrigues about the year 1934. At first their tentative efforts met with little success, but after some two years they were to reap a great reward.

CHAPTER IX

THE END OF THE BLACK LEGEND

THE roots of the Spanish war, so far as it is a civil war, lie deep in the history of the country. So far as the present war is an invasion its origins are simple enough. The second aspect is the more important, but it is necessary to consider the upheaval, one of many in recent years, which gave Italy and Germany such a magnificent opportunity of intervention.

Primo de Rivera was the mildest of all the post-war dictators. He had much of the easy tolerance which makes the Spaniard so attractive. Neither he nor his people had acquired that tough-mindedness which was the worst heritage of the War. His seven years' rule, from 1923 to 1930, made no violent break in Spanish life. It was a victory for the famous 'traditional obstacles' to reform—the monarchy, the Church, the landlords and the army officers—but its effect was to stifle rather than eradicate opposition. Like most dictators he made good roads, but he left Spain very little else when, characteristically enough, he retired rather than plunge his country into a civil war. There was then no foreign Power to offer support at a price. Germany was still a democracy, and though Signor Mussolini had made overtures to his fellow-dictator as early as 1923 the Italo-Spanish Pact was only a mild threat against France which no one took very seriously.

The shape of Spanish politics after 1930 was largely decided by those seven dead years. All the young, virile, and intelligent elements were growing more and more

dissatisfied with their semi-feudal semi-theocratic form of government, while the old 'traditional obstacles' had no need to reform themselves, but merely fastened themselves more firmly on the backs of the people.

Just as Italian fascism was partly the outcome of a feeling of inferiority after the Great War, so the swing to the left in Spanish politics has been accentuated by a desire to get rid of the 'Black Legend' of Spain abroad. This depicts the country as ignorant, priest-ridden, obscurantist, and fanatical, with a weakness for brigandage and bull-fighting. The Monarchy, with its mediaeval trappings, was the first to disappear, but the outward and visible signs of the Black Legend survived in those buildings which symbolized the obstacles to reform—the convents, churches, and barracks. Whenever the Army and the Church have weakened their control, we find the recurring tendency to attack the buildings themselves, a symptom which is often misrepresented abroad by people who do not know the Spanish country-side and the huge and gloomy edifices which dominate so many poor and tumble-down villages.

The rising of July, 1936, was partly an armed revolt of the officer caste. It is therefore important to appreciate the strength of this unofficial trade union.

Señor Azaña has left a remarkable description of the state of the army, when he took over the Ministry of War in Zamora's government—the corruption and jobbery, the absurdly high proportion of officers, especially in the artillery, and the innumerable sinecures. At the fall of the Monarchy the regular army numbered just over 100,000 men. It had not proved itself very efficient in Morocco, but it had 195 generals on the active list, and 437 on the Reserve. There were 5,938 Colonels and Majors on the active list and 407 on the

Reserve, over five thousand captains and nearly six thousand subalterns.

This meant that there was an officer on the active list for every six soldiers, a proportion more than three times as great as in the French army. There must have been considerable competition to find privates to act as 'batmen.' The army was, as Señor de Madariaga pointed out, 'a bureaucratic machine, which spends most of the money paid to it in salaries for generals and officers, a lesser amount in war material, and a still lesser sum in preparing for war. The Army, in fact, is more important as an instrument of home politics than as a weapon of war.'[1] The Navy was run on similar lines, and was, perhaps, the more absurd because of the marked inefficiency of its tiny fleet. It could, however, boast more admirals than the British Navy.

The development of a large officer class, under-worked and over-paid, is always a danger to the State. In Spain this class had already become a definite caste, with common interests and outlook, and large enough to spill over into the civil service, which deteriorated rapidly during the dictatorship.

Government servants suspected of 'advanced' views, especially in the educational field, were speedily replaced by mercenary hangers-on. The King was only the leader of this privileged caste, 'the link between a clericalist army and a militant Church.' Behind him were the landlords and the big industrialists. It was a dictatorship of interests, which collapsed when one of the chief interests—the army officers—quarrelled with the dictator.

The Church was as deeply involved as any of the 'traditional obstacles' in the formation and continuance

[1] Salvador de Madariaga, *Spain.*

of the dictatorship. It was probably the greatest land-owner and business concern in the country, and was constantly accumulating more wealth. Even its commercial enterprises were untaxed, and partially subsidised. The Church was so favoured by the State that it roused the enmity of the less privileged classes supporting the dictatorship—the manufacturer and secular landlord who at least paid some contribution to the exchequer. But it was the strangle-hold which the Church held upon the mental life of the country that roused the strongest feeling against it.

The Catholic hierarchy were able to exercise an effective censorship over all publications, to control the teaching at the Universities, to starve the state secondary schools, to set the slowest possible pace for the building of village schools, and to postpone the long-delayed campaign against illiteracy. In the meantime it could impose its political, economic, and social ideas upon a large proportion of the rising generation.

It is as well that people in England should understand the nature of these ideas, as taught to the children of parents who often had little respect for the priest. They are laid down in the catechism, a new edition of which appeared during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship.[1] A correspondent to *The Tablet* wrote of this little book that 'in a few pages it answers all problems, furnishes all explanations, resolves all doubts and prepares for all the eventualities of life.' Its questions and answers certainly cover a wide enough field.

The child was taught that there are eleven 'deadly sins,' amongst which are included Darwinism, Protestantism, Socialism, and Liberalism. Little attempt was

[1] *Nuevo Ripalda enriquecido con varios apendices* (14th Ed., 1927).

made to explain these dangerous '-isms,' most of which were considered too remote to be worth more than a line of refutation. Charles Darwin's life's work is dismissed with a reference to monkeys. It is Liberalism which is dealt with at length, for here was a creed sufficiently wide-spread in Spain to be worth fighting. Perhaps I may be allowed to quote Professor Trend's admirable summary, which does more to explain the burnt-out churches of Catalonia and the Levante than any statistics about church wealth, about her hotels, factories and newspapers, her 40,000 nuns, her innumerable monasteries, her luxury in the towns, and the penurious ignorance of her village priests.

'What does Liberalism teach?' 'That the State is independent of the Church.' Three grades of Liberalism—of independence—could be distinguished; but the Church had condemned them all, in the encyclical *Quanta cura* and in the *Syllabus;* the State should be subject to the Church, as the body to the soul, the temporal to the eternal. . . . What was the meaning of liberty of worship? That Government should support the free exercise of all forms of it, even if they were false. The obligation of government, however, was to support true religion, which was the Catholic faith. But should it not support and protect the opinion of its subjects? Yes, *señor*, always provided that those opinions were not condemned by the Church. (Horrid proviso.) The liberty of the press was condemned even more outspokenly. Ought the Government to repress this liberty by means of the censorship? Evidently. Were there any other pernicious liberties? Yes, *señor* ; the liberty of education, liberty of propaganda and liberty of meeting.

> Why were these liberties pernicious? Because they served to teach error, propagate vice and machinations against the Church.[1]

So the catechism goes on, and the famous question and answer about behaviour at parliamentary elections follow logically from the general argument.

> What sin is committed by him who votes for a liberal candidate? Generally a mortal sin.

A series of Test Acts forced these opinions upon teachers at High Schools and the Universities. Inevitably the political life of an extremely intelligent people, with a passion for theoretical discussion, develops in strange ways under such a blanketing. Every form of economic and social doctrine found its adherents. When in 1931 the blanket was removed 'the country reflected all shades of European opinion: anarchists, syndicalists, democrats, liberals, republican conservatives, agrarian socialists, revolutionary Marxists, communists, agrarian capitalists, intolerant Catholics, broad-minded Catholics, constitutional monarchists, modern fascists and worshippers of absolute monarchy.'[2] To this multiplicity of groups must be added the regional divisions. Catalonia had to receive her measure of self-government, and the constitution which was evolved in 1931 left the provincial authorities with powers which made the new Spain verge on a Federation.

The local divisions should, perhaps, be taken more seriously than the party grouping. The English, used to their own simple party grouping, have added a sinister

[1] J. B. Trend, *The Origins of Modern Spain*, 61-3.
[2] Jose Castillejo, *Wars of Ideas in Spain*, 140.

significance to many of the names which Professor Castillejo has enumerated in the previous paragraph. Anarchism suggests outlaws, vowed to political murder. Communism implies a much closer connection with Russia than existed until well after the revolt of 1936, and the outbreak of war. Probably anarchism, in its insistence on village self-government, and its mixture of Bakunin's inclination for disorderly rebellion with Tolstoyan idealism, is far better suited to the Spanish temperament than either fascism or communism. Both of the latter depend ultimately on rigid centralization, on the machine-gun, and on complete control of every means of self-expression.

Certainly when war came it was these two warring but very similar creeds which rose to the top. Fascism, of course, completely dominates General Franco's territory, and the Communist leaders tended to be the most practical and energetic element on the Government side. But in the five years which followed Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, the politicians groped about for some definite alignment. The political groups swung first to the left; then back to the right, when Gil Robles entered the Cabinet, and the Government came under the leadership of Lerroux with the support of 'Ceda,' the confederation of right wing parties. Finally, after the suppression of the 1934 revolt by Moorish troops, and the incarceration of 30,000 citizens for political offences, the swing was decidedly to the left, and was reflected in the 1936 elections.

The republic of 1931 showed some of the weaknesses which are most likely to attack a democratic Government after a period of autocratic rule. The fear of armed reaction hangs over such government, tending to paralyse constructive work, and encouraging con-

centration on constitution-mongering, the bane of most inexperienced politicians called to restore order in difficult times. The Cortes Constituyentes spent most of the first five months in framing a constitution, and theoretical discussions brought out certain divisions which might not have been so noticeable in the less controversial tasks of balancing the budget, and getting rid of the mass of graft and corruption which they had inherited from the dictatorship. Don Niceto Alcalà-Zamora resigned over the famous anti-clerical clause—article 26—which ordered the expulsion of the Jesuits, and the limitation of the Church's financial and commercial activities. He was succeeded by the sensible and astute Azaña, but this probably led to the reaction which occurred in 1933, and that short period of right-wing government which gave Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler an opportunity of establishing their contacts with the fascist elements in Spain.

Between 1933 and their defeat in the elections of 1936 the right-wing parties governed the country. There were changes and more than one crisis, but while Lerroux and Gil Robles were playing the political game, behind them the 'traditional obstacles' were waiting to see how far they could take advantage of a swing of the electoral pendulum, and safeguard their interests under a republic and democracy. They had many advantages—Lerroux, the shady financier, was in close touch with Don Juan March, the Majorcan contrabandist and the chief backer of Spanish fascism, and could get all the funds needed for his party funds. Gil Robles, with his Catholic party of action, could mobilize the religious vote. In some parts the landlords could exercise considerable pressure upon their tenants. There was a possibility that Spain might develop a Conservative

Party securely entrenched upon the property-owning and religious classes.

The attempt failed, partly because there was not a sufficiently large class of prosperous business men in the towns, or of farmers in the country. Also the general temper of the country would not brook such a smothering of the hopes raised in 1931—hopes of autonomy in Catalonia, of freedom from exploitation in the mining districts, and of a redistribution of land in the villages. There were two serious revolts, one in Barcelona, and the other, which developed into a small war, in the Asturias. The second, in October, 1934, was suppressed with the most appalling brutality, and the help of many thousand Moorish troops. In this upheaval and in the war three years later, the finest and bravest group of men in Spain, the Asturian miners, have been practically wiped out, first by Moors, and then by Italians and Germans.

The right-wing Government collapsed. There was a revulsion of feeling against them on account of the Asturian affair. It was intensified by their arrest and imprisonment of many of their political opponents. Señor Azaña and Señor Largo Caballero were amongst those who were detained without trial. Lerroux was involved in a financial scandal and had to resign. Above all they alienated many people by an 'economy campaign' which caused great suffering. Though the 'traditional obstacles' did not foresee the electoral defeat of 1936, hoping that money would achieve more than it did, they were obviously preparing for the possibility of a new counter-revolution. The Ceda was never more than nominally republican. It did not dare go against the views of the great majority of Spaniards of all classes, but its leaders were prepared to angle for

anti-republican support, and to connive at various clandestine activities amongst the officer caste, and also amongst the monarchists.

This gave Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini the opportunity which they wanted, and from 1934 onwards their agents were busy. Juan March and Calvo Sotelo were suitable go-betweens, and the first stages of the 1936 revolt were settled in those days. German permeation was arranged through her consuls and the Embassy. Zuchristan and Hans Hellerman were employed to organize the large German population in Eastern Spain, and prepare them to take part in a Nazi rising. These two men began their operations in 1934, were extremely active through 1935, and had full lists of 'front-line fighters' ready by June 15th of the following year. Intimate contacts were established with Spanish Generals, notably General Goded in Catalonia, and General Millán Astray in Morocco. It was in the latter country that propaganda and intrigues against the republic could be carried on most easily. Nazi officers were drafted into the Spanish Foreign Legion, a force which was to play an important part in the 1936 revolt. German business men, well supplied with funds, helped to organize Jew-baiting amongst the Moors, serving a number of useful purposes by reviving and intensifying this ancient feud.[1]

Signor Mussolini began his 'permeation' about the same time, and adopted similar methods. In March, 1934, he and Signor Italo Balbo received a monarchist deputation in Rome, and came to terms with them.

[1] A full account of German intrigues in Eastern Spain is given in *The Nazi Conspiracy in Spain*. Owing to the collapse of the revolt in Barcelona the Government gained possession of many documents, some of which are reproduced. The Germans installed themselves in the Canaries, as the Italians did in Majorca.

The draft of the document, in which these terms are set out, fell ultimately into Government hands. It may be worth setting out in full, as it suggests that Signor Mussolini's ultimate plans were worked out earlier and far more definitely than might be supposed. The agreement is dated nine months before the Walwal incident, but Signor Mussolini at that time was probably throwing out a number of lines into the troubled waters of Europe.

The undersigned, Lieutenant General Emilio Barrera, Don Rafael Olazabal, and Don —— (illegible) Lizarro, representing the Traditionalist Communion, and Don Antonio Goicoechea, as chief of Renovacion Española, hereby confirm the meeting held at 4 p.m. to-day, March 31, 1934, with the Chief of the Italian Government, Signor Mussolini, and with Signor Italo Balbo.

The President, after receiving detailed replies to his many questions concerning the present political situation in Spain, and the aspirations of the Army and of the Monarchist parties, stated as follows:

1. That he is willing to lend material assistance to the parties opposed to the present Spanish regime, for the purpose of overthrowing it and establishing a regency to prepare for the complete restoration of the monarchy (Signor Mussolini repeated this statement three times in order that it might be entirely clear).
2. That to prove his good intentions, he is willing to let us have immediately 20,000 rifles, 20,000 hand grenades, 200 machine guns, and, in cash, 1,500,000 pesetas.
3. That such aid will be in the nature of initial assistance, and will be supplemented by more

substantial help if and when circumstances make it necessary.

It was resolved that a delegation be named to receive the above mentioned goods and funds, and that said delegation be headed by Don Rafael Olazabal, who will take charge of transporting it to Spain; that he will thereafter be assisted by the rest of the delegation, Count de Rodezno and Don Antonio Goicoechea, in making distribution of the material and monies.

It was further resolved that the material and funds will be divided in three equal parts, and each of the three members of the delegation shall arrange for the distribution of one third, after it shall have been transported to Spain.

(This document appears in rough draft, is written on the stationery of the Hotel Quirinal de Roma, and is dated March 31, 1934.)

These pretty and patriotic intrigues were being carried on under the nose of a Government which was using Moorish soldiers to keep down their own workers, and had imprisoned thousands of their countrymen for political offences. Gil Robles certainly knew what was going on, and so did many of the right-wing politicians. Their political motto was 'win, tie, or organize a military revolt,' and they could afford to leave the organization of the latter to the military caste, and to those two busy intriguers, Calvo Sotelo and Juan March.

The importance of these two men in the Spanish affair has hardly been appreciated in England. Sotelo was killed just before the revolt of July, 1936, otherwise he would have been a serious candidate for the leadership. Don Juan March has the temperament of a Majorcan Jew, and prefers the reality to the trappings of power.

Our country has little reason to love Señor March, the man who organized a system of contraband, so extensive and so pervasive, that no Government was strong enough to deal with him. He owed the basis of his immense fortune to a deal with Germany during the war. His flotilla of smuggling fishing boats was used to fuel German submarines in the Mediterranean. These arrangements proved so successful and so hard to counter that the French Government bought him off—a form of *dane-gelt* which was not very effective, as he continued to carry on this traffic clandestinely through other agencies. All this has not prevented him being the hero of certain drawing-room fascists in England.

The success of the left-wing parties in the election of February, 1936, was a measure of the distrust felt for Gil Robles, and of the suspicion that the right-wing confederation—the Ceda—was plotting to kill the republic. It was partly a vote of confidence in men like Señor Azaña, who had been arrested on a trumpery charge, and in all those who had faced prison for their political views. After the July revolt there have been repeated attempts to attack the validity of these elections. Actually, as can be seen from contemporary notices in the English press, the polling was carried through in unusually peaceful conditions. Don Manuel Portela Valladares, who was leader of the centre party, and like many of his followers has since joined the republican side, has given the following tribute to his successor.

> My first duty to you and to the world is to confirm the legitimacy of your powers. I possess two qualifications entitling me to do this. I was defeated in the elections and I presided over the Government under

which they were held. That is my testimony, so that it will be written in the Parliamentary Record and remain there as irrefutable evidence in the history of Spain.

The Frente Popular received 4,206,156 votes in spite of the abstention of many anarchist organizations. The Right-Wing parties polled 3,783,601. Centre parties, many of whom were loyalists after the revolt, got 681,407. A Liberal administration was formed with the support but not the participation of the left-wing groups. The Cabinet was composed of members of the liberal centre parties, nine from the Republican Left and three from the Republican Union, while the War Office was entrusted to a general with no special political affiliations. No socialist was included by Don Manuel Azaña, although they held 89 seats.[1] The Communist Party had few representatives in the Cortes, and it was not until the war had been going on for some time that they were brought into the Government. It was definitely a centre party which took office, and the Premier possibly over-emphasized the moderate nature of his Government. Its middle-aged idealism encouraged a good deal of fascist activity, of provocation and of counter-provocation.

[1] The *Frente Popular* was made up as follows.

Republican Left	84
Republican Union	37
Catalonian Republican Left	36
Basque National Party	10
Socialist Party	89
Communist Party	16
Independent left parties	5

The first socialists to take office were in the Cabinet of Largo Caballero, formed at the beginning of September, 1936 At the time of the February elections there were some thirty thousand members of Frente Popular parties in gaol for political offences.

The first items in their ten-point programme were an immediate amnesty for political prisoners, the reinstatement of officials who had been removed by the previous Government for liberal sympathies, and the carrying out of the land reforms. There had been something approaching a 'Green Revolution' in many parts of Spain, where the landlord system was functioning badly. The *junteros* had occupied and begun working land which should have been made available under the 1932 Act. The new Government retained the land under the State, but legalized the position of the peasants. In many cases the peasants had made their own terms with landlords, but all over the eastern side of Spain there was a great land-hunger which was still to be satisfied.[1]

A few figures are necessary to explain this land-hunger which the 1932 Act had been intended to assuage, but about which nothing was done during the years when Lerroux and Gil Robles held sway.

The distribution of agricultural land in 1933 was roughly as follows:

	Land owned in hectares (1 hectare = 2.4 acres)	percentage of total
50,000 large landowners .	23,200,000	51.5
700,000 larger farmers .	15,800,000	35.2
1,000,000 peasants . .	5,000,000	11.1
1,250,000 smaller peasants	1,000,000	2.2
	45,000,000	100

[1] The writer spent the early days of May, 1937, at the house of a landowner, about fifty miles west of Valencia. He had made his own arrangements with the local villagers, and nothing could have been more friendly and informal than their relationship.

