

## PROBLEMS OF THE IMPERIALIST WAR IN AFRICA

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THE present imperialist war in Europe is being fought in two theaters. The one embraces the British Isles, North and West Germany and the areas occupied by the Germans: Holland, Belgium, Northern France, Norway, and part of Denmark. The other embraces the Mediterranean, the Northern and Northeastern part of Africa and part of Asia Minor.

In both these theaters of war it is against England, or, rather, the British Empire, that her imperialist rivals, Germany and Italy, are aiming their combined blows. Thus, a close political as well as strategical connection exists between these two geographically so widely separated arenas. While the aim of the German operations against the British Isles is to paralyze their function as the economic, political and organizing center of the British Empire, the aim of Italy is to cut England's route to India through the Mediterranean and to threaten her positions on the Suez Canal, in North Africa and in the Near East.

When Italy entered the war on June 11, 1940, the collapse of France had already begun, and her complete capitulation that followed

soon after, on June 22, undoubtedly signified a considerable improvement in Italy's strategic position in the Mediterranean and in North Africa. For whereas Italy's task in the original German-Italian plan of operations was to hold in check the French forces in the Alps and in North Africa, to prevent the dispatch of materials and men to France from Africa, and to hamper the movements of the powerful British and French fleets in the Mediterranean, now her task has been greatly simplified: today she is able to direct her fighting forces, released by the capitulation of France, wholly and entirely against England, which is carrying on the fight.

Nevertheless, the results of the war in the Mediterranean, in North and Northeast Africa and on the coast of Asia Minor so far have not been overwhelming. Italy has been able seriously to hamper the movements of the British fleet between Gibraltar, the Suez and Aden; she has also succeeded, thanks to her supremacy in the air, in ensuring her sea communications with Libya and hence the dispatch of troops and munitions to an area

which offers a grave menace to Britain's position in Egypt; lastly, the Italian troops have been able to record certain territorial gains, especially in British Somaliland, which they have occupied, in Kenya and in the Sudan. Nevertheless, neither in the Mediterranean nor in the North African theaters of war has Italy succeeded in seriously menacing Britain's positions on the Suez Canal and in the Near East.

In view of a probable Italian attack on the Suez Canal, Great Britain has in the past few weeks been concentrating considerable forces in the strategically most important sections, especially in Egypt and Palestine, but also in the Sudan and Kenya, as well as in Aden-Hadramaut. Thus, apart from obstacles of a topographical and climatic character, Italy's advance on the Suez Canal will encounter strong military resistance.

Further, German-Italian plans—as the conversations between Von Ribbentrop, Ciano and Suñer show—aim at using the Iberian Peninsula as a jumping-off ground for an attack on French North Africa and French Equatorial Africa. Spain is demanding the return of Gibraltar, and on June 14 she occupied Tangier, the most important strategic point in French Morocco. By her possession of Tangier and Ceuta, Spain dominates the coast facing Gibraltar. After Suñer's appointment as Foreign Minister, and after the meeting between Hitler and Franco, it is to be presumed that Spain will put no obstacles in the way of the plans of the axis powers.

There are many signs to show

that the center of gravity of hostilities is about to be shifted to the African theater of war.

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What is the significance of Africa to the imperialists?

The second largest continent in the world (with an area of 11,500,000 square miles), Africa represents a huge territory, thrice the size of Europe, but with a total population of only about 150,000,000. More than one-third of this vast continent consists of desert, the Sahara alone having an area of 3,500,000 square miles.

The importance of Africa to world imperialism lies both in its rich natural resources and in its peculiar geographical position. Tunis, Algiers, Morocco, the Belgian Congo and South Africa abound in mineral wealth. While French North Africa possesses vast deposits of phosphorus, copper and iron ore, Central Africa is rich in gold, copper, tin, zinc and manganese. Richness of all in mineral wealth is the Union of South Africa and Rhodesia, which contain the largest gold and diamond deposits in the world as well as huge reserves of coal, iron, copper and platinum. Generally speaking, the mineral wealth of Africa is still inadequately surveyed, especially in Ethiopia and the Sudan, where large mineral deposits are believed to exist. Of outstanding importance are Africa's mighty rivers (Nile, Congo, Niger and Zambezi), whose potential power resources are estimated at about 190,000,000 h.p.

