

Vol 9, no 1, (2017)

Notes from Editors

Special Issue: The 121 Years of the Great Adwa African Victory

By Adey Muchie and Mammo Muchie

We have been trying to publish a book to celebrate the 120 years of Adwa African victory. We have produced a number of calls with Kassahun Checole, the founder and director of the African World Press to harvest papers to produce an edited book. We have now been able to attract a considerable number of papers both in English and Amharic. We decided that it will be good to produce a special issue on the current 121 years of the Great Africa Adwa Victory by selecting a few of the papers that can be shared at a time when the annual time is still with us until March 2, 2017. Amongst the papers we are able to attract we selected four written in English and two written in Amharic to be included in this special issue that all who are now celebrating the 121 years can share and discuss together remembering the historical achievements of this great historic Adwa victory not just for Ethiopia but also the Africana world.

We also think it is very important that we dedicate this special issue to Sylvia Pankhurst's son to Prof. Richard Pankhurst who passed away in February, 2017. Both his mother Sylvia and he deserve very much that we recognise, appreciate and celebrate the distinctive contribution they made consistently against all the foreign aggressions that Ethiopia was subjected to. Ethiopians should honour The Pankhursts by founding an annual series of lectures for both mother and son: the Sylvia and Richard Pankhurst series of annual lectures. It will be good either Addis Ababa University or a number of the nine top universities in Ethiopia collaborate to run the Sylvia and Richard Pankhurst. We can also look for funding to set up the Pankhurst doctoral fellowship programme. Ethiopia has defied successfully the European scramble for Africa demonstrating Africa has defeated clearly and decisively the European colonial powers. This has made Ethiopia to provide the

spiritual power for all Africans to be proud with full dignity and agency as Africans. All European colonial powers were shocked by Ethiopia's decisive Adwa African victory. It is no wonder the Second World War started by the Italian aggression to colonise Ethiopia to redress their defeat at Adwa in 1896. Ethiopia continues to be subjected to unending aggression now being land locked despite the fact the Indian Ocean used to be called also the Ethiopian Ocean. We must recall that the Second World War started with the Italian aggression and occupation of Ethiopia. It is important to read the book written by Baron Roman Prochaszka with the title: *Abyssinia the Powder Barrel in 1934* described as the book on the most burning question of the day. The writer admonished the colonial world to go for the complete 'eradication' of Ethiopia, which he described in his own words as "this plague-spot in East Africa" The book is full of hysterical hate propaganda also against what it describes the 'Amhara' reminding us very much the hateful propaganda by the Nazis in Germany against Jews! The writer was Austrian by origin. This book was first written in German and was translated into English. He was anti-Semitic as fiercely as he was anti-Ethiopian!

The fascist genocide was committed where over one million people were killed. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was also targeted with Abune Pateros killed with barrage of weapons by Italians and askaris and Abune Mikael thrown out of aircraft in Bale and murdered. Many of the churches in many parts of Ethiopia were destroyed with many priests targeted for nothing but because they strongly and with spirit and principle stand for Ethiopia's independence and freedom opposing vehemently and spiritually the fascist Italian aggression.

Nothing vividly communicates the fascist aggression more than Baron Roman Prochaszka's *Abyssinia The Powder Barrel in 1934*. This book has been written with a violent normative position arguing mendaciously for the subjugation, humiliation, surrender and capitulation of Ethiopia to the world imperial and colonial system and calling for nothing else but for Ethiopia's destruction by fanning inter- ethnic and tribal strife and conflict. Moreover it is written from a fascist and white supremacist perspective, arguing forcefully why Ethiopia must be colonised, and why in particular Italian colonialism must be supported to subdue Ethiopia by the whole colonial world.