Besides this mass of smaller peasants, whose holdings average under two acres, there were over two million landless agricultural workers. The conditions, especially in eastern Spain, were not unlike those in India, where a growing population presses heavily on the land. Parts of the Levante are extremely fertile, especially the sea-coast belt, but huge areas are extremely poor, the upland country being like the Deccan, while parts of Andalusia are so arid that the bare, shrubless hills remind one of the North-West frontier.

The writer's work in 1937 took him into a very large number of villages in eastern Spain, and on the poorer soils the standard of housing, and general living was quite oriental in its penury. The Spanish peasant is traditionally supposed to live on an olive, a piece of sugar and a glass of wine. They are probably the most abstemious people in Europe. As over most of India the landlord supplies nothing of any value. He is not like the English agricultural landlord, who is responsible for farm-house, farm buildings, roads, gates, etc. Normally he is merely a receiver of rent, more like a mortgagee than a landlord. The Church held a huge area in fee through its *Federaciones Agrícolas Católicas.* In most cases the owners of the large estates were absentees, and sometimes they were foreigners. The standard of living on most of these *latifundios* was appallingly low. Few peasants earned more than the equivalent of about £36 a year, and they were kept in a state of complete ignorance, a century or so behind the inhabitants of some less landlord-ridden parts.[1]

[1] In 1936 many of these large estates were still owned by individuals. The Duke of Medinaceli had 195,680 acres, the Duke of Peñaranda 104,345, and the Duke of Alba some 90,000. The Duke of Wellington owns a large estate at Granada, and the Marquess of Bute is a considerable property-holder in Southern Spain

Some of General Franco's ardent supporters in England are Englishmen with estates in Spain.

Fascist propagandists in England have spread the idea that the new Government relaxed all authority, and that the country was in disorder. There was undoubtedly a certain amount of direct action. All over Spain men had been waiting for the accomplishment of a number of simple reforms. The 'traditional obstacles' had blocked the way, first during the long illegal dictatorship, and then during the reactionary period which had so quickly followed the establishment of the Republic. The people knew that certain laws had been passed, but had not been put in force.

The anti-clerical Article 26 in the Constitution, the Land Reform Act of 1932, and a host of other enactments were thoroughly approved by whole villages, from the *alcalde* downwards. Spain has always enjoyed a large measure of village autonomy, and in many parts the villagers proceeded to carry out what they considered to be the law. The peasants pegged out their claims, the workers elected their management committees and then went to the local authorities to legalize their position, and obtain the necessary orders and deeds.

Mr. Horsfall Carter, who was in the Badajoz area during the early days of the 1936 Government, has described how it was done:

> At 5 a.m. on March 25th, organized groups of labourers, armed with ropes, spades, and other implements, mustered secretly and trooped out from 150 of the 163 villages of the province; they proceeded—many of them on their donkeys, of course—to the neighbouring big estates and calmly marked

out the strips which they proposed to occupy for cultivation under the new land settlement system. Then, after a lusty cry of *Viva la Republica*, they marched back to their villages, held a demonstration meeting in front of the local Government building, and then sent a commission to get formal approval for their land-taking, their case being that they had been promised the land in the Government election programme, but that all kinds of bureaucratic obstacles were being put in their way.[1]

All very irregular from the standpoint of some orderly democracy, but very natural to people who could still remember the unsuccessful peasant risings of 1892 and 1919, who had seen their rights and liberties snatched from them in 1923, and who suspected, quite accurately, that the officer caste would be plotting another *putsch*. They intended this time to present the officers with a *fait accompli*, an anti-feudal and anti-clerical revolution, completed in most areas with tolerance and good-humour, but in other parts, where the Church lay heavily on the land, it was accompanied by the driving out of the priests, and the gutting of the churches.

[1] W. Horsfall Carter, 'Spain To-day,' in *The Listener*. Also quoted in E. Allison Peers, *The Spanish Tragedy, 1930-36*, 197.

CHAPTER X

THE REVOLT

ON July 17th, 1936, an unknown number of 'planes belonging to the Italian Air Force flew over Tunisia into Spanish Morocco. They had been detailed for service with a Spanish force. Three of them happened to crash in French territory, and at the official enquiry these facts were established. The same day the Foreign Legion, with its German Nazi organization, took charge of Larache, a small coast town in Spanish Morocco, and during the next twenty-four hours the officers of the chief Moroccan garrisons had joined the revolt. The leadership was in the hands of Divisional General Francisco Franco, who arrived melodramatically from the Canary Isles disguised as an Arab.

Although the details of the revolt had been arranged carefully ahead, so as to take place at all the large garrisons on the same day, the outbreak and reprisals probably began a week or two earlier than intended. Señor Calvo Sotelo shared with Juan March, the contrabandist, the chief responsibility for the civil side of the insurrection. These two were the liaison officer and financial agent respectively. Sotelo had helped to organize the fascist groups in Madrid, but they seem to have got out of hand, and on July 4th a number of middle class fascists in motor-cars drove up to a socialist meeting, and fired into the crowd, killing seven men. A week later another section of fascists killed Don Jose Castillo, a lieutenant of strong anti-fascist sentiments, who had, in the course of his duties, killed a

prominent fascist in the April riots. Political murder breeds political murder, and the next morning four of Castillo's companions went round to Sotelo's house, took him out, shot him, and left him in the street.

Subsequent attempts were made by the Italian propagandist sections abroad to pretend that Sotelo's murder was an isolated event, that the victim was a responsible and respectable statesman, and that the method of his killing was specially brutal. The order of events are as stated above.[1] Calvo Sotelo was an international fascist revolutionary in close touch with organizations at Rome and Berlin, in both of which cities he had recently spent some time. He had been concerned with Don Juan March over the shady business of the Morocco tobacco monopoly. He was shot in the head and chest, in very much the same way as Castillo. It is only possible to consider him as a martyr by accepting the fatal view that the death of one man, who has made himself prominent and wealthy by dubious methods, is of far more importance than the death of several who are neither prominent nor wealthy.

The central Government, composed of middle-aged Liberals, 'amateurs and idealists,' appear to have lost their nerve when faced with a direct rebellion. Ultimately most of the resistance was organized locally by the more left-wing groups. A Government 'plane dropped bombs on the military headquarters at Tetuan, but no proper national action was taken. It seems probable that a good many officials, as well as the officer caste, the Church hierarchy and the leading right-wing politicians, were well aware that the *putsch*

[1] See *The Spanish Tragedy, 1930-36*, E. Allison Peers. A useful book. The author's sympathies are obviously with the Right and the Catholics but he gives the correct sequence, and references to the medical evidence about Sotelo's death.

was about to take place, and knew within a day or two when Franco was going to declare himself. For some time his supporters in Government offices helped him by adding to the usual delays.

The telegram sent by General Franco to the Premier set the tone of the rebellion, and is worth reproducing.

> Now that I have assumed the new responsibilities, I wish to protest vigorously against the unspeakable action of the Government in instructing their pilots to shoot at the civil population, thus endangering the safety of innocent women and children.
>
> It will not be long before the movement for the restoration of Spain will be everywhere victorious, and we shall then call you to account for your action. The reprisals that we shall take will be in proportion to the resistance you offer.
>
> We explicitly demand an immediate cessation of this futile bloodshed on your part.
>
> DON FRANCISCO FRANCO.
> Commander-in-Chief of the
> Fighting Forces in Africa.

On the 19th a cruiser from Morocco began a bombardment of Algeciras preliminary to the landing of Moorish troops. The same day military insurrections broke out in Madrid and Barcelona, and in the principal military garrison towns, Seville, Toledo, Burgos, Valladolid, Vigo, Corunna. It was at once obvious that the revolt had been fully planned in all places where the regular army was in force. The insurgents thus got immediate control of all munitions. In the smaller towns and outlying places there was usually a small nucleus of fascists, organized along semi-military lines,

the *Falange Española* and *Requetés*. These had the active support of the local clergy. The party of Gil Robles, the Accion Popular, was apparently the co-ordinating body.

There is no real doubt that in some places the churches, and still more often church buildings and annexes, were used for the local arms depots which the Falangist organizations had been collecting. Enrique Moreno, a Spanish Catholic and well-known writer, has described the outbreak at Madrid.

> In the night of July 18th, the militia made their appearance. It is a fact to which I can bear witness that the following day, Sunday, services were held in most churches of Madrid, and no one made any attack whatsoever on either priests or worshippers. On the other hand, on Monday (July 20th) at the very moment when the rebels were being attacked in their barracks, I saw the militia being fired on from the windows of the Church of Our Lady of Covadonga. And on the 21st I saw signs of the previous day's fighting in the Cathedral, in San Andres, and in the convent of Santa Isabel la Real.[1]

The nature of the revolt varied in different cities. A full account of insurrection at Burgos has been given in an important book, *Doy Fe . . .*, written by Don Antonio Ruiz Vilaplana, who was a judge in that town until June, 1937, but at last resigned and went to France, revolted by the travesty of justice which he had to countenance. He points out that in Seville, Valladolid, and Saragossa, where the Falangists had been busy amongst the working-class people, they joined up with the military at once, but 'in Burgos, Pamplona,

[1] Enrique Moreno, *Catholics and the Spanish State*, 32-3.

and other places picked out for starting the revolt, the Falangists were scarcely recognized, and took no part with the army.'[1]

There is a certain similarity between the Abyssinian and Spanish war. In each case the Italians thought that the support they would receive inside the country would mean a speedy victory. In Ethiopia the 'civil war' excuse was a complete failure; in Spain there has been sufficient support for the Italians to deceive a considerable part of the world into believing that the 'civil war' rather than the invasion was the predominant part of the affair. In each there was a period—lasting to December, 1935, in Ethiopia, and to November, 193., in Spain—when the Italians were proceeding very slowly, and waiting for their prize to fall into their hands without serious casualties or expense.

The Italians had some grounds for expecting that the Government would collapse. First of all, General Franco would have all the munitions of war. They knew that the Government had no reserves except abundant untrained man-power and such few small-arms as might be retained by troops, police, and the civil guards who remained loyal. The idea that the Government had any military support from abroad *before* July 19th is merely part of the general propaganda spread *after* the first failure of General Franco's attempt—the stories of a communist plot previous to the *putsch* and which the army was trying to prevent. A very well-

[1] Antonio Ruiz Vilaplana, *Doy Fe . . . 30*. An English translation of this work, by Mr. Horsfall Carter, is to be published shortly by Messrs. Constable. As a document of the war, and of conditions in western Spain, it is worth innumerable propagandist books and pamphlets by politicians and others who have made short and carefully conducted tours in General Franco's territory. It is obvious that the author hated giving up his career, and only did so for reasons which his book makes clear. The translations of passages from the book, given here and later, are my own.

informed article appeared in *The Sunday Times*, a paper far from friendly to the Government, in the autumn of 1937. In this a military expert who had been on both fronts dealt with the military situation.

> The Franco-ists declare that if they had waited a few weeks longer to rise against the Republic a Bolshevik revolution would have broken out, insisting that Russia had been arming Spain for five years. Considering, however, that when Mola marched up to the gates of Madrid last November the Government troops had only fourteen hundred rifles, eight machine guns, and one cannon with which to defend the city, this appears to be an exaggeration.[1]

After September the Government did buy munitions abroad, and amongst these munitions were Russian lorries, and a certain number of 'fighter' aeroplanes, but from the beginning they have lacked arms, and trained men.[2]

The Government was, at first, almost entirely dependent upon an unarmed popular counter-demonstration against the military officers and the Church. This rising was one of the most remarkable phenomena of this century, resembling in some ways the popular movement which killed the Kapp *putsch* in Germany. But it was fiercer, with the southerner's rapid passion

[1] *Sunday Times*, October 17, 1937.

[2] The writer's personal experience only dates from the beginning of 1937. At that time the Government army was still woefully lacking in every kind of equipment. Their recruits were being mostly drilled and trained with sticks, and hardly got their rifles before being drafted into the firing line. Russian lorries were in evidence, though replaced later by American Fordsons, Dodges, etc. At no time were there many signs of Russian personnel. Foreigners on the Government side seemed to be, in order of numerical strength, French, Germans, Czechs, English, Italians.

and all the pent-up exasperation of five years during which the 'traditional obstacles' had managed to delay or kill everything for which thousands of Spaniards had been longing and working. There followed a real war of the barricades in the towns, and a kind of *jacquerie* in the villages, townsmen with sticks, peasants with scythes, reminiscent of an eighteenth century Europe, and only possible because in those early days the Spanish regular army was, as has been said, 'of a 1900 vintage,' and badly found at that. Italians and Germans, both expecting a rapid success, had provided Franco with little except aeroplanes, money, some second-rate munitions and a certain number of technicians. Their real large-scale intervention with fully equipped regular forces began in November during the second stage of the war.

A civil war of this kind is bound to degenerate into an elementary and completely savage struggle. Until it began to take some shape after a few months there was enough haphazard slaughtering on each side to enable any propagandist to accumulate all the 'atrocity' stories that he might desire. Two points must be borne in mind. In the matter of atrocities chronology is very important. The regular troops and the Falangists had been killing for some days before the reign of terror began on the other side. The wholesale massacre of trade unionists began immediately after July 20th, not only at Seville, but at Burgos and other cities. We have the evidence of *The Times* that the anti-fascist movement began in a perfectly orderly manner at Barcelona, and other places where the revolt had been quelled. On July 23rd their correspondent reported that 'our escorts and the Republican crowds in the towns, all armed to the teeth, were the most amiable

and solicitous revolutionaries one might wish to meet.' It was not until August 1st, some time after the news had come through from western Spain, that *The Times* changed its tone. 'The anti-fascist revolution in Barcelona and Catalonia has become a reign of terror.' From then onwards, as between undisciplined Falangists, and undisciplined anti-Fascist units, it is easy enough for each side to match a Roland with an Oliver, but their amateur methods of chasing and bullying their opponents were never as effective as the systematic efforts of the regular troops.

In those early days General Franco, alone in Spain, had under his command a large force used to discipline. He could count upon the whole of the Foreign Legion and the Moorish troops, about 55,000 in all. He took over the bulk of the regular Spanish army, and about a third of the Air Force.

The great offence of General Franco is the orders which he gave to his disciplined troops, and it was the studied 'frightfulness' of troops, armed sufficiently well to carry out their mass murders effectively, that was chiefly responsible for the undying horror of these early days. If, of course, the view is taken that one priest is worth innumerable laymen of socialist or 'Marxist' views, that one member of the property-owning classes out-balances an indefinite number of ploughmen and artisans, then the 'terror' was worst on the Government side. But the mass executions, the casual slaughtering with machine-guns carried on without distinction of sex, these were done by the disciplined and armed troops, and under a definite policy of terrorizing the civil population.

General Franco's orders were issued to the higher ranks of officers in his army. More than one copy

has fallen into Government hands. It is a long document, but a few extracts will explain the general line of policy.[1] The second sentence of the first paragraph is very revealing in view of later attempts to explain the *putsch* as a reply to an armed Bolshevist rising.

> One of the most important tasks, if victory is to be assured is the undermining of the morale of the enemy troops. The enemy has neither sufficient troops nor arms to resist; nevertheless the following instructions must be rigidly observed:
>
> In order to safeguard the provinces occupied, it is essential to instil a certain salutary terror into the population. When the troops occupy a place, the local authorities must first be taught a lesson in respect; if they have escaped, a similar procedure must be adopted towards the members of their families. In every case the methods resorted to must be of a clearly spectacular and impressive character, and must indicate clearly that the leaders of the troops are determined to proceed with like severity against anyone who offers resistance.
>
> Every town along the enemy's line of retreat and all the areas behind the enemy lines are to be considered as battle zones. In this connection, no differentiation must be observed between places harbouring enemy troops and those not doing so. The panic experienced by the civil population along the enemy's line of retreat is a factor of the utmost importance in contributing towards the demoralisation of the enemy troops. The experiences of the last world war show that the accidental destruction

[1] The translation is from A. Koestler, *Spanish Testament*, 81-2 where the document is given in full. This book is invaluable for its account, much of it first-hand, of the early stages of the invasion.

of enemy hospitals and ambulances has a highly demoralising effect on the troops.

After the entry into Madrid, the officers in charge of the various bodies of troops are to establish machine-gun posts on the roofs of all the high buildings dominating their particular district, including public buildings and church towers, so that the surrounding streets are within range of machine-guns. In the event of any opposition on the part of the populace, the streets should be put under fire without any further parleying. In view of the large number of women fighting on the enemy side, there should be no distinction of sex in such cases.

Anyone with the least knowledge of war can imagine the practical working of such orders by the time they have permeated down to the ranks. If the insurrection in its early stages became something like a war of extermination, the blame lies chiefly on those in charge of disciplined mercenary troops who set from the beginning the standards by which it should be fought. The treatment of the working-class population of Seville, and the mass shooting of those regular soldiers who remained loyalist, decided this issue within forty-eight hours of Franco's first overt act of rebellion. On these points the evidence is overwhelming. There were in Seville several correspondents of newspapers whose general attitude is hostile to the Government, and men of standing amongst the Spanish population who revolted against the atrocities which were committed. The general policy adopted was described in the Conservative *Paris Soir* of July 20th by its correspondents MM. Wormser and Maurel, showing that the working-class massacres started on the day of the revolt.

A merciless purge was carried out with hand grenades and knives. No quarter was given. . . . On the orders of Queipo de Llano all the houses in the working-class districts of Triana were obliged to keep their doors and windows open and all the males were carried off as prisoners. The next day, at dawn, 150 people were shot; on the day after there was a second holocaust, accompanied by cries of 'Long Live Spain.'[1]

From the evidence of Professor Eduardo Ortega y Gasset, President of the Madrid Faculty of Law.

The rebels, in all the districts occupied by them, systematically shoot workers carrying a Trade Union card. The corpses are left lying on view in the streets or heaped up in the cemeteries each with the card of a Trade Union tied to leg or arm, in order to show the reason for the execution.

In the town of Seville alone, and independently of any military action, more than 9,000 workers and peasants were executed. The Moors and Foreign Legionaries went through the streets of humble one-story houses in the working-class districts throwing hand grenades through the windows, killing women and children. The Moorish troops gave themselves up to sacking and plundering. General Queipo de Llano describes scenes of rape on the wireless with a coarse relish that is an indirect incitement to a repetition of such scenes.[2]

This policy of deliberately slaughtering the working class population was carried on in all the towns where Moorish troops and the Foreign Legion were available.

[1] Id. 87. [2] *Spanish Testament* 85.

The former fed fat the ancient spite they had against the Spaniards, the latter, spurred on by the drunken and sadistic Queipo, settled down to the work with a will. Within a few days they had loosed the blood lust which is easily roused in that dry, exhilarating climate and amongst a bull-fighting race. But steadily and systematically, all through the early months of the war, General Franco and General Mola directed their chief attacks against the working-class areas of the cities and towns.[1] Madrid they failed to take, but it was only the low lying artisan area which suffered severely from the first bombings, and the later shelling.[2] The appalling slaughter of Badajoz was later, but in these earlier days some two thousand were killed at Saragossa, fifteen hundred at Burgos, and seven thousand altogether in Navarre, which was always a reactionary area. At least fifty thousand unarmed civilian workers were killed in the first fortnight. They were slaughtered as cattle are slaughtered in some backward country, and the men who killed them were Moors, Foreign Legionaries (mostly German), and middle-class Spaniards. When the regular German and Italian troops arrived the war became more regular, a 'front line' was developed running roughly north and south, but the killing went on spasmodically in both areas for some time.

[1] The success of their efforts at exterminating their political opponents is recognized by their English admirers. 'A change of political orientation has undoubtedly been facilitated by a process of extinction." Wing-Commander James, M.P., *The Times*, Dec., 1937.