Of the vegetable life, in which

Africa is extraordinarily rich and whose cultivation on a large scale promises enormous potentialities of development, prime mention should be made of the world raw materials, and other supplies: cotton, rubber, gum, copal, hemp, oilseed and oil, coffee, cocoa, timber, cork, spices, tanning material, tobacco, wine and sugar. Africa also provides a considerable share of the world's supplies of animals and animal products, such as sheep, wool, hides and ivory.

In the struggle of the world imperialists for Africa, the unique geographical position of this continent has always played an important part. Through the Mediterranean, North Africa is closely connected both with Southern Europe and the Near East. The Straits of Gibraltar, which separate the Iberian peninsula from North Africa, are only 14 kilometers\* wide at their narrowest part. The Apennine peninsula, and especially Sicily, approach very close to Africa, as does also the Balkan peninsula, both directly and by the connecting land strip through Asia Minor, which is of great strategic importance.

What renders Africa's geographical position even more important is the fact that two world trade routes of vital significance to the British Empire follow the line of its coast. While the route through the Straits of Gibraltar, the Suez and Aden is one-third shorter than the road to India and Australia around the African coast, it can be seriously menaced by any of Britain's rivals

\* A kilometer equals approximately five-eighths of a mile.—Ed.

in the Mediterranean; whereas the old route round the Cape of Good Hope, although the longer, is by far the safer. But the longer distance around the Cape of Good Hope has the serious defect of reducing the turnover of cargo space, equivalent to about a 15 per cent loss of tonnage, which is already being keenly felt by Great Britain in the present war. The distance from London to Bombay, for example, is 7,190 statute miles, and from London to Singapore 9,505 statute miles; but via Cape Town these distances are increased to 12,659 and 16,455 statute miles respectively. British oil tankers used to make the voyage from the Persian Gulf to England through the Suez Canal in about twenty-five days; today they require over forty days.

For the world imperialists, Africa constitutes primarily a huge agrarian hinterland, a source of raw material and a market, as well as a highly profitable sphere of capital export (for the construction of roads, railways, harbor works, power stations and public works and the exploitation of the vast mineral resources).

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It was only in the concluding decades of the last century that Africa really became an object of contention among the imperialist powers. Before that it was a scene of sanguinary slave hunts, of the unscrupulous burning and destruction of whole areas and the extermination of whole tribes by the "superior white race"; but now, in the age of imperialism, it has become

the arena of a struggle for raw materials and markets, for cheap labor power and for strategical bases along the world's most important trade routes.

The imperialist voracity with which Africa was literally torn to pieces at the end of the last century was brought about by two causes: first, by the fact that all the other continents were already closed to further imperialist expansion, and, second, by the fact that, with the national unification of Germany and Italy, two new imperialist powers appeared on the scene and began to demand their "place in the sun."

The history of the struggle of the imperialist powers for Africa is clearly marked by the following phases: the phase 1882-1902, or the period of struggle between Great Britain and France for hegemony in Africa; the phase 1902 to the World War of 1914-18, marked by an understanding between Great Britain and France in Africa and their combined and open conflict with Germany, leading to the loss of Germany's colonies in Africa in the World War; and, lastly, the phase 1918-39, ending with the outbreak of the second imperialist war.

In the first of these phases, in which France was anxious to compensate herself in Africa for her losses in the Franco-German War of 1870-71, and above all to set her foot firmly in North Africa, she necessarily came into collision everywhere with Great Britain, who was chiefly concerned to strengthen and secure her strategic hold on India by seizing all the major lines of approach to that country (hence

the slogans: Cairo-Cape Town and Cairo-Calcutta). The mastery of the Mediterranean, and especially the possession of Tangier, Biserte and Tunis was therefore for a long time a subject of contention, not only between British and French imperialism, but also between French and Italian imperialism, both Bismarck and England being very skillful in directing Italy's greedy gaze towards France.

The signal for the final dismemberment of Africa was given by France when she occupied Tunis in 1881. The immediate consequence was not only the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, which had been suddenly plunged into the vortex of world politics by the opening of the Suez Canal (1879), but also the conclusion of the Three-Power Pact between Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary.

That Germany and Italy were able to gain a foothold in Africa was largely due to the acute struggle between Great Britain and France for hegemony in Africa, a struggle which was brought to the verge of open war by the Fashoda incident of 1898. Thus, in order to create a counterweight to French aspirations in the Red Sea, Great Britain allowed Italy in 1885 to occupy the Egyptian port of Massaua, which was to serve as the starting point in the creation of an Italian colonial empire in North-eastern Africa. Similarly, Kaiser Wilhelm skillfully exploited the difficulties encountered by Great Britain in South Africa, Egypt and Central Asia to build up a German colonial empire in Africa. On the

other hand, the colonial appetites of the German and Italian imperialists, uncommonly whetted by several territorial acquisitions in Africa, contributed no little to a reconciliation between Great Britain and France.