He called for no support to be given by all to Ethiopia when the fascists invaded Ethiopia. He said Ethiopia cannot expect support and sympathy because he claimed that it is vernacularly and ethnically divided into 'tribes' with domination of one ethnic group over others. He wrote that an ethnic group has privilege over others. The fascists in this Powder Barrel book

argued the Ethiopia must be incinerated with mustard poison gas and phosgene to kill the people with genocide-al intent and action, especially those marked as the 'oppressor tribe'.

The writer said: "What we are witnessing is by no means a local frontier conflict between Abyssinia and Italy." He extolled Italy's fascist aggression as history's call 'to be the first to take up the challenge in defence of European colonial achievements at this outpost.'

Here is a white supremacist writing a book by arguing for the whole colonial-imperial world to unite and colonise Ethiopia by bringing together the colonial powers and also by utilising cynically and maliciously the divide and rule strategy of pitting one group of Ethiopians against one another, whom he describes derogatorily as disparate and different 'tribes' exhibiting relations of one oppressor 'tribe' over the many disparate 'oppressed tribes.' He spreads the poisonous and divisive politics of ethincism/tribalism that continues to this day to distract the country, the people and the nation from focusing to learn to eat, drink, create shelter, educate and provide health for the wellbeing for all the people as a whole. The claim is made that 'the opponents of anti-imperialism should bear in mind that the numerous non-Amharic (sic!!!) native tribes in Ethiopia, and these constitute by far the greater part of the total population of the empire, are themselves the victims of Abyssinian imperialism(sic!!!)" (p1)

He concluded with the outrageous assertion: "It is therefore utterly mistaken to represent the Abyssinian usurpers as being in any way oppressed and worthy of protection."

The fascist strategy of using ethnicity to sow conflict, distrust and animosity by fanning the politics of self-determination of oppressed nationalities against the oppressor minority 'Amhara' who were said to number no more than 20 % of the population was spread with the intention and practice of both malice and hate.

It is remarkable that the politics of ethnicism was fully elaborated and used by the fascist and white supremacist writers of the 1930s for facilitating the colonisation of Ethiopia as a priority goal. If the country cannot be colonised, the formula was to sow and leave behind distrust and animosity amongst the people never to get the country to focus on issues that matter for the survival of Ethiopia.

That is how ethnicism, self-determination and divide and rule of 'tribes' - that continue to plague Africa was openly advocated by the fascists that have tried to erase the great achievement of the Ethiopian-African Adwa victory. The fascist attack by Italy from 1934-1941 is to nullify the great African achievement the Adwa victory brought in defeating European colonialism in the period of scramble for Africa. Former President Thabo Mbeki made an inspiring speech on the 120 years of Adwa Victory celebration confirming how Africa expressed its defiance against the European scramble for Africa. The Ethiopian Adwa victory is an African victory. It is a victory for all African people across the world. There is no way both whites and Japanese can ever degrade the African people anywhere in the world. The liberation agency of all black people was expressed through Ethiopia and the Adwa great African victory. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=624BaD6wKIQ>). Africa is not a victim, it is a victor and Ethiopia through Adwa Victory will continue to send that message of Africa as a victor throughout our lives.

Adwa Victory also reinforced Ethiopianism that promoted Africa for Africans, Africans for humanity and humanity for God with two Ethiopian Manifestos from 1829 in USA and 1896 in Southern Africa to resist slavery, racism, apartheid and colonialism. Ethiopianism was the pre-cursor reinforcing pan-Africanism. Pan-Africanism reinforced the Africa Renaissance. They are one in three and three into one. The best high way of liberation is signalled by the successful resistance of the Adwa Victory of 1896. Any other way is not the African freeway. Africans must value and cherish their history. They must remember the Adwa Victory will live on; and until Africa is fully free and united, the Adwa Victory will continue alive! It makes us all never to give up resisting all varieties of injustice Africans are still not free from. The African sun shine of freedom will shine ever brighter by remembering the great African Adwa Victory. This victory lives on in the eternal river of time.