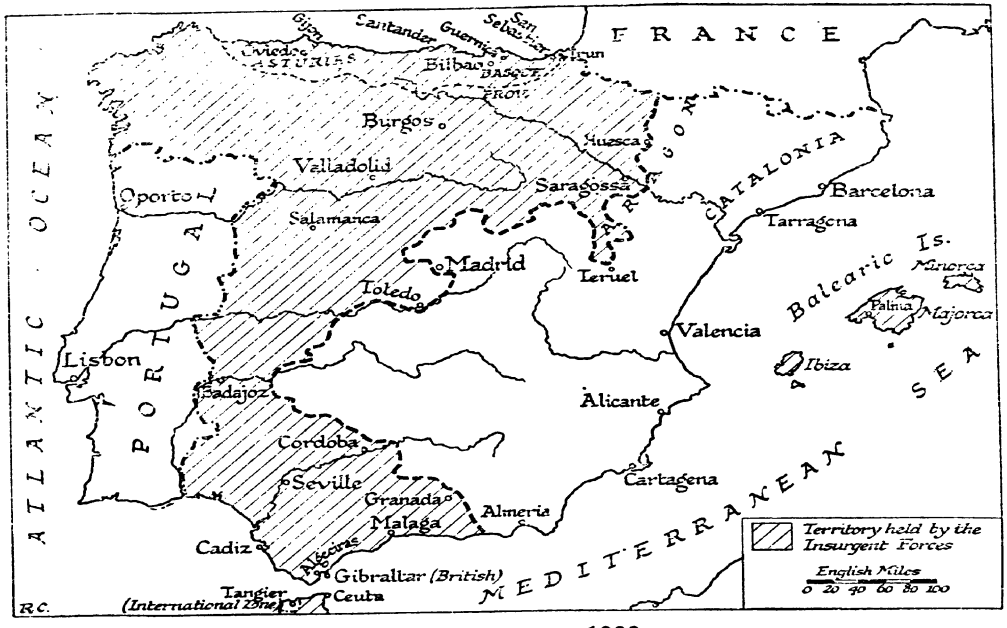
[2] The committee for which the writer was working had its Madrid headquarters in the Calle de Lista, a fashionable part which remained untouched throughout the year. Other areas were rendered totally uninhabitable. Unkind people affirmed that one of General Franco's leading supporters had a mortgage on most of the Calle de Lista, and we could therefore sleep safely in our beds. No one who has seen anything of the war in Spain can miss the definitely class antagonism of the invading army.

By December order had been fully restored on the Government side.

On the Government side it was property rather than human beings that was destroyed, the people turning especially to the gutting of churches as a visible sign of the old 'traditional obstacles,' which were revenging themselves so drastically in the west and south of Spain. This was done with extraordinary completeness in the east of Spain, where the people seemed to slough off their old religion like a snake ridding itself of its skin. It is not for a foreigner to hold an opinion upon the survival of real religious feeling in any part of Spain, but the disappearance of all its outward forms is striking and cannot be contested.

The Russian parallel is interesting. In 1922 the Soviet Government was carrying on an 'Anti-God campaign,' but the Moscow churches were open and crowded, the drosky drivers crossed themselves when passing ikons in the street. In eastern Spain the Government was anxious to have some churches open, mass was said with every form of official approval in Madrid; during several months of 1937 the writer never saw any evidence of propaganda aimed against the priests —except a mass of Nazi anti-clerical papers of peculiar virulence which somehow found their way to Valencia.

There were few signs of personal feeling against the religious orders. In one centre near Requena, all of the monks had returned to civil life, and were working as craftsmen. In September, 1937, when an exchange was suggested, the majority refused to go. The nuns, on the other hand, seemed quite lost in the ordinary outside world, and were glad to be deported. The Church was unpopular as landlord, as educational dictator, as supporter of the old regime, but only in a few areas were its representatives attacked, and then



Spain, January, 1938

only after news had come of the wholesale murders of working-class men and women by foreign troops.

. . . . .

Within one year Signor Mussolini had started on two military parades which had developed into long and expensive wars. In both Ethiopia and Spain he found that he had roused far more national feeling than he had expected. General Franco's *coup d'état* failed in the two great cities of Madrid and Barcelona. A success in Catalonia would have been decisive. It would have provided the Italians with a strategic point for landing troops which would have split the Government's supporters, and cut them off from all communications with France. General Goded and the Germans muddled their side of the business. Gunz, the Nazi agent, was possibly over-optimistic. There was a period of confusion, but the Trade Unions and the Anarchists were able to seize certain stocks of Falangist weapons, and in street fighting, as was also seen in Madrid, a large, half-armed force is comparatively effective, whereas in the open they can be massacred at a distance by modern artillery and aeroplanes. General Goded was besieged in his headquarters and made a prisoner. In the rest of Catalonia there were few signs of the insurrection. Local Falangist organisations had waited for the Barcelona signal, and kept quiet when it failed.[1]

For some weeks the extent of the failure was probably not fully recognized by Germany or Italy, and the two intervening countries did not act very drastically. Spanish civil wars usually take a few weeks, and because the professional soldier knows that even third-rate war materials can be used effectively against unarmed men,

[1] For a full account of this abortive rising see E. Allison Peers, *Catalonia Infelix*, chapter XII.

the early contributions were munitions which they could well spare. They sent a few good 'planes with which they wished to experiment, but up till November Italian assistance took the form of a modicum of troops to occupy the strategic points, like the Balearic Islands and parts of Southern Spain round Gibraltar, and arms which they were 'scrapping' on account of their general re-armament policy.

Signor Mussolini's calculations were upset by three factors. The first was the arrival of some thousands of French socialists, Italian and German refugees from fascism, British communists, and others of 'left-wing' sympathies who found their way into eastern Spain and offered their services to the Government. Most of these men had had some experience of military weapons. Very few Spaniards on the Government side had even handled a rifle. The International Brigade did great service in later stages of the war, but the twelve to fifteen thousand men who joined it in those early days were invaluable. They gave the Government time to begin organising its first and second armies, the former built up chiefly from those militiamen, guards, and others who had remained loyal, and the second from the completely untrained volunteers.

The second factor was Russian assistance in the provision of arms, and aeroplanes. This took time to organize, but the Government justifiably applied to friendly Powers for the purchase of its war materials. These were Russia and Mexico. Both sent limited supplies of modern munitions, the aeroplanes, tanks, artillery, machine-guns, and mechanical transport which differentiate the post-war armies from those of 'the 1900 vintage.' With them went a modicum of skilled men to provide the technical knowledge

required for their working and maintenance. Russia, for example, provided the ground staff for the aeroplanes which it sent, but not the aviators. It was some weeks after the outbreak of war before these munitions began to arrive, but by the middle of November there were sufficient quantities to affect the situation. The character of the war altered entirely after that date. This point is emphasized in Mr. Blythe's work on the strategic effect of Italian and German intervention.[1]

> From an international point of view, therefore, November 13th is, perhaps, the most important date in the Spanish Civil War. On that day the first Russian 'planes went into action at Madrid, and for the first time the Government forces had front line aircraft at their disposal. After this date, any Power which wished to intervene had to send first line material to Spain. It was no longer possible for a Power to secure a political or strategic advantage in Spain by exporting to Spain her surplus war material.

The third factor which held up a speedy victory for the insurgents was a marked lack of cohesion amongst their leaders. For the first six weeks both General Mola and General Queipo de Llano wished to lead the revolt. The former was a far more efficient soldier than General Franco, and the latter was a kind of political 'boss' with a great hold on the extreme South. Señor Vilaplana makes it clear that at Burgos, at any rate, General Mola was recognized as *el Caudillo*, the leader, and that he was responsible for the formation of the original 'Government' which the Italians and Germans hastened to recognize. He had the army behind him, and certain districts, notably Navarre.

[1] H. Blythe, *Spain over Britain*, 29.

'In the nationalist side of Spain, it was not Franco who exercised the chief influence. Where then did he do so? The answer is simple: In Germany and Italy.'[1] General Franco's great virtue, which was not shared by his two rivals, was his marvellous pliancy. He had offered his services in succession to the Republic, to the Monarchists, to the Falangists, and to the Fascist Powers. A political murder and an aeroplane accident, the latter so opportune as to arouse some suspicion, have helped to ease his position. Soleto might have been a dangerous rival, and General Mola would have probably challenged his supremacy before the end of 1937.

Only Queipo de Llano and Juan March are left as possible rivals, and neither has been very happy in the way affairs have developed. 'Queipo, who is a man of foresight, seldom goes in an aeroplane . . . seldom leaves Andalusia.'[2] Juan March, who was most heavily involved financially, was all on the side of the 'traditional obstacles.' His network of smuggling and graft had been built up under the old order, but he was a Majorcan Jew, and was not at all happy working for the anti-semitic Nazis. The Falangists again had political ideas of their own, which were not always in accordance with those of the military caste, and were often frankly opposed to those of the monarchist Carlists. Only Italian influence held the insurgents together after their first effort had failed, and Signor Mussolini's large-scale military intervention, which began towards the end of November, had the triple object of increasing the area of Italian occupation, keeping control of the armaments which he had sent and ensuring that the Italian contribution should be so great that his counsels would dominate the insurgent headquarters.

[1] *Doy Fe*, 123. [2] Id., 144.

CHAPTER XI

THE POLITE COMEDY OF NON-INTERVENTION

FROM the international standpoint Signor Mussolini's new venture was far more subtle and far more adroit than his conquest of Ethiopia. He had, as a diplomatist, taken the measure of the League of Nations and of the two great democratic Powers, France and England. All the weaknesses of the League had been exposed over the question of sanctions, and especially of oil sanctions. No country would care to suggest bringing out that blunt and feeble weapon within a few months of its being returned so ignominiously to its sheath. In France M. Blum had formed his Popular Front Government and was embarking on a series of such domestic experiments as the forty-hour week. He was not likely to work easily with a Conservative Government in England which had ensconced itself safely for another four years. In both countries Signor Mussolini could be certain that General Franco would start with a considerable measure of influential support, so long as his revolt could be portrayed as a defence of orderly government, of property, and of the Catholic Church, while the foreign aggression was kept discreetly in the background until it had become fully effective.

We must presume that Signor Mussolini can have had little idea that his intervention was going to be masked so quickly and effectually by the British policy of 'non-intervention.' It may, perhaps, have been suggested to the British Government by some of those discreet people, who have both the ear of the British

Cabinet and a close connection with the two Dictators. At any rate, it was to prove a gift from the gods, similar to the half-hearted imposition of 'sanctions' a year before. It was valuable enough when it was first broached, soon after the revolt, but it was Signor Mussolini's salvation when affairs failed to turn out as he had expected, and Madrid had not fallen by November.

The English have been subjected to such a mass of tendentious talk and writing, since the beginning of the Spanish affair, that they are apt to forget the essential facts about the part which their country has played. It was some time before the public took any interest in the matter. The revolt occurred almost at the beginning of the August holidays, a period when those who wish to make trouble in Europe have discovered that both the English and the French are least likely to object. The Spanish Government had few contacts abroad. Their Ministers were Liberals, kindly and unsophisticated mortals, pathetically ignorant about propaganda outside their own country. The conglomeration of Spanish 'left-wing' parties had taken little part in international socialism, and the British Labour Party's knowledge of Europe hardly extended south of the Pyrenees. In those early days the Government's case, which was overwhelming, almost went by default.

At the beginning of July, 1936, the Spanish Republic was the recognized and lawful Government. It has remained so up to the time of writing.[1] The Ambassador, appointed by the Government, still occupies the Embassy. The Republican Consul functions at the Consulate. No one in England ever questioned the right of Señor Azaña to form a government in February, 1936, nor were any of its acts disputed by the British

[1] January, 1938.

Government. If any English business men complained about the treatment meted out to them by syndicalists in Catalonia, or if any landlords, like the Duke of Wellington or the Marquess of Bute, grumbled over the new agrarian laws, their grievances did not stir a ripple in their own country. Since the European War nearly every independent state in the world has experimented with industrial and land policies, which have been detrimental in some way or other to the foreign speculator and property-owner. Only in extreme cases has any protest been made by the British Government, and certainly no such protest was made to Spain.

Normally, therefore, the Spanish Government, faced by a military revolt, would have been free to purchase arms abroad, and also, if it thought fit, to raise a new Foreign Legion. Any other country was obviously within its rights in refusing to allow its nationals to be enlisted, or denying them licenses or facilities for exporting arms. But the proposal, which England made, to organize a general international embargo on arms, and later on enlistment, amongst all the leading nations was a new departure, and one which raised difficult questions. A 'Non-Intervention Pact,' such as was envisaged by our Foreign Office, was not a form of neutrality. It was an active policy, somewhat akin to the organization of a strike in an industry, and it has certain important effects upon the country against which this organized boycott is directed. Some of these must be considered.

1. A non-intervention pact immediately enhances the value of all arms already in the country. In the case of Spain these were the ordinary equipment, artillery, transport, rifles, and munitions of the regular forces—the army, the navy, the air force, and the Foreign

Legion and Moorish troops. None of this was very good or modern. There were some rifles, small-arm ammunition, and semi-obsolete weapons in the arsenals, and in the hands of the civil guard, militia, and other bodies. A fair quantity of munitions, not of the first class, and some good aeroplanes were smuggled in from Italy and Germany during the first few weeks of the revolt.

Most of these arms were in insurgent hands, except that the larger part of the air force, and also of the navy, remained loyal to the Government. The advantage in aeroplanes was more than counterbalanced from the beginning by the Italian and German contribution. General Franco had all the heavy artillery, nearly all the machine guns, mechanized transport, and tanks, and by far the largest proportion of rifles.

2. Modern aircraft and weapons of precision have already increased the advantage possessed by a small regular army over any popular movement, or against a government which can only call upon civilian guards and volunteers. A non-intervention pact accentuates this initial advantage, and is therefore a special danger to those many countries which have developed some kind of a military caste, or have allowed their army to become involved in politics.

3. A non-intervention pact, by making arms more valuable, places a premium on smuggling. It is, therefore, a hazardous and unjust policy unless it is likely to be entirely successful, and unless all the countries participating are accustomed to honour their pledges. Obviously neither of these conditions applied to the Spanish affair. For over a year Italy had not attempted to keep any treaty, pact, or agreement when it suited her to break them.

4. As land frontiers are far harder to control and supervise than a coast-line, a non-intervention pact will depend for its proper functioning upon those countries which are contiguous to the area which it is proposed to isolate. In the case of Spain these were France and Portugal. The former was, on the whole, well disposed towards the Spanish Government, but many of its subordinate officials, especially in the south, were inclined to be fascist, and there were plenty of right-wing politicians to draw the attention of the world to a failure by M. Blum to carry out his country's undertaking. Portugal, on the other hand, was under a form of dictatorship, and there was never any doubt about its close connection with the insurgent authorities. From the very first days of the revolt there was a 'Black' embassy at Lisbon, in the hands of Gil Robles and General Franco's youngest brother, Nicholas. The official Spanish Embassy was completely ignored. Until it was clear that neither England nor France would take the slightest notice of the most flagrant breaches of the agreement, Portugal was used as a 'neutral' country for the transit of arms and men into western Spain. After November these went openly through Cadiz.

Such then are the implications, all obvious enough, of a non-intervention policy. Clearly it is a policy both dangerous and dishonest unless the chief participants have a common will and a common object, and are determined that the agreement will be rigidly enforced. If the British Foreign Office had ever believed that General Franco's revolt was an ordinary military attempt at a *coup d'état* they would never have initiated such a cumbrous and difficult procedure. Their anxiety to 'isolate the war' was due to their knowledge that

Italy and Germany were both committed to General Franco, that they had financed the revolt, despatched considerable quantities of men, munitions, and aeroplanes to Spain and Portugal, and were determined to keep these under their control. The British Foreign office presumably knew, what was an open secret in western Spain, that General Franco was the nominee of the two dictators, and that they would be bound to keep a sufficient force in Spain to ensure his predominance, even if he was successful.

The history of the Abyssinian affair was beginning to repeat itself. The British Government had a real policy, but it was not one which they could justify before the country. They were therefore driven into a long series of subterfuges and deceptions, for which it was necessary to distort facts, make a mockery of their protestations of neutrality, and hide or ignore unpleasant incidents—to deny the activities of Italian submarines in the Mediterranean, just as they had protested their ignorance of the use of poison-gas in Ethiopia—incidents which Italy hardly troubled to conceal.

The Foreign Office began its consideration of the new crisis with a consciousness of failure during the previous year. This seems to have made them unduly cautious, and in any question involving Italy our leading diplomats and officials start with certain definite prejudices, fatal to a proper understanding of a situation almost without precedent. Drawn from a very small class, they have a strong initial sympathy with Catholicism, and through Catholicism with Italy. Many of them are descendants, spiritually if not actually, of that type of man whom our Elizabethan ancestors learnt to despise so heartily.

The Englishman Italianate
Is the Devil incarnate.

Their general attitude to the world makes them hate social experiments, loathe Russia, and sympathize with the old 'traditional obstacles' in Spain. Their Spanish connections would be amongst the military caste and the descendants of the 'grandees,' the classes who were prepared to introduce Moors to keep down their own countrymen. They would tend to undervalue any hastily raised popular army, to think that a left-wing Government must be corrupt and inefficient, and believe any evil against anyone with anti-clerical beliefs. They are inclined to form their opinions on historical precedents, with little regard to whether they are likely to hold good in this changing world.

The real policy of the Government was largely based on the situations as seen by people with this sort of outlook. They knew that Italy and Germany, the two aggressor Powers against which we were, presumably, re-arming, had committed themselves, jointly and deeply, to supporting a military revolt. According to their view the revolt was bound to be speedily successful and they looked forward to another Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Still thinking in terms of battleships and strong points instead of aeroplanes and submarines they discounted the strategic advantages which a puppet dictator would give to Germany in another war, and the Foreign Office have never really envisaged a war in which we should be opposed by both Italy and Germany. They may have taken seriously that queer historical legend that Spain would always throw off any foreign control. No one has the faintest idea whether a modern dictator, supported by foreign arms, could hold his

place in Spain or not. The whole technique of fascism is new, the power of modern weapons and aircraft is new, and Spain in 1936 had seen comparatively little of either.

Whatever may have been their reasons, the Foreign Office decided that General Franco would win, and that it was not a suitable time to intervene. Our own re-armament had not proceeded very far or very fast. France, under M. Léon Blum was engaged in a series of domestic reforms, and not in her most truculent mood. It seemed best to let Signor Mussolini win another hand and then trust to luck and diplomacy to prevent his taking full advantage of his influence over the new dictator. Possibly Mr. Eden felt that General Franco's early success would give Italy and Germany less opportunities for permanent interference in Spanish affairs than a prolonged war. Above all, there were features in the Spanish situation which would make it difficult to ensure unity in England on any definite line of action. Our real policy was to pretend to be neutral, and hasten the end of the war. It was the same policy as we had adopted in Ethiopia—disarm the weak, and spare the strong as much trouble as possible.

Such a policy could not very well be advertised from the house-tops. Non-intervention might be an admirable method of shortening the war, but it would have to be justified on other grounds. The Government, therefore, lent itself to a deliberate campaign in which it was strongly supported by those sections of the country which wanted General Franco to win for other reasons. The first step was to insist that the revolt was a civil war, and to do this it was necessary to exaggerate the amount of popular support it received. The next point was to start a subtle campaign against the Government.

The small communist element in the *Frente Popular* was magnified until it included men like Señor Largo Caballero, who had always been as strong an opponent of communism as Mr. Herbert Morrison. As the war went on the gutter press took its cue and Spain was divided into Reds and anti-Reds. Very soon Spain came to be considered as a plague-spot which it was as well to isolate from the rest of the world.