But, in particular, it was Germany's effective competition in the world market, her intense naval construction and her far-reaching plans in the Near East, which had already taken palpable shape in the project for the Berlin-Baghdad railway, that induced Great Britain to make a thorough revision in the first place of her African policy. By their treaty of March 21, 1899, Great Britain and France reached agreement over the division of their spheres of influence in Africa: England shifted the center of her interests to the Eastern and Southern parts of Africa (Egypt, Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa), whereas France welded together Northwestern and Western Africa with French Equatorial Africa to form a solid colonial empire stretching from the Mediterranean to the Congo.

Although, after this agreement, the imperialist antagonisms between Great Britain and France still continued in latent form, in African affairs the two powers acted in conjunction, especially in everything that concerned Germany. A certain exception to this was Italy, which, owing to the Anglo-French antagonisms still operative in the Mediterranean, was energetically wooed by both sides.

World politics in the decade immediately preceding the outbreak

of the World War were dominated by what was known as the "Morocco crisis." The "Morocco problem" represented an inextricable tangle of imperialist contradictions—between England and France, on the one hand, and Germany, Italy and Spain on the other. Germany was particularly anxious to get a foothold in Morocco. German imperialism, hungry for loot, was already crouching for the "panther's spring" in Morocco and was feverishly active in the Near East and in South Africa, and this in the end brought together, not only Great Britain and France, but also Italy and Spain. The secret treaty concluded by Great Britain, France, Italy and Spain in 1904 placed a padlock on further German expansion in Africa. Incidentally, it was this secret treaty—apart from the traditional antagonism between Italy and Austria-Hungary—which contributed largely to Italy's desertion of Germany in the last World War.

Subsequent developments up to the outbreak of the World War proceeded entirely in accordance with the laws of imperialist logic: Britain was able to secure her route to India *via* Gibraltar, Malta, the Suez and Aden, by the compromise with France; at the same time she encouraged Italy's and Spain's colonial appetites in order to create a counterweight to France in the Mediterranean.

On the other hand, in order to drive a wedge both between Italy and Germany and between Italy and Great Britain, France, by her treaties with Italy of 1902 and 1904,

allowed the latter a free hand in Tripoli and turned her gaze towards Great Britain's spheres of interests in East Africa.

In 1911, Italy took advantage of this unique situation to launch a war of conquest on Turkey, which resulted in her acquiring Tripoli and Cirenaica (today known as Libya). The occupation of the greater part of Morocco and the Moroccan west coast by France in 1912, and especially the World War, led in the end to the final partition of Africa.

After the World War, the colonial possessions of the European Powers in Africa were as follows:

	Area Sq. Km.	Population Millions
France .....	11,540	43.9
England ..	10,000 (approximate)	50.0
Belgium ..	2,410	17.5
Portugal ..	2,100	7.7
Italy .....	1,590	1.7
Spain .....	310	0.2
Ethiopia ..	1,120	10.0
Liberia (U.S.A.)	100	1.8
	29,170	132.8

Liberia and Ethiopia were the only parts of Africa that still ostensibly remained "independent" states. In the Negro Republic of Liberia, which had always been dependent on dollar imperialism, the United States intensively developed the growing of rubber, in order to break the British and Dutch monopoly on that product. As to Ethiopia, it was mainly the rivalry between Great Britain, Italy and France, as well as between the U. S. A. and Japan, that she had to

thank for having been able to preserve her independence until 1935.

Whereas the British and French possessions essentially formed integral land masses, interconnected by intensive railway and road construction, as well as by sea routes, Germany's possessions in Africa consisted of four (German East Africa, German Southwest Africa, the Cameroons and Togo) and Italy's of three (Tripolitania, Eritrea and Italian Somaliland) entirely separated colonies.

In the World War Germany lost her African colonies to England and France. Italy, who by the secret London Treaty of April 26, 1915, was also to expand her territorial possessions at the expense of Germany, was left empty-handed when it came to the great division of the spoils. It is the irony of history that Italy, who signed the Treaty of Versailles as one of the victor states, has today taken the side of Germany to fight against this treaty.

