

# Abyssinia

One of the very few areas of Africa that was not under European control. It was near areas that Italy did have control over.

## LONG TERM CAUSES

People were cross with the government:

- Italy not happy with gains made from WWI.
- Mussolini's Fascist Party took over Italy.
- Mussolini had built up his armed forces and wanted to expand an empire for the Italians.

## SHORT TERM CAUSES

- The Great Depression hit Italy badly so Mussolini wanted to distract the people from home troubles by foreign conquest.
- The way that the League had reacted to Manchuria indicated that Mussolini would probably get away with an conquest ambitions that didn't threaten Britain and France's interests.

## EVENTS

- December 1934- clash between Italian and Abyssinian troops at the oasis of Wal Wal gave Mussolini an excuse to attack the Abyssinians.
- The League attempted to intervene, but tension increased.
- January 1935: Laval (French foreign minister) met Mussolini in Rome. They made secret agreements which Mussolini interpreted as permission to do what he liked.
- September 1935, Hoare (British foreign minister) called for the League to stand up to any Italian aggression- contradicting what Laval had done.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1935: Mussolini invaded Abyssinia. Abyssinians could not stand up to them but it took the Italians a long time to get through Abyssinia.
- Within the week, the League condemned the Italians actions and imposed sanctions- League members could not trade with Italy.
- ...however, the sanctions did not include coal, iron and oil trade without which Mussolini would have had to give up war within the week.
- Britain and France also kept the Suez Canal open to the Italians so Mussolini could supply his troops.
- Britain and France then undermined the League. Hoare and Laval created a plan (the Hoare-Laval Plan) to bring the invasion to an end. It would split Abyssinia, the Italians would get all the good land for farming and expansion- the Abyssinians get to live in barren mountainous land apart from the "corridor for camels" a strip of land leading to the Red Sea.
- The plan was leaked to the press, massive public outcry, Hoare and Laval resigned, but it was too late- the British and France were talking tough, but in private were willing to reward Mussolini's aggression.

Britain and France were worried about Germany and needed Mussolini on side against Germany. This is one reason they were reluctant to take action and when they did- that action was weak.

Mussolini assumed that Britain and France (as countries that had empires) would not object to Italy getting its own colonies. It didn't help that Britain and France were acting against each other so it looked like the League

This demonstrated that the League's sanctions as a way of punishing nations were ineffective- and in fact, the League had no desire to make them effective.

The Hoare-Laval Plan never happened, but it showed that the League was never going to take action to protect weaker nations- like Abyssinia which had begged and pleaded for help at the assembly.

**The League was now completely powerless.**