Everything during that autumn conspired to injure the cause of the Spanish Government. Mr. Baldwin was engrossed in trying to straighten out the tangled domestic affairs of the King. This left Mr. Neville Chamberlain and the right-wing of the Cabinet a comparatively free hand. The Blum Government was somehow cajoled or forced into following our lead, and this brought the Labour Party into line. Here the Catholic influence, especially in the north, was strong enough to force a doubtful issue, for the general feeling in the Party was undoubtedly on the side of the Spanish Government. Only two groups in England, the independent Liberals and the Communists, were sufficiently free from outside influence to keep the affair in proper perspective.

The usual financial and religious interests which support Italy came out strongly for the non-intervention plan.

Spain had always been something of a *colonie d'exploitation* for England, and special business interests were involved—mining, engineering, land-owning, wine-exporting, etc. These had all been disturbed by the syndicalist tendencies of the Spanish left-wing parties, and felt that a comfortable military dictatorship in Spain might see them through the next six or seven years. Behind these powerful groups were the wider inter-

national business interests which accepted without much examination the stories of Russian interference in Barcelona and eastern Spain, and the general idea that this was a war between left- and right-wing parties in which their influence must automatically be thrown on the side of the latter.

The Catholic hierarchy came out at once on the side of General Franco. The Pope may have wavered over the Ethiopian affair, but he spoke with no uncertain voice about the present Spanish Government. Churches had been burnt in Spain on several previous occasions, religious orders had been suppressed, and the Jesuits expelled. These have been regular features of a temporary victory for liberalism, and a reaction against the 'traditional obstacles.' Charles III had expelled the Jesuits in 1767, Joseph Bonaparte dissolved the orders, Mendizábal suppressed them a generation later, Montero Rios, Canalejas, and Sagasta tried to reform them. Every revolt in Spain has been followed by the destruction of religious buildings, especially monasteries and convents. Every period of reaction has seen them rebuilt, and the orders rapidly acquiring wealth. In 1931 the Jesuits controlled about a third of the nation's capital, and their commercial enterprises were worth over sixty million sterling. In 1909 and 1923 there had been widespread burning of churches, especially in Catalonia. By 1930 they had been rebuilt.

Such were the familiar symptoms of the long struggle between clericalism and anti-clericalism, which is very different from a struggle between Catholics and anti-Catholics. But in 1936 the local manifestations were a part of an international affair. This made the intervention of the Pope more important and more dangerous. 'He has pointed out how he saw in this civil war the

hand of Bolshevism, and by allowing so many Catholics throughout the world to look on this war, at least in the beginning, as a fight for the Church against anti-Christian ideals, he has to identify himself with the fascist elements of Europe.'[1]

Inside the British Government there were the usual divisions, but the right-wing 'drawing-room fascist' element was stronger and more decided than a year before. Over the Spanish issue they were joined by keen churchmen, like Lord Halifax, and by others who incline to an 'authoritarian' attitude to life. The Catholic and Italian propagandists had a clear field, and their arrangements were made well ahead. They proved very effective amongst Englishmen of the comfortable classes, many of whom found genuine difficulty in understanding the nature of a revolt, of which the *internal* issues were complicated enough, and were confused by all manner of cross-currents, due to provincial jealousies and old historical divisions.

On the whole it was not surprising that the Foreign Office succeeded in getting the Cabinet to accept their policy of 'isolating' the Spanish war, as if the unfortunate country was suffering from some disease, a disease from which it would probably recover if left alone. The policy was based on a complete misunderstanding of the revolt, of its origin, and of the extent to which foreign Powers were involved, but it suited many private interests, and possibly fitted in with the general temper of many English people, who had been grievously wounded by our exhibition of futility during the Ethiopian affair, and only pacified by the assurance that we must wait a year or two, but once re-armed could again take the lead in Europe. England had never

[1] W. Teeling, *The Pope in Politics.*

been less inclined for quixotic enterprises than in 1936. A few younger men accepted the Communist diagnosis of the situation, which for once has proved to be perfectly correct. They joined the Foreign Legion under considerable difficulties and went out to fight for a democratic poor man's government against a fascist invasion backed by financial and religious interests. The issue seemed simple enough to them. Looking back one is forced to admit that they were probably right. But the bulk of their countrymen, traditionally disinclined to take Latin affairs too seriously, waited for further developments, and followed the Government's lead without much enthusiasm.

Germany and Italy were, of course, delighted with the non-intervention idea. They were both convinced that they had got enough arms into Spain to make a Franco victory certain, and they were ready to slacken their efforts. Signor Mussolini was quite prepared to adhere to his declaration of neutrality so long as he was sure the insurgents would win. His confidence on this point is suggested by a statement which he made to the British *Chargé d'Affaires* at Rome, on August 20th, when he declared that Italy had not concluded and would not conclude any agreement with General Franco to support him in his revolt. 'Absolute neutrality is above all in accordance with considerations of humanity, and the means of implementing it are laid down in the documents signed by Count Ciano.'[1] Germany followed Italy's lead with equal suavity. Prince Bismarck actually stated on August 8th that Germany was not supplying munitions to General Franco, on the very day that a squadron of Junkers flew to Seville. In the meantime Portugal, which was

[1] *Messagero*, August 22, 1936.

not a party to all this, was used as a convenient supply base for such arms and ammunition as were considered necessary for supplementing the original supply.

On September 9th, 1936, a body was set up in London with the cumbrous title of 'The International Supervisory Committee of Non-Intervention.' For some months it made no attempt to prevent countries allowing their nationals from volunteering for service in Spain with either side, and from the first the Committee developed all the weaknesses, the procrastination, the inability to prevent leakages which had characterized the Sanctions Committee twelve month before. Its failure was not, however, transparent until November when Italy saw that the revolt, subsidized by her and helped by her munitions, aeroplanes and aviators, had failed to achieve its object, and that General Franco had not taken Madrid. The Burgos Government was recognized by both Italy and Germany in November, but it could not be promptly hailed as the real Spanish Government.

The extent of Italian and German assistance in this first stage is open to dispute, but we know that within a month of the revolt there were about a hundred Junker and Caproni aeroplanes at Seville alone, and a considerable number of German and Italian pilots.[1] These more than counterbalanced such initial advantage as the Madrid Government could claim because rather the larger part of the Spanish Air Force had remained loyal. At the same time Italy established herself in the Balearic Islands, which were to become a base, first for her aeroplane attacks on eastern Spain, and later for submarine action in the Mediterranean. An American writer, Mr. Elliot Paul, has given us, from his own

[1] *The Daily Telegraph*, August 13, 1937.

experience, an admirable account of the revolt, describing its effect upon Ibiza, a small island which has now become an important strategic centre for Italian activities.[1]

The position at the end of November, 1936, was that Italy and Germany had sent a considerable supply of munitions to Spain, but neither its quantity nor its quality were such as to weaken the position of the Powers in Europe. Under modern conditions the 'life' of land armaments is quite short, and Spain had received stocks which would have been scrapped probably, within a year or two. Both Powers had also sent a number of aeroplanes and personnel from their army, but these could obviously be withdrawn as rapidly and inconspicuously as they had been sent. The fact that regular units had been employed against Spain was equivalent to an act of war, but the Valencia Government was not in a position to force this issue, and the League maintained a cautious attitude on this point of international law. Neither Herr Hitler nor Signor Mussolini had completely compromised themselves.

If the affair had gone according to schedule Madrid would have fallen in November, General Franco could have claimed, with some justification, to be the effective ruler in Spain, and the world would have quickly recognized another successful *coup d'état* in Spain. We do not know what would have been the respective pounds of flesh demanded by Italy and Germany for the financial, material, and moral assistance they had

[1] Elliot Paul. *The Life and Death of a Spanish Town.* The book is of great importance as an objective study of a small isolated Spanish community just before and during the revolt. It shows clearly the complicity of the local priests in the revolt, and the outside interference which bore down local resistance. There were hundreds of such towns and thousands of such tragedies in the summer of 1936.

given. General Franco had much that he could have conceded which would have been little loss to Spain, but of immense strategic value to his allies—the Balearic Isles, the Azores, parts of Spanish Morocco, harbourage facilities in the South, flying rights through Spain, etc.

The non-intervention pact, which had been a polite comedy until November, was bound to deteriorate into a most tragical farce unless the insurgents could gain a speedy victory. If they had taken Madrid in November, it would have been easy to have recognized General Franco as the *de facto* ruler of Spain, and the exact means by which a dictator rises to power are soon forgotten—those most interested being by then either dead or in prison. It is still something of a miracle that he failed. He had nearly all the regular army, the Foreign Legion, and the Moorish troops, together with a small Italian contingent; he had German and Italian aviators and aeroplanes which more than counterbalanced the loyalty of the Spanish air force. He controlled nearly all the arms inside Spain until the Russian munitions began to come in October.

The Spanish Navy, though loyal, was unimportant. Of all the services it had been the most inefficiently and corruptly managed. The British Government saw to it that its few ships should not be effective. On August 23rd a Republican ship dared to search a British ship going into an insurgent port in Morocco. We sent a battle cruiser, and stopped any nonsense of that sort. Within three months we were recognizing an 'insurgent blockade' which was entirely ineffective except in so far as it was backed by Italian submarines. On November 25th one of these submarines attacked a Spanish cruiser in Cartagena. The British Government took no notice on the grounds that it 'might have been a rebel sub-

marine.' At that period it was well known that the rebels had no submarines, had no shipyards capable of building one, and no crews trained for the work.

The failure to get the war ended before December was a blow both to the British Government, and even more to the two Dictators. It was, in fact, a general nuisance. Signor Mussolini, however, has the real gambler's temperament. He will never accept a loss if there is any chance of regaining it by doubling the stakes. He had miscalculated the strength of the Spanish regular army, the unpopularity of the Church and the landlords, the courage and tenacity of the Spanish peasants and working men in the north and east, the effectiveness of the Trade Union organization, and the difficulty of street fighting in a hostile city, such as Madrid or Barcelona. He had failed to allow for that wave of popular feeling which had caused thousands of men to hurry individually to Spain and offer their services to a Government which they felt was being crushed because it was democratic and opposed to the privileged classes. He had not foreseen the possibility of Russia following the example of Italy and Germany, and shipping munitions and aeroplanes to Barcelona. His first move had failed, but he was not in a position to accept defeat in view of the continued reports of difficulty in Ethiopia, and of his commitments to Germany. The second phase began at the end of November, and November 25th was the date on the mobilization papers of many Italian soldiers captured at Guadalajara less than five months later.

CHAPTER XII

THE INVASION OF SPAIN

Up till the end of November, 1936, General Franco's open supporters, and also those who were secretly working to ensure an early victory, had a comparatively easy task in England. There was, during the early months, a colourable case for the revolt being a civil war. A considerable majority of the few Spaniards living in England belonged to the classes who were backing the Church and the military caste. Men like the Marquis de Merry del Val, the diplomatist and brother of the Cardinal, were violent partisans, and were allowed a freedom and scope of expression not permitted to the few educated Spaniards who were in England, and knew what was really happening in Spain. The Pope's brass band of literary converts blew their hardest, hitting the wrong note often enough, but making plenty of noise. A reckless and entirely one-sided 'atrocity' campaign was started in papers like the *Daily Mail*, and also in the Catholic press. Our drawing-room fascists even began a kind of Franco cult, and the rather undignified little man, with his doubtful political past, and his shady financial connections, was put before the public as a modern Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche*.

All this was of the greatest help to the British Government and to the Foreign Office. Without exactly supporting the campaign Cabinet Ministers could go round the country pointing out how wise they were to insist on neutrality and isolation, how evenly divided the Spaniards must be, and how lucky it was to be in

England where such things did not happen. While they were doing this, they managed to give two other false impressions, both of which were essential to the acceptance of their real policy. The first was that arms were going into Spain, but they were going equally to both sides; the second was that volunteers were going to both sides, but these counterbalanced each other.

The facts about these two points are now sufficiently well known, and they were then known to the British Government. Both Italians and Germans began sending munitions and aeroplanes on July 17th, and they also sent some personnel. They continued this process through the following months—flying the aeroplanes direct, but using Portugal for most of the stores, and such troops as were sent. Russia did not reply immediately to the appeal sent out for arms by the Spanish Government. She seems to have decided about September to send munitions on a scale which would affect the course of the war. On October 7th, 1936, the Soviet representative made his country's position quite clear at the London Non-Intervention Committee. 'His Government feared the situation created by repeated violations of the agreement would render the agreement virtually non-existent, and that they could in no case agree to turn the agreement into a screen shielding the military aid given to the rebels by some participants in the committee.' This warning was plain enough. Russia, not for the first time, bluntly stated unpalatable facts to an assembly of Powers engaged in hiding those facts from the world. From about that date munitions of various kinds arrived in Barcelona and Valencia by ship from Russia. The first aeroplanes appeared at Madrid, on November 13th, and as already pointed out, this marked the beginning of a new stage.

The point about the 'volunteers' is equally clear. The only foreigners who have fought on the Government side arrived in Spain as unarmed individuals, without uniforms or the slightest assistance from the Governments of the countries to which they belonged. They were equipped and fitted out by the Republican Government from the limited stores which they possessed. An acquaintance of the writer, who went out in the early days, never got anything better than an old Ross rifle, a pre-war model, until he picked up a machine gun after the Italian rout at Brihuega, in the following March. The International Brigade was a completely amateur army, without a single regular unit in it. There was no Russian battalion, and the Russians who came with the munitions were only a few craftsmen and engineers. The Brigade never numbered more than about 15,000 men.

The 'volunteers' on General Franco's side all arrived as fully armed and equipped units, except a small number of real volunteers from Ireland. Two or three thousand Catholics went out to western Spain under General Duffy. They had a short and unhappy experience, suffering casualties from their own side due to some mistake. It was made obvious to them that they were not needed with an army, the foreign elements of which were regular soldiers. The only 'volunteers' worth considering on the insurgent side were Italians and Germans. All of them were sent under orders of their Government, they served under their own officers, who had Government commissions, and who were in constant communication with their own army headquarters at home. They are described in official orders from Rome as the Italian Expeditionary Force. By February, 1937, they numbered at least fifty thousand,

and by the end of the year they were over eighty thousand strong. The Germans never formed a distinct force, and a very large proportion of their twelve thousand soldiers were airmen, and technicians.

These accounts of the sending of arms and of personnel to Spain would not now be impugned by any serious person with the least knowledge of the subject. Unless we accept the incredible suggestion that our own Government was misinformed about elementary military facts in a country where espionage was so easy as to be hardly worth checking, then our Foreign Office and War Office knew what was the real position. Yet all through the earlier part of the war Mr. Eden misled the public into assuming that Republican Spain had been getting arms to the same extent and in the same way as General Franco, and that foreigners on each side could be placed in the same category.

The writer always found that this second assumption caused the deepest resentment in Spain. There is an arguable case for the revolt being more of a civil war than an invasion, but there is none for putting on the same footing as German and Italian conscripts the men who found their way into Government Spain from France, Czechoslovakia, England, and elsewhere. Most of them were poor men, who slipped quietly from their homes, and drifted southwards, sometimes 'hitch-hiking' on lorries, sometimes walking over the mountains when they had not passports, but all impelled by a desire to fight. They went partly for adventure, but chiefly for an ideal. They mostly arrived penniless, and they fought without the backing of a great Government, knowing that if they were killed they would die un-remembered, if they were wounded they would have only the most elementary attention, and that they would

be fighting with a badly equipped army against regular troops fully supplied with aeroplanes, tanks, heavy artillery, and all the arsenal of modern war.

It was the nearest approach to a crusade that our generation has seen. The International Brigade suffered from all the discomforts and lack of medical supplies which marked the early part of the Mesopotamian campaign, and they fought through actions as sanguinary as any in France. They were rushed up to the front armed with out-of-date rifles collected from old dumps. They hung on to positions from which more experienced officers would have extricated them. They taught the cheerfully incompetent Spanish militiamen what modern fighting meant, and now most of them are dead. No braver men ever left France or England, and perhaps in ten years' time they will have achieved little more than a gesture. There is, however, a chance that by a delightful paradox a handful of Glasgow communists saved the British Empire on the banks of the Jarama river in February and March, 1937. Most certainly they saved Madrid.

There is no longer any serious doubt about the conditions under which Italians and Germans were brought over to fight in Spain. A mass of documents was captured at Guadalajara, when the Italian troops retreated in disorder, leaving quantities of papers, letters, orders, etc., in their discarded baggage. Besides this great haul a considerable number of prisoners has been taken from time to time, deserters have come over, aviators forced down, all with their mobilization papers on them. The 'documentation' from the Government side is complete, but of late it has been hardly necessary to collect evidence about the Italian breaches of every non-intervention agreement which they have made,

because Signor Mussolini has gloried openly and repeatedly in such successes as his troops have won, and has not even been willing to share the success with the Foreign Legion, the Moors and the Falangists. Herr Hitler has been far more discreet, and some attempt has been made to camouflage the sending of German aviators through an office in Berlin, but the line troops were taken straight from barracks or from manœuvres, usually under orders to ' practise embarkation,' and then sent down to Cadiz.[1]

The Italian mobilization orders are official documents, headed ' Ministry of War ' and warn those who do not report that they will be brought before military courts to be dealt with according to the law. The men were, in fact, definitely conscripts. Some were in the regular army, and some in Blackshirt organizations. After the first month or two the former seem to have predominated, especially in the commissioned ranks. All were sent in Italian ships, and guarded by Italian men-of-war. An officer's diary, captured at Guadalajara, is interesting on this point, and also on the mentality of the fascist invaders. It is translated in *Spain Over Britain.* The entry for January 7th describes his departure from Italy.

> Noiselessly the pirates of an ideal depart from their Fatherland, on the most wonderful and most sacred adventure. The Commander of the Naples Division conveys to us greetings from the Crown Prince.
>
> The soldiers have been given amulets with the image of the Christ, the Holy Mother, and the Holy

[1] The writer had some talks with a German, met casually on the road, who was a young doctor doing his military service. His regiment had been ordered on embarkation manœuvres, and they found themselves sailing for Cadiz. He was so angry that he had deserted at Cadiz, found his way to the Government side and was in charge of an improvised ' tank.'

Ghost. To-morrow, if all goes well, we arrive at Cadiz. The anxiety continues—after all ours is a pirate ship. But our 'Papa' is protecting us. Warships —ours and foreign.[1]

In this manner, carefully watched over by their navy, blessed by the Vatican and by the Italian Government, fully armed and equipped with Italian munitions, these 'volunteers' came over to the south of Spain. The officers were probably keen enough, but the conscripted men, as was to be seen later, had no great stomach for the fight, especially when the influence of the amulets had worn off. These presumably were the same amulets which the Seville priests distributed to the Moorish troops on their arrival, assuring them that they would ward off bullets.

After November, 1936, the war can be divided into three stages. The first lasted up to about the middle of April. It included the taking of Malaga in February, and should have ended in the capture of Madrid. This failed, chiefly owing to the resistance of the Government troops on the Jarama river in March, and still more to the rout of the Italians near Guadalajara. The next phase was the attack on the isolated northern Government area—the Asturian and Basque country which was cut off from eastern Spain, and extremely short of munitions. This was gradually reduced, chiefly through sheer weight of metal, and the complete control of the air by the German bombers. Then followed in the autumn and winter the later stage which is not complete when this is being written, the period when General Franco was expected to use his forces for an attack upon the Aragon front and upon Madrid.

[1] H. Blythe, *Spain over Britain*, 19.

During the first phase the evidence suggests that a force of about fifty thousand Italian regulars and Blackshirts was landed in the south of Spain. Their expedition was a definite breach of the non-intervention agreement even before February 20th, the date upon which Italy, Germany, and the other Powers promised to forbid the departure of 'volunteers.' Apart from the question whether the Italians or Germans could possibly be described as 'volunteers,' they went from their countries equipped and armed.

The Italian expedition, with some help from German aircraft and considerable assistance from Moors and the Foreign Legion, succeeded in capturing Malaga in the early days of February. The Government forces, badly armed and on this occasion very badly led, put up an extremely poor defence. The quality of the Spaniard as a fighting man seems to vary considerably with the Province from which he is drawn. The toughest fighters undoubtedly come from the north.