Before the World War, the imperialist struggle for Africa was essentially a struggle between England, France, Germany and Italy. After the World War, the United States and Japan joined the fray. That Spain, Portugal and Belgium possessed considerable territories in Africa was above all due to the rivalry of the imperialist Great Powers, who could not arrive at a unanimous understanding over these regions. As to Portugal's extensive colonial possessions in Africa, they have for a long time been British rather than Portuguese, for it was only thanks to her intimate political connection with Britain

that Portugal has been able to retain such considerable remnants of her former colonial power. Incidentally, in Britain's colonial transactions with Germany, the Portuguese colonies have often played the part of political small change; this was particularly the case in the convention of 1898, concluded at the time of the Fashoda incident, when Britain strove to reach an understanding with Germany, the edge of which would be directed against France and, more particularly, against Russia.

Like the Portuguese colonies, the Belgian Congo was a typical fruit of the acute rivalry among the Great Powers in Africa. The creation, at the Berlin Conference of 1884, at which Bismarck presided, of a "neutral" Congo state under the "sovereignty" of King Leopold II of Belgium was a compromise, arrived at by the Powers fighting for possession of Africa.

The post-war phase of the imperialist struggle for Africa was marked by the revival of the antagonisms between England and France, which especially found expression in the Near East, and from which Italy in the first instance was the direct beneficiary. Mussolini's neo-Italian imperialism, which in Africa and the Near East chiefly enjoyed the favor of dollar imperialism until 1930, after that was taken under the benevolent patronage of French imperialism, which again tried to divert its attention from Tunis to British spheres of interest, namely, to Ethiopia. A secret treaty concluded between Laval and Mussolini set the ball

rolling. Britain's policy of sanctions was frustrated both by the United States, which unconcernedly continued to ship oil to Italy, and by the passive resistance of France, which refused to place her harbors and repair yards at Great Britain's disposal in the event of a campaign against Italy. But, basically, the policy of sanctions broke down because of the internal contradictions within the camp of the British imperialists themselves, for a policy that might eventually bring the existence of the regime in Italy into question by no means suited the reactionary line of the Chamberlain clique.

With the war in Ethiopia, however, Egypt again became a focal point of world politics.

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It is primarily Egypt that is the strategical goal of the present war in Africa. Napoleon's idea that Egypt was the fulcrum for the lever that would lift the British Empire from its hinges has today, in an entirely different historical setting, acquired new significance.

In his *Outline of Economic Geography*, J. F. Horrabin speaks of the significance of Egypt to Britain, as follows:

"It is the safeguarding of this route, as well as the oil of Persia and Mesopotamia, which dictates Britain's vital interest in the whole 'Near-Eastern question.' The lands flanking that road must be brought and kept, directly or indirectly, under British control. The question who shall occupy Constantinople becomes a matter of British concern, for Constantinople is one of

the gateways of the Mediterranean, and the British 'road' runs through that sea. Above all, any real independence for Egypt is out of the question: for Egypt commands Suez—the key position of the whole route. . . ."

And Horrabin adds with melancholy sarcasm:

"People who want independence in the modern world should take care not to live in places commanding world trade routes—like Egypt or Ireland (unless, like the Turks, they can succeed in playing off against one another the jealousies of rival groups)."

Since she occupied Egypt in 1882, Great Britain has declared dozens and dozens of times that she would restore Egypt's national independence; but she has never kept her promise. True, in 1922 she formally abolished her protectorate over Egypt; nevertheless, she retained her actual supremacy by virtue of a clause in the treaty which stipulated that she reserved the defense of Egypt to herself. Egyptian national sentiments were particularly offended when, in 1924, Great Britain took over the administration of the Sudan, forced the Egyptian troops to withdraw, but compelled Egypt to go on paying for the Sudan. Finally, in 1936, Great Britain undertook to occupy only those zones in Egypt that were of military importance and to maintain only eleven thousand men on the Suez Canal. Today, according to many estimates which more or less tally with each other, the British army on Egyptian soil already amounts to two hundred and fifty

thousand men, recruited from English, Rhodesian, Indian and Australian units, and the number is being continually reinforced. Thus, willy-nilly, Egypt is being converted into a theater of war, although, under the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of alliance, she is not obliged to assist Britain in the event of war.

