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Haile Selassie's 1936 speech to the League of Nations was an exposé of its deceitful nature. When faced with a stampede of violence from Italy, the Conquering Lion of Judah, Haile Selassie, in a historical moment stood up against its adversary to "defend the cause of all small peoples who are threatened with aggression."¹ Selassie eloquently stripped the League of its valiant armor and unveiled the vileness of the organization and its conspiring members. The League of Nations' failure to take action in the Italo-Ethiopian made it a vehicle for the aiding and abetting of colonial powers. The League's sheer disregard to assist Ethiopia was easily foreshadowed by past events in which Europeans failed to honor their terms with Africans.

Two years after the General Act of the Berlin Conference 1885 was signed, Henry Morgan Stanley, on behalf of King Leopold of Belgium, enacted the same 'scorch-the-earth' tactics ² that would later be used by the Germans against the Maji Maji in 1905.³ These are the same powers that agreed to "bind themselves to watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being" under

¹Robert O. Collins, "Haile Selassie - At The League Of Nations, June 30, 1936," in Documents from the African Past (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2001), pp. 320-327.

²Hochschild, Adam, and Barbara Kingsolver. "Under The Yacht Club Flag." Essay. In King Leopold's Ghost: a Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa, 99-99. Boston, MA: Mariner Books/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1998.

³Kevin Shillington, "Consolidation of Empire: the Early Period of Colonial Rule," in History of Africa (London: Red Globe Press, 2019), pp. 377-377.

Article 6: 'PROVISIONS RELATIVE TO PROTECTION OF THE NATIVES, OF MISSIONARIES AND TRAVELLERS, AS WELL AS RELATIVE TO RELIGIOUS LIBERTY' of the General Act of the Berlin Conference.⁴

Notably, Haile Selassie made sure to point out the snake in the grass. When he denounced Italy for its duplicity in knowing that they had insincerely signed treaties of friendship, the earliest of which was signed in 1887.⁵ Yet, their only intention was to conquer Ethiopia and get revenge for the battle at Adwa.⁶

Subsequently, it is of no surprise that Mussolini's infatuation with the resurrection of the Roman Empire also meant a repeat of history's greatest betrayal. Just like in Shakespeare's, *Julius Caesar*, Ethiopia's people too would quietly whisper the famous last words "Et tú Brute" as they mercilessly suffocated on clouds of mustard gas from a fellow member of the League of Nations.

Moreover, the old boy's club politicking of the League contributed to their failure in upholding the contents of Article 15,16, and collective security.⁷ Which further establishes the League's willingness to corroborate the initiative of its treacherous members. Before Italy attacked Ethiopia in 1935, Britain and France were well aware of Ethiopia's fate having been

⁴"General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa, 26 February 1885." Accessed December 17, 2020. <https://loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/1885GeneralActBerlinConference.pdf>

⁵ W. B. Stern. "The Treaty Background of the Italo-Ethiopian Dispute." *The American Journal of International Law* 30, no. 2 (1936): 189-203. Accessed December 18, 2020. doi:10.2307/2191086.

⁶Richard James Reid, "Battles Home and Away - Africa in Global War (Again)," in *A History of Modern Africa: 1800 to the Present* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), pp. 249-249.

⁷Robert O. Collins, "Haile Selassie - At The League Of Nations, June 30, 1936," in *Documents from the African Past* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2001), pp. 320-327.

notified by the Italians of their plans to attack during their meeting in Stresa, Italy.⁸ Meanwhile, Ethiopia suffered; Britain and France hoped that by not punishing Italy that Mussolini would side with the Allied powers instead of Hitler. As a result of Britain and France's conspiring the Hoare Laval pact was drafted which promised Italy 66% of Ethiopia. However, the plan never came to fruition after it was leaked to the press.⁹

Furthermore, the appeasement policy encapsulated by the Hoare Laval pact would have been AAA discount on African territories for being a member of the League of Nations. The League of Nations' only aid was abetting Allied powers in permitting Italy to invade Ethiopia. The League of Nations was nothing more than a getaway car for these disgraceful forces. Ethiopia was dealing with an ally turned foe that believed it "would be failing in its most elementary duty, did it not cease once and for all to place any confidence in Ethiopia reserving full liberty to adopt any measures that may become necessary to ensure the safety of its colonies and to safeguard its own interests."¹⁰

Despite the collusion and the League's failure to enact collective security. Haile remained poised seeking every precautionary measure to avoid battle on several occasions. That even on the day Italy invaded he had troops stay back 30 km to "remove any pretext of provocation."¹¹

⁸"Baldwin and the Abdication Crisis," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed December 18, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom/Baldwin-and-the-abdication-crisis>.

⁹ "The Hoare-Laval Pact," The Hoare-Laval Pact, accessed December 18, 2020, <https://www.gcsehistory.com/faq/hoarelaval.html>.

¹⁰ Robert O. Collins, "Haile Selassie - At The League Of Nations, June 30, 1936," in Documents from the African Past (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2001), pp. 320-327.

Ibid., 324-324

Mussolini claimed Ethiopia to be an anachronism, a savage and unstable state.¹² However, Haile Selassie displayed the richness of his African personality with his regality, patience, and tenacity. "Counting on the faith due to treaties, I had made no preparation for war, and that is the case with certain small countries in Europe. When the danger became more urgent, being aware of my responsibilities towards my people, during the first six months of 1935 one tried to acquire armaments. Many governments proclaimed an embargo to prevent my doing so, where-as the Italian government, through the Sues Canal, was given all facilities for transporting without cessation and without protest, troops, arms, and munitions."¹³ A striking statement for a man that should have acted like a savage.

Given these points, an attack against one member of the League of Nations was an attack on all members. Britain, France, or the League of Nations weren't overly concerned whether or not Ethiopia was conquered. Both Allied Powers had numerous colonies themselves. In effect, making their association in the larger context of the League of Nations meaningless. When it concerned Africa, Europeans felt entitled to anything, anytime, anywhere. For this reason, Europeans were willing to use Ethiopia as collateral to secure economic and political gain. This brings us full circle — as Haile Selassie states, "This is not a case of the impossibility of stopping an aggressor but of the refusal to stop an aggressor"¹⁴

¹²Richard James Reid, "Battles Home and Away - Africa in Global War (Again)," in *A History of Modern Africa: 1800 to the Present* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), pp. 249-249.

¹³Robert O. Collins, "Haile Selassie - At The League Of Nations, June 30, 1936," in *Documents from the African Past* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2001), pp. 324-324

¹⁴ Ibid., 326-326