After February 20th the speed of sending in soldiers was increased rather than diminished. The reason was probably the slow progress in central Spain, and the hope that, once the International Brigade could not recruit more members, General Franco would finish off his Madrid campaign quickly.

Some 10,000 Italians were landed at Cadiz between February 22nd and 28th.[1] Most of these seem to have been rushed up to the Central Spanish front to help in the capture of Madrid, which for political rather than strategic reasons was considered the key position.

The commander of the Madrid defence, General Miaja, said this afternoon: 'Three Italian prisoners

[1] *Daily Telegraph*, March 8, 1937. *Manchester Guardian*, March 8. (From Cadiz.)

have been taken. . . . They were disembarked in Cadiz on February 22nd. . . . Now they form part of an Italian division of 7,000, which is attacking us on this sector of the central front.'[1]

The deliberate and systematic violation of the non-intervention agreement had been well known in Spain long before the end of 1936. The British Government must have learnt about the departure of an organized Italian expeditionary force from December onwards. By every canon of international law the pact should have been denounced before the end of the year in view of Italy's obvious preparations, her issue of mobilization orders, etc. The occupation of the Balearic Islands, the fortification of Majorca and Ibiza, their use as purely Italian air bases, the appointment of regular Italian officers as commandants, all these were known by the end of November, 1936.

Faced by these unpalatable facts all that the British Government did was to mislead the public by pretending that these definite acts of war, committed by the Italian Government against the recognized Spanish Government, were part of a general interference in Spanish affairs by irresponsible outsiders. Towards the end of November, Mr. Eden, replying to a question, said: 'I am fully aware that there are Italian volunteers in Majorca—as there are other foreign volunteers in other parts of Spain. I deprecate it, but I cannot deal with this question alone.' The answer, with its obvious attempt to confuse the issue, suggests that he had already decided upon the other course—another gamble on an early Franco victory, in view of the sending of regular troops from Italy and probably from Germany.

[1] *Daily Telegraph*, March 10. (From Madrid.)

These two countries had already recognized General Franco, not as they had hoped as ruler of Madrid, but as head of the Burgos Government. They obviously intended to fulfil the Berchtesgaden agreement, and see the business through. The easiest policy was to accept the inevitable, and make friends with Italy by easing her path. The Italianate-Catholic element in the Foreign Office got busy, and determined to put forward some ostensible fruit of this conciliation policy.

All through December, while troops were being mobilized and despatched to Spain, there were negotiations for an Anglo-Italian *entente*. The so-called gentlemen's agreement was signed on January 2nd, 1937. The Government claimed this as a great victory. Their official spokesman hinted strongly that Signor Mussolini had been persuaded to withdraw from his Spanish venture, and there was vague talk about the resurrection of the old 'Stresa front' of unhappy memory.

The 'gentleman's agreement' remains a diplomatic mystery. Possibly some pressure was exerted from Berlin, possibly the Duce had never intended the negotiations to be anything more than a convenient way of wasting time while his mobilization was being carried through. We now know that 10,000 Italian regular troops were landed at Cadiz on the very day that it was signed, and later in the month Mr. Eden had to confess that serious breaches of the non-intervention agreement had recently been committed. It was an undignified position, and the Foreign Office employed the same tactics as during the later stages of the Ethiopian war. Although we had consuls at Cadiz and elsewhere Mr. Eden always replied to definite questions by stating that he had no 'precise information,'—statements that were either mendacious or ridiculous in view

of the fact that the arrival of troops was constantly reported by English, French and American correspondents of newspapers which are certainly not usually accused of 'left-wing' tendencies.[1]

Looking back upon this unhappy period in our foreign relations, it would seem that the Foreign Office was obsessed by certain illusions. They still overrated the fighting qualities of the Italian infantry, underrated those of the Spanish militiamen and the International Brigade, were certain that any Government containing socialists and communists must be inefficient, apparently, and accepted the statements made in part of the press about the 'chaos' in eastern Spain. Their channels of information about Republican Spain were, for the most part, officials whose upbringing, outlook, religion, and social contacts made them hostile to the new order. The withdrawal of our Ambassador was an initial mistake, but so long as Mr. (now Sir George) Ogilvie Forbes was *Chargé d'Affaires* some semblance of a proper relationship existed. As our policy grew more tortuous, and our representatives less impartial, every Englishman in Republican Spain was aware of a steady deterioration.

All through the early part of March Signor Mussolini continued to send out troops, and those newspapers in England, which have from the first encouraged every form of Italian aggression, now began to report their arrival in anticipation of the expected fall of Madrid and the need of ascribing this to their hero's armies. Breaches of faith so magnificent forced them to break their previous discreet reticence.

Ten thousand fresh Italian troops are reported in Gibraltar to have landed at Cadiz from three ships

[1] E.g. *The Daily Telegraph*, *Le Temps*, *The Washington Post*, etc

which arrived there on March 22nd, 23rd, and 24th. The reports add that the Italians were sent immediately to Seville, whence they were distributed to various fronts. According to a quarter considered reliable, these Italians are infantrymen.

Several thousand more Italians are expected to reach Spain very shortly.[1]

This important movement was not denied by the Foreign Office. Mr. Eden, in reply to a question, stated that he had heard of the landing. 'A Note has now been received from the Spanish Ambassador in which it is stated that the Embassy have received confirmation of the disembarkation at Cadiz on March 23rd, 24th, and 25th of 10,000 Italians. I am making enquiries into the statements contained in this Note.' In answer to a further question as to whether this would not be 'a gross breach of the undertaking given by the Italian Government,' Mr. Eden replied 'Yes, sir, it certainly would.'[2]

Two points are worth noting in Mr. Eden's reply. First he makes it clear that he had his channels of information in southern Spain—there was still in fact, a British Consul there. Secondly, like Lord Halifax on the poison-gas question, he promises to make enquiries about facts which, having his representatives there, he must have known perfectly well. The 'enquiries' whether made or not, were never published. The expression 'enquiries will be made' has now become the diplomatic way of accepting the truth of an unpleasant fact about which no action is to be taken and no protest made.

[1] *Observer*, April 11, 1937. *The Times*, April 8. See the *Evidence of Recent Breaches by Germany and Italy of the Non-Intervention Agreement. Compiled by a Committee of Enquiry.*

[2] *Hansard*, April 14, 1937.

All through that winter Mr. Eden, under pressure from his pro-Italian supporters, was misleading the country about the extent and nature of Italian and German intervention. Late in December, when he knew that these countries were sending expeditionary forces, and that no other country was doing more than supplying a modicum of munitions of war on payment, he went out of his way to state that 'As far as concerns non-intervention, I wish to say categorically that there are other Governments more to blame than those of Germany and Italy.'[1] Even if we are to believe the incredible, that he had been totally misinformed by the British representatives on each side, he had abundant opportunity for correcting this statement during the spring, when every week was making it more absurd.

He never did so, nor did he ever differentiate between the legal Government of Spain and the insurgents. Although the latter were not 'recognized,' the Foreign Office continued a policy which in theory placed them on an equal footing—neither were granted belligerent rights—but in practice meant that the German and Italian Governments could send what they liked to Spain, while even private firms in England or France could not supply the Spanish Government, though they could and did continue to sell arms to Portugal to be sent overland into Burgos territory.

The same partiality was evident in the question of control of the seas. At the beginning of the revolt, when the Spanish navy still operated and had not been driven off by Italian submarines, it will be remembered that a Government man of war searched a British merchant ship on its way to Spanish Morocco. A battle-cruiser was immediately sent from Gibraltar, and the Spanish

[1] *Hansard*, December 10, 1936.

Government was firmly warned against any further interference. A little later, when the Burgos authorities proclaimed a blockade of Government ports, our Foreign Office accepted a blockade which was obviously incomplete, and warned its merchant ships against venturing into Spanish waters with cargoes which had been declared contraband by General Franco. Meanwhile a Bill was rushed through Parliament declaring it illegal to take munitions to Spain. We were, in fact, doing for Italians in Spain what we had done for them during the Ethiopian war, arranging that their enemies should be unarmed.

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Foreign Office, always contemptuous of popular movements, had come to the opinion that (1) Italian and German intervention could not be prevented; (2) that it was bound to succeed within a comparatively short time; and (3) that it was therefore best to make friends with the Mammon of Unrighteousness and hasten the inevitable end. But, as the writer's Spanish friends were only too fond of pointing out, *Spain is not Abyssinia.* The British diplomatic forecast was wrong about the original *coup d'état.* The Foreign Office proved equally lacking in prescience about the effects of Italian and German intervention between December, 1936, and March, 1937.

On March 13th, 1937, Signor Mussolini, who was then on his way to Libya, sent a telegram to General Mancini, the Italian Divisional Commander in the Central area. The fighting had already begun which, as Queipo de Llano promised so confidently and so often over the wireless, could only end in the fall of Madrid. A double attack was being made, along the Jarama river from the south, and down the Saragossa road from the north. Both seemed likely enough to succeed, and if they did Madrid would be cut off.

For some months Madrid had been dependent on the one main road which leads through Tarancon to Valencia, or upon the side-roads past Tarancon to the rail-head at Albacete. Even this main road was cut near the city, and a detour was necessary. If the gap had been closed a little more Madrid, which still had nearly a million inhabitants, would have been besieged.

Signor Mussolini's message breathes the same proud confidence as Queipo de Llano's more breezy but less pretentious statements. It was to be circulated to all branches of the Italian army in Spain.

> I am receiving on board the *Pola* on my way to Libya, the *communiqués* on the great battle in progress in the direction of Guadalajara. I follow the fortunes of the battle with a tranquil soul because I am convinced that the enthusiasm and tenacity of our legionaries will sweep away the enemy's resistance. To defeat the international forces will be a success of the highest value, including political value. Let the legionaires know that I MYSELF am following their action from hour to hour, and that it will be crowned with victory.
>
> MUSSOLINI.[1]

It was all timed for a great triumph. On March 14th the Duce arrived at Tripoli and was proclaimed 'Protector of Islam.' On the 15th the bibulous Queipo de Llano had promised the fall of Madrid. At Bucharest a Nazi *putsch* had been arranged for the same day. Signor Mussolini should have returned to Rome, and inaugurated a new stage in his empire building. In these days the gods deal so gently with mortals suffering from *hubris* that we are apt to forget the fate which must ultimately befall them. Perhaps the despatch went a

[1] *Documents on the Italian Intervention in Spain*, 14.

little too far. On this occasion vaulting ambition received a temporary check. On the 16th General Mancini was compelled to send a very different circular to his officers, and Mussolini deferred his epoch-making speech. Madrid had not fallen.

Cowards exist even in the best and bravest masses. We must not therefore be surprised that there are also cowards amongst us.

But we must get rid of them.

(1) There have been cases of self-inflicted wounds.

(2) There have been cases of wounded and bandaged soldiers who in fact had nothing the matter with them.

(3) There have been cases where a genuinely wounded soldier was accompanied by others who were not in any way charged with this mission, and who of their own initiative took this chance to leave the firing line.

A. ORDER. WHOEVER IS GUILTY OF ANY OF THE FOREGOING ACTS SHOULD BE IMMEDIATELY SHOT. (Five individuals have already, since yesterday, suffered this just punishment.)

B. The medical service is to report immediately, cases of self-inflicted wounds or what they suspect to be such.

C. The staff of the Royal Carabineers, the staff of the volunteer troops and the divisional staffs are to establish a vigilance service for this purpose on the lines of communication, in the sanitary services, in the field hospitals, etc.

A particularly close watch is to be kept on the ambulances.

MANCINI.

General Commander of the Division.[1]

[1] Documents on the Italian Intervention in Spain, 18–9.

Both documents were taken from officers who fell in the fifteen-mile flight at Brihuega on the Saragossa road. For the first time in eighteen months the Italians came against solid troops not notably fewer in numbers nor worse armed than themselves. They had against them part of the International Brigade, including some of their anti-fascist compatriots, the Garibaldi division. With them was a portion of the new army.

The Italians were caught near Brihuega, marching down the road in a most unmilitary formation, with transport mixed up with their leading troops. When they were attacked they turned and fled, leaving their equipment and two thousand prisoners in the hands of the Government. Lack of mechanical transport alone prevented the loyalist troops from capturing the whole army, which was able to reform with the help of some Spanish regular regiments.

About the same time another section of the new army, with a small detachment of the International Brigade, held up the southern attack near the Madrid-Valencia road. Instead of the pincers being closed round the city they had been rudely forced open. From that time onwards the road to Madrid has been open, and until December, 1937, when Teruel was captured by the Government troops, there has been no more large scale open fighting on the whole of the front which divided east and west Spain. The invading armies turned northwards, where a portion of Republican Spain was isolated. There they were to find an easier prey in the Basques and Asturians, tough, heroic men, but virtually disarmed, without aeroplanes, heavy artillery, or anti-aircraft guns, and cut off from all supplies by the British Navy as controlling force and a partial blockade. The reduction of this northern area was to take them the rest of the summer.

At this point a chapter may be interpolated upon the condition of Spain, for it is relevant to such questions as to whether the revolt was a civil war or an invasion, and to the English attitude towards such questions as 'non-intervention.' Signor Mussolini can for the moment be left at Rome, lashing with pen and tongue those foreign miscreants who dared to describe Brihuega as 'a second Caporetto,' and to point out that the Italian infantry seems incapable of fighting except when it has an overwhelming advantage.

Physical courage amongst people of another nationality is a very delicate subject for a foreigner to discuss. It is twenty years since the English took part in a war. Are we so certain that our nerve is still sound? The most that can be said, and this with some diffidence, is that clearly Signor Mussolini can drag his countrymen into queer adventures, can make them endure great discomfort, can use them as a punitive force, but he does not seem to have imbued them with that ultimate courage which so often has made the Turk, as well as the German, the Frenchman, the Englishman, hang on to an impossible position until they are killed. The writer only knows of Brihuega at second-hand from men who took part in the fight. He was himself in the very undignified and uncourageous position of sitting in Madrid, wondering whether to clear out, bag and baggage, before the place was besieged. But the subject must be raised because of the absurdly laudatory accounts of Italian prowess in Ethiopia and Spain which have appeared in certain sections of the British Press, especially in those ultra-conservative papers which are so patriotic that they are lost in admiration for any country which habitually succeeds in humiliating us.

CHAPTER XIII

SPAIN AT WAR

THOSE Englishmen who have worked in Spain during the war have the impression of a thick curtain drawn between themselves and their compatriots. As communications become mechanically easier, man increases the barriers. An Elizabethan could, like Ralph Fitch, travel without passport or papers, let or hindrance, from Dover to Teheran. Even during the Napoleonic wars our forefathers wandered about Europe. Lord Brougham, as a young man, satisfied a desire to see Bonaparte, then at war with us, with no greater inconvenience than a longish wait in the closet of a Rhine ferry-boat. Correspondents began to be herded about carefully in the Great War, but now the fog of war spreads far wider than the front line area, and covers the life of the peoples on each side. By the time an item of news has passed the local censors, been sifted by some news agency, twisted by a sub-editor to suit the 'angle' of a newspaper, and undergone the informal censorship which operates over the greater part of the British Press and the B.B.C., there is very little left of it.

The Government's reasons for suppressing, or 'toning down', news have already been discussed in previous chapters. The same financial interests which were backing the Government's policy also helped to ensure that it should not be upset by some revulsion of public feeling, such as forced the abandonment of the Hoare-Laval proposals for an Ethiopian settlement. To do

this it was necessary to emphasize the 'civil war' side of the struggle, to minimize the extent of Italian and German official participation, and to exaggerate the communist element in the *Frente Popular*, both before and after the July revolt. Fortunately their efforts were only partly successful. War correspondents are an honest and hardy race, to whom the country is not sufficiently grateful. The profession is dangerous and very poorly requited. Accounts of actual fighting, especially in the northern enclave, were usually accurate and impartial enough, but the public were not kept very well informed about the condition of the country itself.

This chapter is rather in the nature of a digression, though the condition of the country during the war is relevant to the question whether this Spanish affair was a civil war or not. Unfortunately the subject has been so muddied over by propaganda that the writer may be excused if he confines himself chiefly to personal experiences. As he was never in western Spain during the war period all that he can do is to offer a few general observations about that side.

Throughout 1937 the conditions under which foreigners could visit western Spain were considerably stricter than eastern Spain. Those who were not known to be fascist sympathizers were forced to sign a statement that they would not write or say anything publicly referring to conditions in insurgent Spain. No such undertaking was required by the Government. There was also far greater freedom of the press in eastern Spain. General Franco has instituted the ordinary fascist regime, as in Italy, but in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia there were opposition papers very bitterly critical of the Ministers, and sometimes of the conduct of the war.

Living conditions were undoubtedly more comfortable in western Spain. The east, more highly industrialized and heavily populated, has a small rainfall, which makes it an orange- and vine-growing area unsuited for cereals or grazing. Normally there was an export of grain and meat from the west to the east, and Madrid looked to the north-west for its milk supplies. The inevitable food shortage in the east was accentuated by the mass movement of refugees, which has been one of the most remarkable features of the war, and by the difficulties of feeding Madrid, a huge unproductive city on the very edge of the Republican territory. The economics of both sides are something of a mystery, but it is probable that the German and Italian intervention of fully-equipped troops was not the same strain on the country's resources as the fitting out of an unarmed militia. The volunteers of the International Brigade brought little or nothing with them, and had to be clothed, as well as armed.

Don Antonio Ruiz Vilaplana throws some interesting light on certain aspects of life in the insurgent territory, after the country had been divided into two definite zones. Although General Franco has been anxious to initiate a fascist regime on the Italian model, it is clear that the revolt was considered as an army rising, and the officers thought that the administration should be entirely military. On General Mola's arrival at Burgos he addressed a meeting of officers and officials.

> 'This Government, which will be established either here or at Pamplona, will, I think, have to be formed, not only by soldiers, but also by some civilian elements.'

'Not at all,' interrupted a colonel, 'it must be solely military, and that was the plan of the revolt. Under clause six, that we all know, it was laid down that once the movement succeeded, each district would form its military committee, and from this would be formed a national assembly, composed exclusively from the army.'[1]

General Mola managed to appease this Colonel Blimp, but it is clear that the old regular army expected and obtained a very large share of the Government. The courts were soon superseded by military tribunals, manned by the less valuable type of retired officer. It was these tribunals which continued to inflict death penalties for political views all through 1937, long after eastern Spain had returned to the normal judicial procedure. The ordinary insurgent procedure was laid down in the official bulletin. 'In order to hasten the disposal of cases, a special procedure is established by virtue of which the court will hear the accused, at least two witnesses to the case, and will then dictate the sentence, which will be carried out immediately.' It was a system of drum-head courts-martial, admirably suited to extirpating one's political opponents, and thoroughly approved by the Church. The retired army officer could go to the cathedral at Burgos and learn that 'we cannot, we ought not to live with the wicked socialist or with the liberal who have stained their hands with so much blood and crime. . . . No truce and no quarter till the victory of religion and order has been finally established.'[2]

Inevitably the supporters of each side have made the most of political divisions amongst their opponents,

[1] *Doy Fe*, 57–8. [2] Id., 191.

but the difficulties which have arisen in General Franco's territory are very efficiently suppressed, and the world hears little of disputes between Falangists and Requetés, between Spaniards and Italians or Germans, between the insurgent government and the mass of the people. During periods of comparative inactivity, as throughout the autumn of 1937, these political and national differences become acute. The Falangists and the Requetés are at least as antagonistic as Communists and Anarchists, and their political ideals are as incompatible. A recent report from the correspondent of *The Times* suggests that neither the propertied classes nor the Church form a sufficient basis for the insurgents, and the authority of the latter is based on official pressure rather than popular support.