Italy's Egyptian policy is of long standing. It became particularly active when Mussolini's neo-Italian imperialism reverted to Crispi's idea of creating an African colonial empire and converting the Mediterranean into a *mare nostro*, an Italian sea. Since then the activities of Italian agents have grown more intense not only in Syria, in the Mosul region, in Ethiopia and in the region of Lake Tana, but, and chiefly, among Ibn Saud's Wahabis and in Egypt. Italy's wooing of Egypt and Arabia has become unusually pressing since the outbreak of hostilities in Africa. She has not abandoned the hope of inciting these regions to revolt against Great Britain.

Italy is now faced with the thorny problem of ousting Great Britain from Egypt without coming to loggerheads with the Arabian and Mohammedan world, to which Egypt belongs. Whereas Britain has, by bringing strong pressure to bear on the new Egyptian government, already succeeded, in spite of the hesitation of the King, in getting Egyptian troops dispatched to the Libyan front and to the Sudan, and whereas she is turning sentiment in her favor by generously buying up the entire Egyptian cotton crop, Italy, whose friendship for Egypt is

so far finding expression only in the bombardment of Egyptian towns, can do nothing more than continue to appeal to Egypt's "national interests" and—to threaten. For example, the *Messagero* of September 17 (quoted in the *Basle National Zeitung*) stated:

"The Arabian tribes must convert their political tendencies into real action. If, however, Egypt does not want to perform her historic mission towards Islam, destruction awaits her."

It is a fact that at present, at least, the well-armed British troops and the pound sterling are making a greater impression on Egyptian ruling circles than Italy's coaxes and threats.

But Italy's hopes are directed not only towards Egypt; they are also directed towards the whole Arabian world.

It cannot be denied that Great Britain has piled up plenty of inflammable material in Arabia. In the last World War she won the support of the Arabs by dangling before them the prospect of a nationally independent Arabia, and with their help defeated the Turks. But Britain never had the slightest intention of honoring the promises made to the Arabs by the notorious Colonel Lawrence. On the contrary, her secret treaty with France of May 9, 1916, the so-called Sykes-Picot Treaty, provided for the partitioning of Arabia, in which Great Britain was to get the lion's share. The "Greater Arabia" idea was finally shattered by the Versailles treaties. Britain received the man-

date of Palestine and France of Syria, while Transjordan, Iraq and Kuwait were set up as British buffer states. Britain also succeeded in entrenching herself in Southern and Southeastern Arabia (Aden, Hadramaut and Oman).

Throughout the post-war period Britain took advantage of dynastic and religious dissensions in Arabia (between the Sunnites and Shiites) to stir up strife among the Arabs. The British imperialists set up one of the sons of Sherif Hussein of Mecca, the famous Feisal, who with Colonel Lawrence had led the Arabian warriors against the Turks in the World War, as king of Iraq, while Hussein's other son, Abdullah, they made Emir of Transjordan, chiefly as a counterweight to Ibn Saud, the ruler of Central Arabia. For Ibn Saud, who, as leader of the puritanical Wahabi movement, had in 1924 conquered the Hejaz, the kingdom of Sherif Hussein, and in 1926 had become the ruler of the whole of Inner Arabia, was beginning to become a menace to Britain because of his Greater Arabian aspirations.

Ibn Saud has been particularly strenuously wooed by Italy since the Ethiopian war. The Italian imperialists have built mosques and numerous Koran schools in Libya, where they have also founded an Arabian university; they have placed transport ships at the disposal of the Mohammedans gratis for the pilgrim traffic to Mecca; they have even gone so far as to forbid Catholic missionary activities among the Mohammedans in all the Italian colonies—all this in order to

pose in the eyes of Ibn Saud and of the entire Mussulman world as the benevolent protectors of Islam.

In his fight for independence against Britain, Ibn Saud has been skilful in exploiting not only the interests of American, and even of Japanese, imperialism, but, above all, the interests of the Italian imperialists and their German imperialist allies. Thus, in reply to England's alliance with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Iraq, later joined by Kuwait, formed a defensive alliance in 1939 under the benevolent auspices of Italy. Italy promised to secure the Arabians their national independence—at the hands of no less a person than General Graziani, the Graziani who had once suppressed the insurrectionary Arabian tribes of Libya by fire and sword.

Germany and Italy are trying to persuade the Arabs that it is to their common interest to put an end to British supremacy in the Near East. But so far the Arabs have not been particularly responsive to their arguments. Germany's war on the Hereros, in which this people was almost entirely exterminated, as well as Italy's numerous punitive expeditions against the native populations of Libya and Ethiopia are still fresh in the memory of the Orient.