For pan-Africanists across the world, Adwa Victory also makes Ethiopia as Africa as the epitome of African nationalism. Ethiopia is not just for those in Ethiopia, it is the moral and spiritual national resource for all Africans across the world.

In his biography Dr. Kwame Nkrumah relates his reaction to the fascist assault against Ethiopia. He was in London at the time of the savage attack on the way to the United States, when he saw the newspaper poster, "Mussolini Invades Ethiopia." He said he was immediately and naturally seized by a strong outrage. Dr. Nkrumah said: "At that moment", he wrote, "It was almost as if the whole of London had declared war on me personally. For the next few minutes I could do nothing but glare at each impassive face,

wondering if these people could realise the wickedness of colonialism, and praying that the day might come when I could play my part in bringing about the downfall of such a system. My nationalism surged to the fore; I was ready to go to hell itself, if need be, in order to achieve my object.”(Quoted in John. H. Brown, Public Diplomacy Press Review, USC Centre for Public Diplomacy, May 22, 2004)

Our revered Nelson Mandela felt a similar outrage: “I was seventeen when Mussolini attacked Ethiopia, an invasion that spurred not only my hatred of that despot but of fascism in general.”(Nelson Mandela, Long walk to Freedom, p.402)

March 1 in 2017 will mark the 121 years of this great Adwa Victory. We produce this special issue to open all Africans across the world to start a vast education for the whole year by producing a variety of resources, activities, shows, exhibitions and artistic, scientific, philosophic reflections by demonstrating the relevance and significance of the Adwa Victory in the past, present and future to complete African full freedom, liberation, dignity, pride, agency and self-worth now and in the future. We should start with our children from kindergarten to all in every arena of social, public, cultural economic and artistic life across the Africana world. The Africa Union, all the current African states, the entire African Diaspora , The Pan-African Federalist Movement, The African Union Student Council(AUSC) and even all those nations across the world that have been colonised should make it a special day and work specially in February by combining it with the Africa History Month until March 1, 2016 to make this a special time for spreading vast education and awareness to reach every African child, woman and man across the world.

Let us also unlearn dividing ourselves in linguistic and religious enclaves to re-think and re-learn by going beyond the fragmenting and fracturing divisive variations and diversities and appreciate and celebrate our Africaness similarity to bring in reality the enduring historic contribution Ethiopia possesses as the provider of the spiritual public good for completing African liberation.

We appreciate Africa World Press for collaborating to produce a book commemorating Adwa Victory not just an Ethiopian victory but as an African victory. This is an enduring historic legacy that all Africans must become fully aware.

The contributions are by Dr. Ted Desta on "The African King Who Conquered Italy", Menelik in the 19th Century US Press Before and After Adwa - Special for Revisiting Adwa Book, Tekeste Negash on The Role of Queen Taytu in the Adwa African Victory, Misganaw Tadesse on Ras Mikael of Wollow and the Campaign of Adwa, Habte Giorgis on Melelik II: History Focused on Items Mentioned on the Proclamations of 1909, and the book review by Rajesh Gopalakrishnan Nair on Raymond Jonas's book on The Battle of Adwa: African Victory in the Age of Empire. We have added two Amharic papers on Adwa Victory by Ato Kidane Alemayehu who is an Executive Director for Global Justice and Lemlem Telila.

Always going back to history is very useful to find how to go forward in shaping a bright future. Everything is moved but historical memory. When one loses history, one loses one's identity and agency. Africans should learn what they should know. Africans badly need to learn their positive struggles, knowledge and spiritual heritages. These invaluable contributions on Adwa's African victory in the age of the scramble for Africa should provide the knowledge for Africa to stand up united. It is no good to talk African unity and not unite. Time to learn from the lessons of Adwa victory for Africans to come together to deal with and respond to all the challenges Africa continues to experience. Adwa Victory is the inspiration to decolonise Africa fully. Adwa Victory is alive and will continue to live on now and the future.