> The hold of the Church is not as great as Nationalist propagandists would have it believed. I was struck by the emptiness of churches and cathedrals in Nationalist territory. But ecclesiastical bureaucracy has blossomed out again after six years of rather uncertain power. Evidence of this is seen in San Sebastian, where women who appear on the beach without stockings or knee-length bathing suits are promptly placed under arrest.[1]

The mass movements of population have been very significant. Whatever doubts Whitehall may have had about the war, the peasants seem to have known from the first that it was a foreign invasion. There have been plenty of military revolts before, but the people in towns and villages have never thought it worth leaving their homes. There have been at least four large-scale emigrations since the outbreak of the

[1] *The Times*, Jan. 14, 1938.

revolt. All of these have been *into* eastern Spain. The only corresponding reverse movement has been a small middle-class movement from Madrid through the ports to France and finally to insurgent territory. There can be no real question about the size and nature of the four movements, far less than there is about the composition and sizes of the two armies.

The Spanish peasant, when threatened by danger, has an urge to move into a town. Possibly this is a kind of atavism, or the remains of some old tradition from the days when the walled city offered the only security against the incoming Moors. The next war in which England is involved will probably see the reverse process, and townsmen rushing out into the country in order to avoid the bombing to which all groups of buildings will be exposed. One of the chief refugee movements was into Madrid from the surrounding western villages, another was through Aragon towards Barcelona. These two exceeded half a million. The Andalusian movement, at the beginning of 1937, was in the direction of Murcia, where nine months later there were still twenty thousand homeless peasants concentrated in buildings and camps. This movement from the south, though connected with the fall of Malaga, was essentially a peasant exodus, and certainly amounted to about 150,000. All through January whole families were trudging along the main Almeria road with their bedding loaded on to mules. The final movement has, of course, been out of the northern enclave—Basques and Asturians escaping by boats across to France, and thus on to Catalonia. Much of the work done by the various foreign relief organizations was connected with these refugees, for it was their arrival which threw the ordinary local administration out of gear.

It is significant that there should have been any doubt in England about the refugees, whose numbers and importance were a commonplace to anyone living in Spain. The British public were not kept well informed about what was happening. Some leading newspapers had no representatives regularly in Republican Spain, and nearly all those who were there complained with reason about the way their reports were handled in London. One correspondent was incontinently dismissed because he insisted on telephoning from Madrid that the city had not surrendered to General Franco in November, 1936, when his paper had apparently stated that the insurgents were already occupying it. Another London daily paper was represented by a little Frenchman who hung about Perpignan collecting what scraps of gossip suited his editor's attitude towards the 'Reds.' One way and another the English knew very little about what happened inside Republican Spain after July, 1936, very little about the type of Government, and not very much about the systematic invasion of Spain by Italy and Germany after December.

It may, perhaps, be useful to give the pooled experience of a number of relief workers, not only on the question of refugees, but on the more general subject of conditions in eastern Spain during the war period. These workers were drawn from many countries, England, America, Denmark, Switzerland, Canada, etc. They were of very varied types—some were experienced social workers, others came out to drive lorries, etc. Our work made it essential to keep in touch with each other, and we formed a conference which met each month. Living in eastern Spain, with work that took us about into villages and provincial towns, as well as into the three large cities, we had

unusual opportunities of seeing the ordinary life of the people during 1937. Our lorries ran freely from Madrid into all parts of the Levante and Catalonia—as far south as Almeria and Jaen, as far north as Puigcerda, and along the Guadalajara and Teruel roads. They travelled unheralded, and with rather less supervision than those belonging to Government departments.

It is difficult not to admire and like people who endure hardships cheerfully. Food was scarce in all towns and cities for the whole of the time. The villages lacked certain commodities, such as soap, while Madrid was not only short of food, but also of heating. Fortunately Spanish peasants and working men live as frugally as anyone in Europe. Their habits have stood them in good stead during the war. English doctors have gone out to Spain and prophesied famine and pestilence, but sanitary arrangements have always been elementary, and the diet so spare and simple that an intensification of both has not led to any great catastrophe. Only invalids, the very old, and the very young have suffered much from the worsening of conditions to which the great mass of the people have been long accustomed.

The soldiers were, on the whole, well-fed. The peasants in their villages could look after themselves. The chief sufferers were the refugees and the townsmen. The first great refugee movement was from the central plateau villages into Madrid and other towns like Cuenca. The second was from the Malaga area through the most barren part of Andalusia to Murcia. Both were made under conditions resembling those of an Indian famine, but they were endured with an oriental stoicism, and it was only the very old and the babies who died.

The local authorities, themselves often short of food, were unable to cope with these mass movements, but they gradually learnt to handle large numbers of refugees, and most of these were sorted out and accommodated in the villages. The refugees are such an important and significant feature that it may be worth restating their numbers. A conservative estimate of these movements would be 300,000 from the centre into and through Madrid, 150,000 from the south—the Granada and Malaga area—and 200,000 from Aragon into Catalonia. During the summer and autumn of 1937 another 150,000 or more escaped from the blockaded part of north Spain, through France into Catalonia. There were other smaller movements, making up at least a million and probably a million and a quarter refugees from homes in western Spain into Government territory.

The Spanish people seemed to take the war, and also this huge refugee problem, with their usual stoic philosophy. The nature of the war undoubtedly came as a surprise to these decent and tolerant people, so untidy in their habits, so orderly in the general pattern of their lives. They were traditionally used to civil wars, waged usually between 'liberals' and the army. These were expected to last six weeks at the most, and to involve a little fighting of the old-fashioned type, some burning of churches and convents, and a few executions. The Great War, with its use of modern machinery for mass slaughtering, had missed Spain, and its battles had meant little more to the peasants of Valverde and Campanilla than the bombing of Nanking does to a Norfolk farm labourer. The Spaniards on the Government side were as shocked at the new methods as were the Ethiopians. The bombing of open

towns affected them in exactly the same way, and also the murdering of working-women with their menfolk in Seville. During the first weeks of the war the militiamen, when one of their comrades was killed, used to take him back to his village for burial. A very right and proper attitude towards human life and human dignity, but not suited to modern warfare.

Once a line had been established between the Government and the rebel troops, life soon became comparatively normal over most of eastern Spain. This was only to be expected. Except in those areas from which the peasants had moved *en masse* the same was undoubtedly true on the rebel side of Spain. This seems to have surprised travellers of the leisured class, who have had little experience of war. The ordinary villager, whether peasant, artisan, or shopkeeper, gets up in the morning, and automatically carries on with his usual work, no matter what catastrophic events may be happening in the great cities. This could be seen daily on the Madrid road. The peasants at Perales were cultivating land within three miles of the enemy front line. The little hamlet of Fuentidueña, which figures in Mr. Hemingway's film *Spanish Earth*, is only twenty kilometres further east, and there they developed a new irrigation system on the land which had been taken over by the *junteros*. The shopkeepers kept open their stores so long as there was anything to sell, and sometimes when they seemed to have nothing at all.

More remarkable was the extreme orderliness of village life, after the small amount of central control had practically disappeared. There was not a uniformed policeman between Madrid and Valencia, and singularly few in the cities themselves. Spanish 'anarchism',

which so frightens the House of Lords and the old ladies in Kensington, helped the country at this juncture. It is largely based on village autonomy, which has always been a feature of Spanish life.[1] The *alcalde* took over complete charge with no more physical force at his disposal than an old watchman with an even older blunderbuss. The traditional independence and dignity of Calderon's 'Mayor of Zalamea' has survived through the centuries. It was the *alcalde* who received the children brought from Madrid, who arranged for their adoption by the village women, and generally did the honours of his village with that dignity which seems to be the birthright of the Spanish peasant. In the larger villages he would be helped by a committee, which in the Levante would often be 'anarchist' in politics, but seemed reasonable enough in practice.

There appeared to be very little crime, and those engaged in relief work came across singularly little disorder, with the one exception of the Barcelona rising in May, 1937. This was a serious struggle between the anarcho-syndicalist group and the local Government. It was precipitated by two of those political murders which seem to be endemic in that curiously ill-tempered city, with its mixed population, and long history of internecine quarrels. The fighting, which was localized even inside the city, was put down by General Pozas without great difficulty, but with rather heavy casualties. It was a lamentable business, but at least it shocked Catalonia into a more helpful frame of mind, and led

[1] Anarchism seems to have much in common with Mr. Gandhi's theories about village life. Both are based on the traditional village unit and government—the Indian *patel* amd *panchaiyat* corresponding to the Spanish *alcalde* and *junta*. Such theories are admirably suited to a static society, self-supporting, and content to live on the land.

directly to more control from the Central Government, an essential condition for success in the war. Some five months later, when the Government moved from Valencia to Barcelona, the change, which was expected to wound Catalan susceptibilities, was welcomed locally and passed off without the least excitement. Anarchism, like 'Gandhi-ism,' is a fine creed for the countryman, but not suited for industrial areas, especially in war-time.

It is unfortunate that most journalists and visiting politicians see little of 'Red Spain' except the three chief cities, and little of the inhabitants except those interested in politics. Even those foreigners who are well disposed towards the Government have sometimes helped to give the British public a picture of Republican Spain as a land rent by every form of political dissension, and of warring ideologies. The English reader naturally recoils from accounts of queer organizations like the C.N.T., the U.G.T., the P.O.U.M., and the F.A.I.—all of which seem to be designated by initials which only accentuate their sinister mystery. These federations and parties had no great significance outside the cities, and comparatively little either in Valencia or Madrid.

The real revolution in eastern Spain was over by the beginning of 1937. Almost within the statutory six weeks, which seems to be the accepted length of Spanish revolutions, the 'traditional obstacles' had been removed. The Monarchy had disappeared six years before, and its restoration was not even part of the Falangist creed, though General Franco is said to have toyed with the idea. The symbols of ecclesiastical authority, the churches and convents, were confiscated and secularized. Some 14,000 priests and members

of religious orders were still in eastern Spain, but most of the younger ones had returned to civil life, and the Church Militant had been swept away.[1] The landlords and manufacturers had mostly escaped or were in 'sanctuary' in some consulate at Madrid. Those who had remained had come to terms, often very favourable terms, with their tenants and workmen.

With the 'traditional obstacles' had disappeared also a vast accumulation of the snobbishness and class feeling which sits so heavily on western Europe. The removal from society of some influential castes probably accounted for a tendency, common in all transitional states of society, for politicians to become too important, and to ride their particular theories to death. But it is absurd to picture Government Spain as if it were a prey to warring and intransigent sects. Perhaps the best reply to such an accusation can be made by drawing once more on the experience of relief workers. Not only was our work not held up by disorders, but such difficulties as we met from local and central officialdom were only of the kind which are experienced from bureaucracies all over the world—'red tape' and a certain inelasticity at times of crisis.

By the end of 1937 the Government had ruled for sixteen months over an area considerably greater than England and Wales. It had improvised a large army out of its civilian population, and arranged for the manufacture, at Barcelona, Cartagena, and elsewhere, of a great part of their ammunition and equipment. It had defended a thousand-mile long front against an Italian expeditionary force, supported by regular German, Moorish, and Spanish troops, and a mostly

[1] The village priests, usually ignorant, poor, and not very young, have often settled down in peaceful obscurity in their parishes.

German Foreign Legion. The support of Madrid, a city of a million inhabitants at the end of a single road, has been a great strain which somehow has been borne. Finally the east of Spain has always been the most densely populated, though the west is better watered, and more fertile. Now that so many refugees have escaped to Republican Spain about half of the original population is living on the barren side of the peninsula.

The Government has functioned steadily, with singularly few changes amongst its Ministers and its higher officials. The majority of both Ministers and officials strike the foreigner as much less advanced politically than their party labels would suggest. The peasants have completed their 'green revolution,' the workers in Barcelona have accomplished a fairly successful syndicalist reorganization of industry. The Government remains a definitely middle-class and rather cautious group of men. Don Juan Negrin, who became Prime Minister in May, 1937, might have stepped straight out of an office in Whitehall or Geneva. The officials undoubtedly include many of the type irreverently nick-named 'radishes'—red outside but white within.

The Communists especially belied the foreigner's conception of their party. There were only a few thousand in Spain before the revolt, but they have been increased twenty-fold by those who were grateful for Russia's material help in the autumn of 1936, after the Italians had begun to land troops. The communist leaders have shown themselves practical men, determined to get on with the war. They were the constructive party in contrast to the idealist anarchists, and they seldom let foreign theories upset their approach to a difficult problem. The Government's attitude to farming is typical.

Señor Uribe, a communist, became Minister of Agriculture in September, 1936, but he wisely did not try to start collective farming in that typical peasant country of Eastern Spain. He did not even begin to press the farmers of the 'kulak' class, but he confirmed the breaking-up of the big estates, and only supported collective groups when they had been formed spontaneously. The landless workers would sometimes organize these collective farms, but the peasants showed little inclination to co-operate. Only in Catalonia did the anarchists attempt state control of farming, and it was a failure. In spite of the war the general level of production in eastern Spain has risen by over ten per cent under Don Vincent Uribe, a triumph for helping the peasant over his land problem, and then leaving him to get on with his work.

The most striking evidence of the undisciplined orderliness prevailing in Republican Spain was to be seen in the towns not far behind the lines. The civilian population was liable to suffer in towns like Guadalajara, Jaen, and Viver from the soldiers buying what supplies there were, while refugee peasants would also come in from villages nearer the line. Our lorries would sometimes take supplies of milk and other children's food to local relief centres in these towns. There was usually plenty of wine and little to eat—for eastern Spain is a great vine-growing country. Anyone old enough to have gone through the European War would have expected a considerable amount of drunkenness and rowdyness at night in the streets, which were packed with soldiers. There was curiously little of either, though there seemed to be no military police about. It was a civilian army at war, hating the unessentials, the saluting, the correctness of uniforms, but taking readily enough

to camp life, and especially, it would seem, to trench warfare.

Perhaps the Spaniards have kept their sanity and their poise because they find it difficult to take the war too seriously. On those fronts, like the University city at Madrid, where the Government troops were opposed by the old Spanish regular army, or parts of the Aragon front which were held by Falangists, the war tended to become very casual. At one point in the Casa de Campo at Madrid there is a tiny shelter between the opposing lines. A Moor, who had deserted to the Government side, used regularly to meet a fellow-villager from the other side, and spend the night chatting with him. Both sides felt that it was a shame to deprive a fellow human being of that great necessity—conversation. The 'back-chat' and ragging between the front lines was incessant. In these parts the war was very amateur, quite of 'the 1900 vintage.'

The only really deep animosity seemed to be against the Italians. The Germans somehow did not arouse this feeling. Perhaps it was because they had fewer infantry regiments fighting, and these acquired a great reputation as fighters. Possibly because there are a surprisingly large number of Germans fighting and living on the Government side. Most of them were presumably refugees—Jews and others escaped from Nazi Germany—but many seem to have come to Spain in the early days of the war.[1]

There seemed little feeling against foreigners at the beginning of the war, but the English grew very unpopular—on general rather than personal grounds—when it became clear that their Government was deliberately conniving at breaches of the Non-Intervention Agree-

[1] A Spanish official told the writer that there were a quarter of a million former German subjects in Republican Spain.

ment. Up to the late spring of 1937 it was felt, charitably enough, that this might not be deliberate, but afterwards we were believed to be engaged in some incomprehensible Machiavellian manœuvres, and were forcing France to follow our lead. Mr. Eden was looked upon as the chief conspirator, and certainly did not improve our reputation in Government Spain by persisting in classing Italian regulars as 'volunteers,' and by his bland remark that he was sure our policy was appreciated on both sides. The Valencian, bombed twice a week by Italian 'planes from the Italian Balearic Islands, may be forgiven for not enjoying the sight of British and Italian cruisers side by side in his harbour, both nominally engaged in 'control work.'

To a generation of Spaniards our Foreign Minister will be remembered as *el gancho*, the dandy who had lured his country from its duty with soft words. In Spain the issue appeared so simple and straight-forward. Hardly twenty-four hours passed without some direct evidence of Italian intervention, and each month it became more blatant. By June, 1937, Signor Mussolini was openly boasting that his country had never been neutral. 'In the great fight which has brought face to face two types of civilization and two conceptions of the world, Fascist Italy had not been neutral, but has fought and victory will be hers.'[1] After Brihuega, when it was clear that the war would be prolonged to a third or even a fourth stage, Italy began an intensive submarine campaign. On one occasion an Italian cruiser pulled out of the harbour, and began shelling the port a few hours later. All these happenings were painfully real to the Spaniards, whereas to the Englishman at home they seem to be only distant political events.

[1] *Popolo d' Italia*, June 26, 1937.

The patience of the loyal Spaniards through 1937 was as remarkable as their tolerance. They felt themselves deserted by the civilized world, just as Haile Selassie had felt the year before. They might easily have given way to an outburst of xenophobia, fatal but forgivable. It must be remembered that the people in the smaller countries have not yet accepted the new law of the jungle, and Sir John Simon's comfortable theory that they only exist on the sufferance of the great Powers. The leaders, however, kept their heads. They continued to put their case before Geneva and before Europe honestly and reasonably. The mass of the people remained polite to foreigners, and far more tolerant to the enemy in their midst—as for example the avowed supporters of General Franco taking sanctuary in the consulates at Madrid—than the insurgents ever were. They settled down to defend the free and delightfully class-less society which they have evolved.

Even if Italians and Germans reduce eastern Spain, if the *cuerpos armados* resume their ancient importance, if the Church creeps back to wealth and power behind General Franco's bayonets, if the landlords get back their rent-rolls and Juan March his tobacco-smuggling business, some few foreigners will at least have seen the real potentialities and magnanimity of Spain, and will live in the hope of seeing them once more.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BASQUE TRAGEDY

By the end of March, 1937, Signor Mussolini knew that his second great Spanish gamble had failed. Certain minor gains had been recorded. He had won Malaga, and controlled Andalusia, but he now had a large army of at least 80,000 troops in Spain, as well as vast quantities of equipment and munitions, and could not extricate them without some kind of an imposed peace. It was very hard to force terms on the Government, or make a permanent settlement for Spain, without capturing Madrid and establishing his nominee as dictator. His unhappy legionaries had spoilt the wonderful 'curtain' which should have been the theatrical finale of the Spanish venture in the same way as the fall of Addis Ababa had brought the Ethiopian war to a close. The tidying-up in Spain could have been accomplished behind the curtain, just as it was being done in Ethiopia. With General Franco in charge of the Madrid Government, and recognized by the Powers, the old Government would soon have degenerated into the 'rebels' and cut off from supplies they could not have resisted the subjugation of the whole country, the changing of its political complexion by the process of extinction and imprisonment, and the establishment of a regular fascist regime.

The stage was admirably set. There should have been the great speech at Tripoli, symbolizing and insisting upon Italy's future predominance in the Mediterranean. In the west, Madrid should have fallen, and in the north-east a fascist rising had been planned at Bucarest.

Signor Mussolini would have been proclaimed Protector of Islam, while the Vatican, joining in the plaudits over the fall of Madrid, would have seen to it that Catholicism acknowledged its true champion. The month of March should have seen the crown of a year's bold diplomacy, and the apotheosis of Signor Mussolini himself. Everything had to be postponed because some badly armed but plucky Spaniards, helped by a few French, English and German communists, had held up the Italian army. The Rumanian *putsch* also misfired, and was delayed for nine months. The great speech was never delivered. An opportune but not very severe dust-storm provided a sufficient excuse for returning to Rome. Signor Mussolini had hasty conferences with his staff, while his supporters in England were consigning draft panegyrics to their waste-paper baskets.