Equally fresh is the memory of the infamous methods of so-called "peaceful penetration" employed by Britain and France in Africa, the effect of which has been to subjugate and exterminate whole peoples. The exploits of the British "civilizers" in the wars on the

Mahdis in the Sudan in the years 1883-98 and the gruesome massacres at Omdurman and Khartoum, by which the bloodstained Kitchener crushed the Mahdi revolts, have not been forgotten in Africa. Nor have the deeds of the French General Lyautey against the Moroccans in 1911-14, and especially the unparalleled ferocity with which the heroic and desperate revolt of the Riff Kabyles under Abd-el-Krim was put down in 1925-26. Unforgotten too is the fifty-hour bombardment of Damascus by the French General Sarrail and the sanguinary punitive expeditions against the insurgent Druses in Syria in 1925-27.

The appearance of jackals and hyenas to snatch a share of the booty when big beasts of prey fall out is no less familiar to the peoples of Africa. This downright hyena policy has been pursued in particular by Spain, which, for the rest, was not outdone by the big imperialist powers in the brutality of her treatment of the natives.

The imperialist powers are endeavoring in this imperialist war to exploit the aspirations for freedom of the native peoples as a weapon against their rivals. While Italy is speculating on a revolt of the Arabs, Britain is again endeavoring by wiles and concessions, her traditional methods, to neutralize Arabian nationalism, efforts in which the British agents Philby, who, as adviser to Ibn Saud, even became a convert to Islam, Major Clubb and Gertrude Bell, a figure of no mean notoriety in the Near

East, are proving themselves worthy successors of Colonel Lawrence.

Italy's hopes of an Arabian revolt, of a "holy war" against Great Britain have so far not materialized. On the other hand, the "holy war," proclaimed against Italy by the Mufti of Egypt at the behest of the British, has met with little response. Evidently, the Arabs are profoundly skeptical of such "holy wars" in the interests of one or another imperialist group.

Lenin once said in reference to the attempts of the imperialists to make capital out of the national and religious dissensions of the oppressed colonial peoples:

"The age-old oppression of colonial and weak nationalities by the imperialist powers has not only filled the working masses of the oppressed countries with animosity towards the oppressing nations but also with distrust of them in general." (V. I. Lenin, "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions." *Collected Works*, Vol. XXV.)

Italy is waging the war in Africa on three fronts, of which the Libyan and the Sudan fronts aim directly at the principal strategical objective, Egypt, while the purpose of the troops operating in Kenya is to tie up and split the British forces. But whereas the Libyan front can be directly supplied with munitions and reinforcements, the armies operating in the Sudan and Kenya, which are completely cut off from Italy, must either be maintained on accumulated war stocks or be supplied by air.

So long as the Italian army operating from Ethiopia and Eritrea

does not force its way through the Sudan and at least cut the Cairo-Khartoum line, Libya is to be regarded as the central Italian front in Africa. The unusual feature about the offensive against Egypt from Libya is that, contrary to all strategical principles and historical traditions, it is being conducted from the West. Italy lacks an adequate fleet for an offensive from the Nile delta, and adequate support bases in Asia Minor for an offensive from the East.

The Italian army concentrated in Libya is estimated at five hundred thousand men, supplied with about one thousand tanks and as many airplanes. While Graziani, whom after the Ethiopia campaign Mussolini christened the "strategist of astronomical distances," unquestionably possesses considerable experience in desert fighting and, to judge by all appearances, will attempt an attack from the South through the waterless desert, such an undertaking would, to say the least, be very hazardous and the issue problematical. One finds frequent statements in the Italian press to the effect that England is a well-armed and very formidable enemy. For instance, Virginio Gayda, writing in the *Giornale d'Italia* on September 10, says:

"The war will be a long and difficult one. The British world empire is at stake. Rich and well-armed, England has still sufficient means of defending herself."

In contradistinction to Italy, which is trying to avoid naval engagements in the Mediterranean and whose air arm is her chief

weapon, Britain's main strength—apart from her well-fortified positions in Egypt itself—lies in the concentration of naval, air and land forces at the most important naval bases. In addition, her troops stationed on the most important fronts, in the Sudan and in Kenya, have the advantage of possessing good lines of communication, which cannot be said of the Italians. Moreover, in the African theater of war Great Britain possesses a big air fleet, estimated at about 1,300 craft, of which 600 or 700 are concentrated in Egypt alone.

