

Ethiopia Disturbs Europe's Balance

By AUGUST THALHEIMER

The League of Nations is starting its negotiations today* on Ethiopia. It is useless to speculate about the possible outcome of these negotiations since by the time this writing reaches America the results will already be known. Instead, I shall point out the effects of the Ethiopian affair on European relation of powers which are already discernable.

EFFECTS OF WAR IN ETHIOPIA

Let us start with France. Apparently, she has to choose between Italy and England. In reality, her choice has already been made by the nature of things. The rapprochement between France and Italy was designed to prevent Italy from allying herself with Nazi Germany and to have Italian forces attack Germany in case of war. Should there be an Ethiopian war, however, Italy will be stumped as a serious military force in Europe. Recent maneuvers in Upper Italy which were to prove that Italy could simultaneously carry on a colonial war in Africa and remain a full-fledged military force in Europe did not prove anything of the sort. To carry on maneuvers for a few days is one thing, to wage a war is quite another. The Ethiopian war will tax the military, economic and financial resources of Italy, as time goes on, to such an extent that she will be greatly weakened if not paralyzed in Europe. Thus the value of Italy as an ally against Nazi Germany is lost for France. Then the danger arises that Italy will again turn towards Hitler Germany. But Italy and Hitler Germany have no common aims in this case.

CAN THE NAZIS WORK WITH ITALY

The Austrian question remains unsolved. If Italy gave up Austria voluntarily to Germany this would be such a heavy blow to Italy as a European power that all possible gains in Africa could not make up for the loss in prestige. This is out of the question. But perhaps there is a common interest that Italy and Hitler Germany share in colonies in Africa or elsewhere? As is well-known Hitler Germany has already publicly drawn the conclusion from the remarks of the English Foreign Minister which established the right of Italy for colonial expansion, namely, that it is the right of Germany for colonial expansion. But the fact that both powers have colonial claims does not mean that they will work together in this particular case. In addition, Hitler Germany values the friendship of England much more than that of Italy, England being the country which must be taken into consideration first as far as colonial expansion is con-

cerned. It is much more advantageous and more favorable for Hitler Germany to win colonies with the aid of England than against the latter's wishes. Italy's value as an ally against Germany is diminished for France and there is no serious threat that Italy will become an ally of Germany.

FRANCE NEEDS ENGLAND'S AID

On the other hand, the value of England as a European pillar of support for France remains. Moreover, France will surely attempt to exact further pledges from England as compensation for the loss of Italy as an ally. Such attempts judging from the French press are already being made. The French government, so the press relates, has asked England whether she would be willing to participate in sanctions in case of a European conflict as she did in the case of the Ethiopian war. On the other hand, France must seriously reckon with the possibility of a rapprochement between England and Germany.

All of which proves that the choice of France as between Italy and England was predetermined from the very start in favor of England. This situation is already reflected in the composition of the French delegation to the League of Nations. The delegation consists of Foreign Minister Laval, Herriot and Paul Boncour. Herriot and Paul Boncour are

known for their anti-Italian policies, and for their insistence upon the strengthening of the League of Nations. These two were also active forces in bringing about the rapprochement between France and the Soviet Union.

ROLE OF THE SOVIET UNION

The last-mentioned factor is not accidental. If on the one hand Italy is being eliminated as a military force, England, not being a great power on land, is not very useful for the specific military aims of France. It therefore, follows that the Soviet Union, the strongest European land power will increasingly attract France. This is true in even stronger measure of the Little Entente. The latter is demanding the speedy conclusion of the Eastern pact (and the Danube pact). The situation created by the Ethiopian war will therefore be very favorable to Russian foreign policy. The relative increase in power of Hitler Germany thru the Ethiopian war is forcing France and the Little Entente into closer relations with the Soviet Union than has previously been the case. France until now hesitated to start concrete military negotiations with the Soviet Union. It is obvious that these matters are now being speeded up.

All these turns will not proceed along perfectly straight lines; the basic line of
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strategy however has been predetermined by the nature of the situation.

The Soviet Union will, of course, continue to do everything in its power to prevent the Ethiopian war. The criticism of certain Social Democrats in accusing the Soviet Union of a lack of initiative in the Ethiopian conflict is unjustified. The Soviet Union is but one force in the European set-up. England is unwilling to apply sanctions against Italy without the support of the other powers, particularly of France. The Soviet Union is certainly in a much more isolated position and as such can do even less. England might possibly close the Suez canal, she might exert pressure on Italy by refusing to grant credits and to supply Italy with raw materials, etc. and force other powers to do likewise. It is ob-

vious that the Soviet Union can do nothing of the kind. The Soviet state as such can attempt to use its influence for the prevention of the Ethiopian war only within the League of Nations.

The position of the international working class of course is quite different. It has the real possibility and therefore the duty to mobilize broad masses for the preservation of peace in Africa and Europe. This problem demonstrates again that tho the aims and principles of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and of the Communist Parties in capitalist countries are alike, their tactics and methods must differ. The Communist parties must be aware of this and must, on the basis of this knowledge, counteract the confusion created by certain Social-Democrats.

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