It had been a good gamble, and so near success that there was nothing to do but try again, and trust that next time there would be enough Germans fighting in Spain to pull General Franco's army through. As usual a lack of success in the field was countered by renewed truculence in the diplomatic arena. Signor Mussolini knew one place where he had no need to be daunted. Exactly one week after the return from Tripoli, Signor Grandi stated that his Government could no longer support a proposal for a committee on the withdrawal of 'volunteers.' He had been asked by the Soviet delegate if his Government still stood by their offer made earlier in the year. It was then that Signor Grandi declared that 'Not a single Italian volunteer would leave Spanish soil until the end of the civil war.'

As had happened so often during the last eighteen months, Signor Mussolini, when angered by fate, amused or revenged himself by humiliating England. There

was, of course, nothing in this declaration which meant any real change of policy. The British Government knew that the Italians could not withdraw their forces, even if they wanted to do so, until they had established a subservient Government in Spain. It was, however, the first public avowal that these forces which had been sent to Spain, after the formation of the Non-Intervention Committee, were entirely under Government control, and obedient to Signor Mussolini's orders.

This declaration broke the *façade* which the Foreign Office had built up in front of our real policy. Lord Plymouth had to express his 'great surprise.' M. Yvon Delbos talked roundly about not tolerating any more volunteers, but we would not support him. The British Government had gone too far. It was too late for them to re-educate the English public, too late to confess. We were tied to the farce of non-intervention until the war was ended, and every month our position was to become more undignified, our reputation abroad more tarnished, our troubles in Egypt, Palestine, and elsewhere more acute, and our hopes of a final success more fugitive.

Signor Grandi's statement made a good 'curtain' for the second act of the non-intervention comedy, but the Foreign Office insisted on having the last word, and a *communiqué* was issued, which included this charming example of understatement.

> The Italian delegate declared that in his opinion the problem was not a technical, but a general one, and that its discussion by such a sub-committee did not seem calculated to produce practical results. He added that at the moment he was not in a position to enter into a discussion of this point.

As if to emphasize the absurdity of this periphrasis, Signor Gayda, the chief Italian propagandist, was declaring in the Italian papers that his Government had decided, 'after careful consideration of the whole situation,' that 'the Italian volunteers will not leave Spanish soil until the forces of General Franco have won a final and complete victory.' At the same time the anti-English campaign, by wireless and in the press, was intensified, and every night the Arabic-speaking world was informed of our misdeeds. It was not until the beginning of 1938, and under pressure from the Opposition, that any reply was ever made. The Government had put its money on 'Italian conciliation,' they still watched anxiously down the course, and could not understand that the ill-conditioned animal, spavined and broken-winded, had been left at the starting post.

The only possible reply to the failure before Madrid was an attack on the isolated Republican forces in Northern Spain. The northern enclave was badly supplied with arms, had no air force, and must fall ultimately from an assault by a properly equipped army. Reinforcements and supplies had to be sent. It was obviously no time to make even nominal concessions to the idea of non-intervention. The committee's proceedings had ceased to be a form of polite diplomatic comedy. The third and subsequent acts were to be played as farce.

The tragedy of northern Spain has been so recent and so complete that it is painful to write about it. The country of the Basques and Asturians had been cut off from eastern Spain early in the war, but had held out as an independent and autonomous unit, based on the three towns of Bilbao, Santander and Gijon, all on the northern coast. Of these Bilbao was by far the

most important, a manufacturing city of some 175,000 inhabitants. After the failure to capture Madrid in March the Italians and Germans turned to the North, and began their campaign against a group of men who were completely isolated, except by air, and almost without munitions. The summer months saw one of those wars of machinery against men which move a certain type of person in England to ecstasies of admiration for the machine. It was a campaign not altogether unlike the later stages of the Ethiopian war, except that the aeroplanes used explosive and incendiary bombs, but not poison gas, and the Asturian miners and the Basque peasants were incomparably better fighters than the Ethiopian levies or regular troops.

The reduction of the northern provinces was a German rather than an Italian undertaking. After Brihuega the Italians were kept discreetly in the background, though there were always some Blackshirts ready to make triumphal marches into captured towns. The campaign was planned with Teutonic thoroughness and ruthlessness from Burgos, and was based on the complete control of the air by the Germans in the country north of that city. Attempts were made to fly Government aeroplanes over from eastern Spain, but owing to the shortage of aerodromes and the complete lack of any ground defences against the air, those aeroplanes which arrived were generally destroyed on the ground. The Basques and Asturians fought to the end, but they were cut off from any help by land, sea, and air.

Don Antonio Ruiz Vilaplana, the judge at Burgos, describes the scene there preparatory to this offensive.

> Daily we saw regular Italian troops, and motor convoys arriving in Burgos; in the aerodromes of

Gamonal and Vitoria were hundreds of German three-engined bombers and 'chasers' waiting for the order to attack, the two great Powers, unashamedly intervening, knowing that they could finish off the courageous but isolated Basque defence. The German aviators, reserved and serious, said nothing about the campaign, but the few Spanish airmen, who from time to time took part in the war, were more talkative and were bursting with admiration. 'It's great. What material, and what fine chaps! In two hours, no more, they start out together, drop their bombs just where they want, and are back without losing their formation, and without losing a machine.'

'Yes, that's right,' said a friend.

'The others haven't an air force. Do you think they are going to bring down our machines with stones? . . .'[1]

War and class hatred play queer tricks with us all. A few years ago even a member of the officer class in Spain would have hardly been pleased if someone had suggested that he would be rejoicing at the chance of accompanying, in a minor capacity, a German air squadron bombing his countrymen and his towns from Spanish soil. To-day, it is to be presumed, our parlour fascists would equally repudiate the idea that they might at some future date cheer the departure of German aeroplanes on a bombing expedition to South Wales, blowing up Glastonbury or Gloucester and its cathedral on the way.

The campaign began in April. Perhaps four quotations from English correspondents, attached to newspapers friendly to the insurgent cause, will be the easiest

[1] Antonio Ruiz Vilaplana, *Doy Fe . . .*, 84.

way to recall the methods employed, and the predominance of the German intervention. Even apart from the question of Italian military incompetence, the north coast of Spain was Germany's share in the spoil, just as the Andalusian coast and the Balearic Islands had been ear-marked for Italy. The quotations are selected from those brought before the unofficial Committee of Enquiry, and appear in their report.[1]

Twenty-two German bombers accompanied by six chasers raided Galdacano village, 10 miles east of Bilbao, this afternoon. The 'planes stayed for half-an-hour, dropping several large high explosive bombs and a large number of incendiary bombs. Twelve private houses were destroyed by fire, and the woods around also caught fire in several places.

The chasers machine-gunned the inhabitants, including women and children, as they fled from the burning village to the fields.—Reuter.

(*Morning Post*, April 30th.)

Bilbao, May 7th.

Only a part of the Junta air fleet is occupied on the front line. Others operate behind. Watching from a hilltop outside Bilbao this afternoon, I saw 10 Junker three-engined 'planes swinging from the east over the valley wherein lie Zamudio and Derio. They were accompanied by four smaller and faster machines flying higher. They dropped a couple of dozen heavy bombs on Zamudio, smashing houses and killing the occupants.

(*Morning Post*, May 8th.)

[1] *Evidence of Recent Breaches by Germany and Italy of the Non-Intervention Agreement*, May, 1937. Published by P. S. King.

Bilbao, Friday.

Pines on the summit of Mont Solube are still ablaze to-night, and the valleys are filled with smoke.

I picked up an incendiary bomb which had failed to explode when it hit the peak. It was marked:

$$K—B1 \ \frac{H}{344} \ 1936 \text{ and } 118 \text{ RH. } \frac{S}{143} \ 1936,$$

identifying it as of German Krupp manufacture. Many similar bombs were picked up after the bombardment.

Ronald Monson in Bilbao (*Daily Telegraph*, May 8).

The environs of Bilbao were subjected to-day to the heaviest bombardment experienced during the present offensive. Six Junker aeroplanes swooped down on the riverside dock suburb of Zorroza and dropped upwards of forty heavy bombs, causing considerable damage and firing a petrol dump.

(*Morning Post*, May 12th).

I lived for a week in a hotel formerly called the Francia and now called the Gran in Vitoria, which is the headquarters of the German General Sander, who is in command of the 'Legion Condor,' the name given the German contingent in Spain.

This German legion, numbering around 10,000 men, made up of regular German army units, can by no euphemism be described as volunteers, as most of the Reichswehr soldiers assigned to this duty did not know where they were bound for until they were aboard ship.

(H. S. Knickerbocker, *Evening Standard*, May 7th).

A considerable portion of this force was landed at San Sebastian, in northern Spain, during the first week

in May at a time when the British Navy was still controlling that coast, preventing ships taking arms to Bilbao, and engaged in warning off those British tramp steamers which continued to run the nominal blockade, and take supplies into the Basque and Asturian coast towns. While the Basque civilian forces rapidly expended their small supply of ammunition, the steady well-disciplined German troops cleared up the northern enclave, advancing from the east side through the Basque country, and capturing Bilbao, Santander and Gijon.

For some reason the destruction of Guernica by incendiary bombs created a quite disproportionate excitement in England and in certain democratic countries of Europe. It was part of the regular procedure of the German air force. Probably no one amongst the few Spaniards attached to them troubled to warn their 'uncles,' as they called them, that this little place, marked on their maps for destruction, had any special significance. It was just a town on one of the lines of advance, and it was therefore best to kill some of the inhabitants and frighten the rest out of the place, so that it could not be used to delay the troops. Owing to the outcry about this affair, which was really on a par with the bombardment of Durango and other towns, the insurgents attempted to deny that it had been attacked, and their usual group of supporters, the second-rate publicists and third-rate politicians, began to spread the story that the religious centre of the Basque people had been burned by the 'reds,' in other words by the militia who were themselves mostly Basque and Asturian. They asked people in England to accept the word of General Queipo de Llano, who stated over the wireless that 'the day had been unsuitable for flying, and no 'planes had gone up.'

Ex uno omne disce. It may be worth repeating the evidence on this case, even at the risk of turning this chapter into a collection of newspaper cuttings. Guernica is really a test case for Englishmen. If anyone is prepared to believe the statements in the Catholic press and elsewhere on this subject, and willing to accept the denials of the Insurgent Government, then it is clear that their partisanship is a matter of faith—something perhaps to be marvelled at, but which places them outside the category of ordinary people. 'I believe because it is impossible,' and the more impossible the firmer they believe. They will believe 'that there are no refugees in eastern Spain, for why should Spaniards run away from their deliverers.' They will believe Catholic writers when they state that 'there were no atrocities on the Nationalist side, because there was no need for any.' They will, in fact, believe anything, so long as it fits in with their pre-conceived ideas, and they will discard as false anything which upsets these original premises.

As earlier in the chapter it will be best to take the evidence of correspondents from three papers with a definitely 'Conservative' outlook—*The Times*, the *Daily Express*, and the *Morning Post*—a newspaper which is now, alas, defunct, but which those who disagreed with its views always admired for its straight-forward presentation of foreign news, as well as for its insistence upon the high traditions of journalism.

> Guernica, the most ancient town of the Basques and the centre of their cultural tradition, was completely destroyed yesterday afternoon by insurgent air raiders. The bombardment of this open town far behind the lines occupied precisely three hours and a quarter, during which a powerful fleet of aeroplanes

consisting of three German types, Junkers and Heinkel bombers and Heinkel fighters, did not cease unloading on the town bombs weighing from 1000 lb. downwards and, it is calculated, more than 3000 two-pounder aluminium incendiary projectiles. The fighters, meanwhile, plunged low from above the centre of the town to machine-gun those of the civilian population who had taken refuge in the fields.

The only counter-measures the Basques could employ, for they do not possess sufficient aeroplanes to face the insurgent fleet, were those provided by the heroism of the Basque clergy. These blessed and prayed for the kneeling crowds—Socialists, Anarchists, and Communists, as well as the declared faithful—in the crumbling dugouts.

The Times, April 28, 1937.

The statement issued from Salamanca that Guernica was destroyed by 'Red' incendiaries is false.

I personally talked with over twenty refugees from Guernica in the outskirts of the town on the night of its destruction. Except for minor details about the number of aeroplanes which destroyed Guernica, their stories agreed on every point. Between 4.30 and 7.45 that evening Guernica was destroyed by aircraft which most of them could distinguish as belonging to the insurgents, while priests were able to describe the well-known Junkers type which was responsible for the heaviest bombing.

The Times, May 6, 1937.

I have seen many ghastly sights in Spain in the last six months, but none more terrible than the annihilation of the ancient Basque capital of Guernica by Franco's bombing planes.

I walked this evening through the still-burning town. Hundreds of bodies had been found in the débris. Most were charred beyond recognition. At least two hundred others were riddled with machine-gun bullets as they fled to the hills.

I stood beside the smouldering Red Cross hospital of Josefinas. The bodies of forty-two wounded soldiers and ten nurses lay buried in the wreckage. They never had a chance. The wounded were killed in their beds, the nurses were killed on duty.

I stopped next, above what had been an air-raid refuge. Down there fifty women and children, huddled together as the raiders swooped down on their town, were burned alive.

Of the 4,000 bombs dropped by the raiders 1,000 were incendiary and 100 were aerial torpedoes.

Mr. Noel Monks, *Daily Express*, April 28, 1937.

The Junta, according to Spanish newspapers, claim that there are no German aviators in the service of General Franco's Government.

Although the raid on Guernica is attributed by San Sebastian newspapers to an invention of the Bilbao Government, circumstantial evidence points to it being the work of the Junta forces.

The Junta cannot deny that there are German airmen fighting on the Basque front. A Spaniard who has returned from Junta territory informs me that there are many of them, and that he, as a Spaniard and a Conservative, was ashamed to admit that many Spanish and Basque men, women, and children were being killed by German bombs from German machines piloted by Germans.

According to reliable information, it would appear

that the Junta wish to suggest that the Basque Government are bombing and killing their own people.

Morning Post, April 29, 1937.

Against all this we have the assurances of certain gentlemen, who most assuredly were *not* there, that the town was burnt down in a fit of pique by the departing soldiery.

The clearing up of this enclave took longer than had been expected by the Republican Government, which, once it was found to be impossible to send assistance by land, sea, or air, resigned itself to its loss. Bilbao did not fall until June 19th and Gijon until three months later. The Basques and Asturians lost very heavily, but their dogged defence forced General Franco to delay operations on the other front until the autumn, and this gave the Government time to build up and train an army, and collect more transport.

The absence of any serious fighting on the main front was significant. It seems probable that Signor Mussolini hoped to starve out eastern Spain while the Germans were 'mopping up' the north of the country. Extraordinary events were happening in the western Mediterranean. All through April and May the German and Italian navy and air force were busy round the Balearic Islands, and it was a period of continual attacks on the eastern ports. In May some Government aeroplanes retaliated on Ibiza, and, probably accidentally, managed to drop a bomb on the *Deutschland*, killing some twenty men. The German navy then retaliated by openly shelling Almeria, a completely defenceless and overcrowded sea-side town and small port. The naval control system, which everyone in eastern Spain knew to be farce, broke down completely. Italian sub-

marines were continually active, pretending if necessary to be part of the insurgent navy, but towards August openly attacking Russian and other vessels.

Conditions became impossible, when references had to be made to submarines of unknown origin operating illegally in the Mediterranean. The British Government was at last touched on a very sore spot, and took the only definite step with which they can be credited during this unhappy year. The Nyon Agreement with France was aimed clearly at the pirate activities of Italy. (One English newspaper attempted to explain these submarine attacks made mostly on Russian cargo boats as Russian mischief-making.) The agreement instituted an effective system of patrolling by French and English ships. Italy was allowed to 'save face,' as they say in China, by participating in the patrol, but her career as a pirate ceased, after she had managed to delay the reorganization of the Republican army, and injure the population by sinking a certain number of food and oil ships.

On the northern coast the British Navy remained in charge, while the Admiralty did its best to discourage any merchant ships running the 'blockade' into Bilbao and other parts. This was the period when 'Potato Jones' and other inheritors of an older and finer tradition, continued their work, and carried goods into Northern Spain, just as twenty years before the Basque sailors had run the German blockade to take food into English ports. They had to face the indirect obstruction of the British Government as well as the possible attentions of General Franco's two old and ineffective men of war.

The decision of the Cabinet to discourage British ships going to Bilbao was taken at a special Cabinet meeting on Sunday, April 11th. While they could not

fail to protect their nationals' boats on the high seas, they could and did take every step to prevent boats proceeding to the ports of the northern enclave by making a number of statements which were simply not true. Sir Samuel Hoare was their mouthpiece. On April 20th he affirmed that General Franco's blockade was 'effective,' which later events proved to be absurd. On the following day he said that 'mine-laying is still going on by General Franco. There is no doubt that General Franco has mined there.' He followed this up with the information that insurgent ships had been frequently within the three mile limit, and that they had not been fired upon by the shore guns.

Mr. G. L. Steer was in Bilbao at the time, and was joined in May by Commander H. Pursey, R.N. (ret.). Later during the summer a mass of evidence was accumulated, including the log-book of the battleship *España*, and there is no reason to impugn the general findings in Mr. Steer's recent book, *The Tree of Gernika*, which gives a full and admirable account of the Basque tragedy.

Insurgent warships could not and never did enter the territorial waters of Bilbao; later, the trawler *Galerna* once stood upon the limit to fire across an English merchantman's bows; but she received such a sprinkling of 6-inch shells from the shore that she turned round for home, never venturing forward again. The guns of Bilbao proved themselves capable of keeping insurgent ships more than three miles away: the preferred distance of these was nearer eleven. Insurgent warships had never been within the three-mile limit; they had been fired upon, and hit by the shore guns much farther out, as in the

Canarias episode. That makes four gross inaccuracies. One tires of counting. But again, there is nothing astonishing in them. Neither the Royal Navy nor the British Consul has ever seen the guns of Bilbao, or possessed any information about them whatsoever. They had not even seen half the batteries in action; they knew neither their calibre, nor their number, nor, except the Punta de Galea, their emplacement.

Thus the Government case rested upon two major misstatements of the truth, that there were mines in Bilbao territorial waters, and that this three-mile stretch could not be protected by Bilbao coastal batteries.[1]

This quotation is given at length as it bears out the experience of those who have worked in eastern Spain. Over and over again the British public have been fobbed off with garbled versions of events, so coloured as to suit the Government's general policy of making an insurgent victory inevitable. The blocking of the northern ports certainly hastened the clearing up of the Basque and Asturian provinces. The small government forces fought as long as they could against overwhelming odds and the civil population stood by them until as many as possible, following their old traditions, took to the sea and escaped to France.

The refugee movement out of the northern enclave is easier to understand, but was even more remarkable than the peasant movements earlier in the war. The Asturian miner had suffered from Foreign Legions, Moors and military 'justice' during and after the rising of 1933. He fought bravely and hopelessly. Where

[1] G. L. Steer. *The Tree of Gernika*, 192.

possible he got his family and children on to a fishing boat and sent them across to France, and it was mostly in open boats that so many thousands escaped from northern Spain. Some, of course, went on steamers, and a curious little eddy in this great stream was the removal of four thousand Basque children from Bilbao to England.

It is worth considering this last episode, not for its intrinsic importance, which was small, but because of the light which it throws upon the English attitude to Spain and to foreign affairs generally. The French Government took and looked after ten times as many children. Belgium and Denmark received, in proportion to their populations, larger contingents than England. In France the State was directly and financially responsible for most of the refugees who remained in the country, and also for assisting into Catalonia the still larger number who went straight through. Yet in none of these countries was there anything approaching the controversy aroused by the retention in England of a few thousand children who were supported entirely by private individuals, or in sectarian homes—Catholic, Salvation Army, etc.

The most unhappy feature of the controversy was that the attack was not only aimed at the committee responsible for bringing them to England, but also against the children themselves. Reporters were sent from the less reputable newspapers to 'write up' the children, which in this case meant of course 'writing them down.' On the whole they were an amiable lot of youngsters, belonging to the oldest and also one of the best peasant stocks in Europe, but the conditions from which they came, the practical difficulties of accommodating them suddenly in England without any official assistance, led

to minor troubles of a kind familiar to every one who has had experience of camps and of dealing with children in large numbers.