The focal points of Britain's far-flung system of defense are Egypt and the Suez Canal.

Fully cognizant of the menace to the very existence of the British Empire that either a landing of German troops in the British Isles or the conquest of Egypt by Italy would entail, Great Britain has concentrated her most powerful forces at these two most seriously threatened points. Considerably improved as the strategical position of the Axis Powers undoubtedly was by the defeat of France, Germany and Italy have not yet succeeded in seriously threatening Britain's position in these strongest centers of her resistance. As the so-called *blitzkrieg* becomes more and more a war of material, a war of attrition, the problem of land and naval forces assumes greater and greater prominence.

The British navy, in spite of the losses it has so far suffered, still remains the mistress of the seas, or at least of the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. The navy continues

to play a predominant part in the resistance to Germany's and Italy's far-reaching plans in Europe and Africa.

An attack by Italy or Germany on Egypt therefore involves not only operations by land from Libya or the Sudan, but also, in its broadest sense, the mastery of the Mediterranean, especially of the Eastern Mediterranean. As the hopes of an Arab revolt in Britain's rear have not materialized, her opponents have begun to attack her position on the Suez Canal by turning the other arm of the pincers against Greece, where Britain possesses excellent naval bases.

Italy is moreover vitally interested in a solution of the Syrian problem. She is carrying on intense activities among the Syrian Arabs and is at the same time categorically demanding the complete demobilization of the French forces in Syria and the delivery and destruction of French war material.

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The focal point of the present war in Africa, apart from Egypt and the Arabian countries, is the French colonies. And intense struggle between Germany and Italy on the one hand, and Great Britain, on the other, for these colonies is going on openly, and even more so behind the scenes. Hence the equivocal attitude of Germany and the cautious maneuverings of Great Britain with regard to the Vichy government, which in France itself stands on very shaky ground, it is true, but which in the colonies, and especially in the African colonies,

still represent a factor with which both the belligerent parties in Africa have to reckon. Hence, especially Italy's nervousness with regard to the French troops both in Africa and in Syria which have not yet been disarmed and which, under certain circumstances, might go over to de Gaulle, that is, to England, and thus exercise a very considerable influence on the further course of the war.

The events in the French colonies during the past few months, especially in French Equatorial Africa, in Dakar and in the Belgian Congo, and above all the agreements concluded by Germany with the Vichy government, are clear evidence of the fact that the French African colonies are playing an important part in the imperialist contest for Africa.

Another reason why French Equatorial Africa is so important to the Axis Powers is that it affords a broad and direct territorial connection both with Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and with Italian Libya. The fight for French Equatorial Africa is, therefore, an integral part of the far-flung struggle of the Axis Powers in Africa and for Africa. A prominent part in their plans is played by the excellent motor road through the Sahara Desert, connecting French Morocco with French Equatorial Africa, as well as by the well-equipped air fields in Timbuctoo, Dakar and the Kaur Oasis. Of no less importance is the fact that French Equatorial Africa offers an absolutely secure source of food supply for any army operating independently in that territory.

However, the realization of these grandiose plans is fraught with immense topographical, climatic and technical difficulties, especially as regards the transport of men and material, which is such a supreme problem in a war in Africa. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that—apart from the fact that her sea communications are still substantially intact—of the total of 60,000 kilometers of railway in Africa, Britain alone possesses 40,000 kilometers—a fact which is bound to weigh heavily in the scales.

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The imperialist war in Africa raises a number of problems, on the solution of which the issue of the war in favor of one or other of the belligerent parties will largely depend. While Germany and Italy are obliged to force the war and to fling their strong land armies, which have not yet been properly brought into action, into the scales, Britain's tactics are just the opposite, namely, with the support of her strong navy and the powerful resources of the British Empire and the United States, to maintain a vigorous defense of her most important centers of resistance and thus keep the enemy at bay and wear him down. Britain's chief allies in this mighty struggle against her imperialist rivals are the sea and the desert.

On the other hand, Africa offers the Axis Powers a good opportunity of breaking through the naval ring that separates them from the colonies and colonial raw materials. As

they themselves point out, Africa is for them a jumping-off ground in their fight against the British Empire for a redivision of colonies. German imperialism, it is true, has subjugated half of Europe by force of arms, but colonies continue to be for it the decisive problem. The imperialist war is therefore tending to shift more and more to Africa.

But the war in Africa not only demands enormous measures of preparation, maintenance and protection (construction of roads and supply of munitions, gasoline, water and food); it will also be a hard, stubborn and extremely protracted war, with many a surprise in store.

One of the many unknowns in the imperialist reckonings of both the belligerent parties is the behavior of the peoples of Africa, whom the imperialists are accustomed to use as pawns and to regard simply as objects of their sinister schemes. While Italy, for example, is trying to incite the Egyptians and Arabs to revolt against England and is promising them national freedom, she is keeping the Arabs of Libya, the natives of Eritrea and Somaliland, and, above all, the people of Ethiopia, in bloody subjection. Or else she dangles the promise of "equality" before the natives, calling them Italian citizens, in order to send them under this title to the various fronts in Africa.

On the other hand, the Egyptians and Arabian peoples are not finding the British yoke any milder. While Britain systematically foments disension and confusion in their ranks and employs every means to frus-

trate the idea of pan-Arabian unity, and is keeping Haillé Selassie ready Ethiopia's aspirations for freedom and is keeping Haillé Selasse ready at the gates of that country in order with his help to rouse the native tribes against Italy. In this war, as in the World War, Britain is getting the colonial peoples to fight for her. While the British army in Egypt consists principally of Indians, in Kenya and the Sudan it is largely colored troops from Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa that are fighting.

But in the British dominion of South Africa the situation is very tense. The entry of the Union of South Africa into the war (on September 8, 1939), was the signal for the outbreak of internal political conflicts which have since been waged chiefly between the supporters of the British Empire, headed by General Smuts, the present Prime Minister, and the national Afrikaners (Boers), headed by Dr. Malans and General J. B. M. Hertzog, the ex-Prime Minister. How tense the situation is, is shown by the fact that a motion by General Hertzog for a separate peace with the Axis Powers was rejected by a majority of eighteen votes.

For the native Afrikaners, the present world war, like the last World War, is a political education and a school of political activity. The Arabian countries of Asia Minor and North Africa, the natives of Egypt, Libya, Tunis, Algiers and Morocco, the people of Ethiopia and the numberless Negro tribes of Central and South Africa are beginning to awaken to political life

and are impatiently awaiting the day of their liberation from all exploitation and oppression.

Imperialist rivalries in Africa have helped immensely to further and strengthen the national consciousness of the African people. While the immediate political effects of this national awakening are not as spectacular as they are in India and China, the signs of a growing awareness of the common destiny of all the African peoples, irrespective of religion or color, are unmistakable.

This sense of political solidarity among the African peoples was impressively revealed during the revolt of the Riff Kabyles and the Druses, but especially during the war in Ethiopia, when not only the Arab and Berber peoples of North Africa, but also the Negroes of Equatorial and South Africa proclaimed their solidarity with the struggle for liberation of the Ethiopian people. In this present war, there are many Arabians who are of the opinion that the peoples of Africa should take advantage of the struggle for hegemony of the imperialist powers to achieve their own national and political independence.

The political prestige of the white bosses in Africa, already severely shaken in the first imperialist war, when the peoples of Africa and Arabia were drawn into the imperialist slaughter, has suffered another severe shock in the present war in connection with the attempts of the white bosses to convert the native peoples into cannon fodder. The African peoples are beginning to see through the lies and political

deceit of the various imperialist groups, and are becoming more and more sceptical of the promises of the imperialists to grant them national freedom and independence in the event of their victory:

"It was formerly the 'accepted idea' that the world has been divided from time immemorial into inferior and superior races, into black peoples and white peoples, the former of which are unfit for civilization and are doomed to be objects of exploitation, while the latter are the sole vehicles of civilization, whose mission it is to exploit the former. This legend must now be regarded as shattered and discarded. . . .

"The era of undisturbed exploitation and oppression of the colonies and dependent countries is over." (Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, pp. 254-55.)

So long as the native population of Africa submits to being an object in the criminal game of the imperialist powers and a source of strength for imperialism, the imperialists will never let go of their booty. There is only one way of liberating the "dark continent" from the rule of the white bosses, and that is a revolutionary struggle of the native peoples against imperialism.

"The revolutionary struggle of the oppressed peoples in the dependent and colonial countries against imperialism is the only road that leads to their emancipation from oppression and exploitation." (Joseph Stalin, *Leninism*, Vol. I, pp. 68-69.)