All through the autumn this lamentable campaign continued, and after the clearing of the northern enclave it took a more definitely political complexion. General Franco was naturally anxious to have the children sent back *en bloc*. This was partly a matter of political prestige, but also the insurgent leaders must be aware that the west of Spain has been largely denuded of working-class people, and the landlord and industrial leaders are anxious to get back children of working-class people, who can be brought up in the fascist manner, and turned into obedient workers. Western Spain has always been lightly populated, and the revolt has meant a net loss to that part of well over a million and a half people. The refugees account for the bulk of this figure, but we must add to them the losses due to mass executions during the earlier part of the revolt, the men who joined the militia and are now in eastern Spain, and the men who have been killed, especially during the capture of the Basque and Asturian districts.

The usual pro-Franco elements were mobilized to force the committees responsible for the children to send them back to Bilbao, instead of finding out the wishes and whereabouts of their parents. Landlords and the Catholic hierarchy led the attack. The neo-fascist press and the Pope's brass band took up the cry, and a peculiarly virulent campaign was set on foot, not only against the committee, who were used to public life, but against the children themselves. These unfortunate little brats, most of whom were under twelve, were accused of immorality, rowdyism, and of 'polluting our English blood.' Peers, in whose veins ran at

least one generation of ennobled blood, made unaccustomed visits to the House of Lords to protest against four thousand foreign children remaining in England. Peers, whose titles were even younger, set their newspapers on to making life impossible for these children, and adding as much as possible to the difficulties of those who looked after them.

It was all very instructive, especially for those unfortunate people, like the writer, who happened to be members of the committee, and knew the real forces which were at work, and the motives behind them. It was a revelation of the ease with which public opinion can be moulded to-day by a comparativel, small group of wealthy men, and also of the extent to which snobbishness dominates our national life. A few generations ago we were proud of our hospitality to refugees, and recognised that the starving Huguenots had eventually enriched our national life. But now we are far less hospitable than most European countries, and it is inconceivable that a similar campaign against the children themselves should have been started in any other western democratic country.

The children of the alien rich are, of course, still more than welcome in England. Sir Timothy Taper is the first to meet the sons of an American millionaire and suggest a safe seat in the Commons—'quite cheap, you know. Only the election expenses and two or three thousand a year to nurse the place.' Baghdadi Jews are received with open arms—provided that their poor relations stay safely in the Baghdad *bazar*. Siamese and Indian princelets are never accused of polluting our blood so long as the marriage settlements are in order. Children who bring nothing but energy, courage and old traditions are a potential danger.

CHAPTER XV

ENGLAND'S BETRAYAL

THE capture of the Basque and Asturian provinces ended another phase of the Spanish affair. General Franco's supporters in England made the most of his successive 'victories' over the unfortunate militia, cut off in the northern enclave. Many people in England, slightly uncertain about their geography, assumed that the end of the war was in sight, and that an insurgent triumph was inevitable. Actually there had been no large-scale fighting for several months on the long front between the Republican and insurgent armies. After the Italian rout at Brihuega in March the Government set itself to train and equip their new army. The result of their efforts was seen in December, when choosing their own time and place they made a magnificently successful raid on Teruel.

It seems possible that internal political difficulties accounted for General Franco's inactivity after the fall of Gijon at the end of October. Possibly the Italians and Germans, having achieved their two strategic objectives in Andalusia and Northern Spain, began to insist that General Franco should finish off the war himself. Affairs in the Far East were distracting the attention of the Powers from Spain. The Japanese campaign against China was adding a new series of atrocities and horrors to the long tale of crime which has followed logically and inevitably from the night of September 1931, when Mukden was seized by Japanese troops. For some weeks before Teruel the English

press had relegated Spanish affairs to a back page, and the Foreign Office was clearly convinced that the insurgent victory which they had expected for so long could not be delayed.

Whatever may be the final result of the battle round Teruel it has shown that the Republicans have built up a brave and moderately efficient army, capable of fighting against better-armed troops, and of pushing through an attack against an enemy which has control of the air. This is a very great achievement. The effect of the attack has been to postpone still further any insurgent advance, and upset whatever plans the Italians may have had for a new political move based on some snatch victory. There was a hasty and, to the cynically-minded, a most amusing scuttle on the part of the English press to cover the fact that they had been mistaken about the republican powers of resistance. The issue of the war still remains uncertain, depending ultimately on the continuance of intervention by Italy and Germany.

Once more it would seem that Signor Mussolini, while advancing from one easy diplomatic triumph to another, has been held up by the inadequacy of his troops in the field. Again he has been unable to sweep the board. As in November, 1936, as in March of the following year, he has to consider whether to increase the stakes, to throw more troops into Spain, become more truculent towards France and England, and to organize his country still more completely as a fighting unit. If he can only win this last gamble, the stakes which he has doubled so often will bring him a great part of the empire for which he has played with such consummate recklessness. From what we know of his temperament he is not likely to draw back.

We may reckon up the prizes which lay on the table at the end of 1937, waiting to be won by another successful diplomatic bluff, or by the victory of Italian armies in the field.

Ethiopia was occupied, if not subdued, and the conquest had been recognized by several Powers, including Holland. The new Italian Empire of East Africa, coupled with a treaty with the Yemen Government, left Italy straddled across the narrow end of the Red Sea. She can make the eastern approach to the Suez Canal impassable, just as her air force, submarine and surface motor-boats can control the narrow strip of sea to the south-east of Sicily. In Egypt and Palestine Italian agents have been successful in stirring up political troubles, and developing connections between the various anti-British forces in the Near East. At Bucharest the fascist *putsch* which failed in March has been successfully accomplished.

In the western Mediterranean Signor Mussolini has been equally successful. Italian troops occupy Andalusia and the Balearic Islands, cutting off the French from their African Empire. A friendly Germany controls North Spain and Spanish Morocco. His complete diplomatic triumph is so nearly complete, but as before his army will never give him the support he needs. Some miserable race of half-armed people, despised by the civilized world, will always go on fighting, and even winning minor successes. The Ethiopian has settled down to guerilla warfare after the fall of Addis Ababa. The civilian Spanish hang on grimly to their territory and to Madrid, spoiling the triumphal 'curtain' which should have been rung down on the Spanish tragedy.

There is a significant contrast between the Duce's succession of diplomatic victories, won at the expense

of the great democratic Powers, and his rather feeble military achievements against third-rate opponents. His friends in England have tried to minimize this difference by portraying his successive opponents as men so savage and brutal that they are formidable even when unarmed, and fit only for mass destruction. The efforts of these propagandists have been partly successful because they ease the conscience of the British public, which has still a sneaking feeling that possibly they are responsible for the plight of Ethiopians and republican Spaniards. We are sometimes apt to forget Buffon's definition of the cat, that wicked and vindictive animal which defends itself when attacked. There has recently been no close season for such dangerous game.

The moral of the last few years has been that Italy is relatively ineffective when opposed by a united and determined people. Signor Mussolini's triumphs have been won at the expense of countries which were neither united nor determined. All through this unhappy period he has been able to rely upon sufficient support inside England to be certain that the policy of the British Government would be vacillating, dishonest, and tortuous. If the new Roman Empire develops into an organism, strong enough to hold our country in pawn, and so situated that all our present re-armament will be futile, then Signor Mussolini should raise a new altar to Janus, and offer his daily thanksgiving to those men and women in England whose divided loyalties made his gamble a success.

The English who have supported Italy all through her period of aggression correspond roughly to the three Spanish groups—the 'traditional obstacles'—the Church, the property-owners, and the army. The Catholic hierarchy naturally sympathize with *el Clero.*

The slaughter of trade unionists and socialist workers and their wives did nothing to counter-balance the subsequent killing of priests. To the Catholics it was a one-sided tragedy. The equation—one priest is equal to ten workmen—is one which they cannot even consider.

Their adhesion to the dubious alliance with ultra-Conservatives and business interests was based on faith rather than argument or interest, though the Catholic hierarchy, as opposed to their rank and file, have always shown a keen sense of property, and a dislike for any effective trade union organization. The business men, who have been supporting Italy, are presumably urged by interests more than by faith, though it is very easy to believe in the sanctity of property until it becomes a religion. They find a natural basis for working with the Catholics in their common distrust of socialist experiments and in their desire for an 'ordered society,' which to their mind means a State where the lower orders are well disciplined and kept in their proper place.

There is hardly a military caste in England, but their place is taken by our neo-Fascists, supported by a large group of back-bench Members of Parliament. They have a great backing in the press, and in the more venal type of periodic journal. The Spanish affair has brought this group more into the open, and shown that a new kind of internationalist exists in this country.

From the first this new type of Conservative was prepared to ally himself with our old enemies against our friends. The 'traditional obstacles' in Spain were violently pro-German during the European war, when sympathies were divided rather more fiercely than they are in England to-day. The army officer was noisily on the German side, the bishops, in their efforts

to praise the Kaiser, were obliged to contend that he had been secretly converted to Catholicism.[1] The 'grandees' and the business men connived at, and in some cases participated in those activities of Juan March (which have already been mentioned) in connection with the German submarine campaign. Only the Liberals and left-wing parties were solidly pro-Ally.

This former division of sympathies does not affect the enthusiasm of our new English internationalists towards those who formerly helped our enemies, and who are now allied with the only countries against which we are actually re-arming to-day. The truth is that their loyalties are sadly divided, and in the last year or two England has had a very poor share in the division.

The divided loyalty of the English Catholic is easier to understand and appreciate. A large proportion are really Irish, and never had any special attachment to England. Even with those who are English by race it is easy to argue that a spiritual loyalty should over rule a temporal one. The Englishman who is an adherent either of Roman Catholicism or of Russian Communism must give his political judgment as a hostage. He must study the views of a foreigner on a number of highly controversial and mundane subjects. In the first case the foreigner is an octogenarian Italian priest, in the second a Georgian of doubtful antecedents. In neither case can an Englishman understand the many influences which are brought to bear upon these men to whose conception of foreign policy they must attach so much weight. They must accept the pronouncements

[1] My informant is a Spanish University Professor who heard sermons in this vein during the war. The Church in Spain ran an 'atrocity' campaign against England and France.

of Vatican or Kremlin as a matter of faith, and assume that their leaders have a sufficiently detached point of view.

On most subjects the average Englishman is prepared to recognize the complete authority of the priest over his flock. Many, including the writer, would have resented any attempt to penalize Catholic orders in the manner that has occurred in France, and have looked upon the existence of Catholics in England as lending a variety and interest to our national life. During the last two years they have found repeated cause to modify this view. If the priest comes down to the market-place as a politician, and from inexperience shows himself more reckless and bigoted than the ordinary layman in public life, then common sense revolts at treating him as a privileged person.

If the Pope takes sides on political questions about which many Englishmen feel deeply—as for example Italian aggression in Ethiopia and Spain—then again the English protestant feels justified in examining the reasons which may have caused him to take this attitude, and will refuse to recognize such political pronouncements as being *ex cathedra* statements which any of his fellow-countrymen should accept without question. If they accept as unquestionable, declarations condoning repeated breaches of treaties, of international law, and of the ordinary rules of civilized warfare, then the non-Catholic Englishman is entitled to ask whether Catholics any more than Communists are fit persons to be entrusted with the charge of English interests abroad. We find, on examination, that a large proportion of the Foreign Office are drawn from wealthy Catholic families, and that the general atmosphere is extremely friendly to fascism.

Once the Catholic hierarchy has made the mistake of identifying itself openly and whole-heartedly with one side in foreign affairs, it is incumbent to examine what power they have politically. The study is intensely disquieting. They have everything which their internationalist rivals the Communists have not. Their supporters in each political camp gives them a voice in Parliament far greater than their numbers would justify. They have at their command immense wealth, for the Church has age-long experience in accumulating property. The growth of religious orders in England has followed their expulsion from continental countries, and the dead weight of these celibate orders lies heavily on our countryside. Their control over schools makes it easy to impress upon the young the most blatantly one-sided propaganda against those of their countrymen who have not taken Italy's part during Signor Mussolini's bid for Empire.

If this new internationalism were purely a sectarian affair it would be of minor importance. We have always tolerated sects, like the Society of Friends, whose views on pacifism may force them at a crisis into some attitude opposed to the interests of their country. But to-day we are faced with a movement which is primarily political, and is only religious on account of the Vatican's connection with an aggressor Power.

Many Englishmen will find it hard to understand or even to credit the growth of this ultra-Conservative internationalism. They are used to attacks on Liberals as 'friends of every country but their own,' and forget the rapidity with which party labels may change, and new shapes appear in the political kaleidoscope. The old internationalism of the left was seldom dangerous to England. Usually it took the form of a protest against

some imperial scandal, of which there has been a long succession from the time of General Eyre to that of General Dyer. Sometimes it was a protest against another country's aggression or the brutal subduing of a revolt, such as the 'Bulgarian atrocities.' From time to time England has supported groups of people struggling for independence—Greeks, Italians, Czechs and Poles. At best this interference was a decent impulse which has gained us some reputation in the world. At the worst it was merely a form of futile protest. It was never based on that hatred and contempt of their fellow-countrymen which characterizes the English drawing-room fascists, and the business men who are co-operating with them.

The new internationalism is based on the crudest form of selfishness, and its greatest ally is the snobbishness which corrupts so much of English life. A list of prominent advocates reveals, at the top, business and press magnates, land-owners whose families are long accustomed to living on unearned incomes, unimportant peers, the shades of great names in our history. Below them come the army of jackals—Sir Timothy Tadpole elbows out Mr. Taper, a crowd of second-rate publicists struggle for recognition by the leaders. These men are dangerous. They have not the Catholic's strength politically in being represented on each side, but they have unlimited financial resources, all the means of publicity they require, and a simple doctrine founded on hate—hatred of the League of Nations and the idea of international law, hatred of organized labour, hatred of general freedom in thought and action, hatred of universal education unless strictly controlled in their own interests. Time has its revenges. Nearly a century ago Flaubert was laughing at the socialists who wanted to

'drill humanity in barracks and divert it in brothels.' Now we have a far more potent danger from the right, the fascists who would drill humanity in labour camps, and educate them in seminaries.

This new form of fascism is essentially an English variety—not going to the extremes of a Mosley, an exotic product who need not be taken seriously. The fascism of the ultra-Conservative is an insidious growth, exploiting to the full the mental laziness and insularity of his countrymen. The last few years have shown how easily the English can be misled about foreign affairs during periods when important events are happening all over the world. Mass suggestion has already reached a stage in England at which the control of opinion is at least comparable with that in the totalitarian states. This typically English fascism depends less on active force than upon the force of inertia. The new fascist becomes gradually accepted as representing order and religion in a shifting world, though the ultimate control will not be in the hands of the Catholics, whose beliefs are sincere, but of hard-bitten men whose religion at most is that 'of all sensible men.' Hypocrisy is likely to play a large part in the new internationalism. Dante would probably have disliked Signor Mussolini only a degree less than he would have despised his English supporters. His verdict upon them must surely have been that most damning phrase—'hateful to God and to the enemies of God.'

This small book is written for that vast majority of Englishmen, who from their circumstances have no first-hand knowledge of what is happening abroad, and who find the greatest difficulty in following the course of events as it shifts rapidly from one corner of the world to another. They tend to accept the comfortable words

of those in authority. Democracy will fail, and deserve to fail unless those people in Western Europe and America, who still have the free use of their intelligence, will insist on being told the truth by their rulers, will throw those rulers out of power when their Government wilfully and systematically deceives them, and will keep vividly in mind their responsibilities abroad.

Of these responsibilities England has the greatest. Her scattered Empire has involved her in continual interference both in Asia and Africa, and her sudden collapse before Italian aggression has left millions of people in Europe and the Near East bewildered and uncertain. This feeling is shared by many who have watched at close quarters what has occurred in the two countries which have been the first victims of Signor Mussolini's ambition. They have seen that the actual result of British policy has been to disarm men fighting for their country and their liberty, and they have been able to trace the effect of certain sinister influences on the formation of that policy. The exposure of these influences is the first step towards a return to the decent sanity for which our country was once famous.

EPILOGUE

THIS book was first completed about the end of 1937. The spring of 1938 has seen Signor Mussolini extracted from another difficult position with the help of his friends in England, and again his success has been won at the expense of European civilization. January found Italy with far greater stakes on the table than

she could afford. Her economic position was deteriorating, Ethiopia remained an open sore, and the Government raid on Teruel did not suggest an early victory for General Franco. Germany had other uses for her aeroplanes besides supporting the inefficient Italian infantry, and she had already full control of the northern Spanish coast-line, which gave her those strategic advantages over England and France for which she had first embarked on the Spanish affair. Herr Hitler has no special interest in the new Roman Empire, and was certainly not going to pull Signor Mussolinis' chestnuts out of the fire, without a definite reward.

It was at this moment that Mr. Eden at last showed signs of returning to the firmer attitude which had been momentarily successful and then abandoned at Nyon. A withdrawal from Spain would have to precede any economic discussions, and there were even signs that England intended to close the farcical Non-Intervention proceedings. It almost seemed as if the aggressor Powers would be checked, and there was an immediate rally amongst their friends in England to prevent such a misfortune. The isolationist group became active in the press and the Cabinet, and they were supported by the usual influential sections outside. The resignations of Mr. Eden and Lord Cranborne were far better understood on the Continent than in England. The struggle inside the British Government has been followed with intense interest in every European capital, and the victory of Mr. Neville Chamberlain was held to prelude a general loosening of those last feeble strands of international law which still existed in our western world. We had not long to wait. Germany saw her opportunity in Austria, and this enabled Signor

Mussolini to offer some *quid pro quo* which would otherwise have been difficult to find. Italian acquiescence in a German seizure of Austria was a fair exchange for enough German aeroplanes and heavy munitions to ensure a fascist victory in Spain. It was a simple bargain, like so much of recent fascist diplomacy.

It is difficult to understand the mentality of those Englishmen who continue to look with equanimity upon the direct results of their diplomacy during the last three years. There are, of course, many Englishmen who would secretly welcome the establishment of a fascist regime in their own country. They are men of a naturally hectoring character who believe that they would have better opportunities and more scope under such conditions. There are others who place their religion first and are prepared to follow the political guidance of foreigners. There is a far larger class which is prepared to let things slide in Europe, comforting themselves with two beliefs—first that we are arming quicker than our possible opponents, and secondly that Spain is unimportant because General Franco will throw off his foreign encumbrances, and establish a more or less friendly dictatorship.

No country can have ever gambled on two more doubtful propositions. Germany can and will develop her air force considerably faster than ours, and while we arm we are also disarming, for every new concession diplomatically to the aggressor Powers loses us friends and ensures Italy and Germany the subservient neutrality or more of some minor Powers which have ceased to expect any support from us. The incorporation of Austria into Germany means an access of material force which completely undoes the last eighteen months' re-armament work in this country.

Finally, as to Spain, Mr. Neville Chamberlain assures us that:

> The Italian Government have now again asserted their willingness loyally to assist in the execution of the British plan, and, what is perhaps more important, they have repeated a declaration which they made some time ago and which was made public here at the time, to the effect that Italy has no territorial, political, or economic aims in Spain or in the Balearic Islands.

Few people probably take such a declaration seriously. It is painfully reminiscent of the Foreign Office's view about Manchuria.[1] But many have a pathetic belief in the Spaniard's dislike of foreign control. They forget that historical precedents are of little value. The new fascist technique, backed by the astounding efficiency of modern arms and aeroplanes makes a successful popular rising absolutely impossible. If General Franco once controls the whole of Spain, a small Italian and German force will dominate the country, and make a peasant or working class revolt as unlikely as a similar movement for independence in Austria. Yet it is on such chances that the future of England depends.

[1] See above pp. 19–20.

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