

TRIALOGUE Act 2

A speech conversation between Benito Mussolini, Sylvia Pankhurst and Haile Selassie



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“To take a moral stance means to assume responsibility for the Other; to act on the assumption that the well-being of the Other is a precious thing calling for my effort to preserve and enhance it, that not have been done at all, and that even if other do or can do it this does not cancel my responsibility... and this being-for is unconditional (that it, if it is to be moral, not merely contractual) – it does not depend on what the Other is, or does, whether s/he deserves my care or repays in kind. One cannot conceive of an argument that could justify the renouncing of moral responsibility.”

- Zygmunt Bauman

in “Alone Again - Ethics After Certainty”, 1994

Benito Mussolini's Speech

09 May 1936

Piazza Venezia - Rome, Italy

powerful, grandiloquent, articulated, manipulative, declamatory, portentous, rhetorical

Benito Mussolini

1883 – 1945

Il Duce of Fascism, Prime Minister of Kingdom of Italy, dictator of Italy

On 5 May 1936 Italian army entered Addis Ababa under the commander of Pietro Badoglio with orders to execute all 'young Ethiopians'. Mussolini then announced to a crowded Piazza Venezia that Ethiopia is Italian.

Four days later, on 9 May 1936 Mussolini turn again to his balcony in Piazza Venezia to proclaim the formation of the Italian Empire. The announcement placed Ethiopia under the entire sovereignty of Italy as part of the Italian East Africa (Africa Orientale Italiana – AOI) formed by the merge of Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia. The king of Italy was proclaimed Emperor of Abyssinia and the Marshal Badoglio the Viceroy of Addis Ababa.

Four hundred thousand people cheered and applauded Mussolini in delirious joy while fanfare of trumpets demanded silence. By the end of his speech, which didn't last more than twelve minutes a unite loud 'Yes' repeatedly answered the leader request for compromise towards the Italian Empire and God.

New Times and Ethiopia News

First issue released on 09 May 1936

Woodford, United Kindgom

powerful, highly-charged, intense, provocative, persuasive, dense, persistent

Sylvia Pankhurst

1882 – 1960

artist, activist, suffragists, pacifist, leftist, anti-fascist, anti-colonial, press editor

‘New Times and Ethiopia News’ was a weekly newspaper self-published by Sylvia Pankhurst. The first issue went to press on 5 May 1936, the same day the Italian troops entered Addis Ababa. It was then officially released on 9 May on the watch of Mussolini declaration of the Italian Empire.

After being constantly flooded with anti-Ethiopian propaganda, Sylvia decided to create her own press to advocate for Ethiopian rights condemning Mussolini and Fascism. The newspaper then appeared to be pro-Ethiopian information to counteract the colonial malicious propaganda used by Fascist Regime to justify its brutal intervention in Ethiopia. While Mussolini proudly announced: “the civilization that triumphs over barbarism, justice which triumphs over cruel arbitrariness”, the newspaper exposed on articles and images the atrocities committed by the Italian Army.

Sylvia was incessantly sending of letters to statesmen and politicians around the world in which she attached a copy of ‘New Times and Ethiopia News’. The print has reached ten thousand copies weekly with support of donations, possibly also from Emperor Haile Selassie.

Initially with the intention to keep Ethiopia issue alive, ‘New Times and Ethiopia News’ also believe the importance of League of Nations and more broadly anti-fascist cause and International justice.

‘New Times and Ethiopia News’ has run weekly for 20 years.

Haile Selassie's Speech

30 June 1936

League of Nation - Genève, Switzerland

powerful, slashing, precise, touching, thought-provoking, emotional, sensitive

Haile Selassie I

1892 – 1975

Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, King of Kings of Ethiopia, Ras Tafari
The Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974

On 30 June 1936 Haile Selassie in person addressed the League of Nations to appeal for justice to his country. It was the first time a head of state of an independent African country was speaking directly to the League of Nations to stop the invasion in his homeland by another member state. The year before, 1935 Ethiopia was brutally invaded by Italian troops and Haile Selassie pleaded the League to assure the security of weaker powers from hostility by stronger ones. Haile Selassie expounded on the collective peace security role of the League was at stake; the non-intervention of the League on such circumstances would immediately dismiss its own presence in the future.

Haile Selassie expressed himself for half an hour in Amharic after a short introduction in French, in which he justified the need to speak deeply from his soul and heart therefore on his mother tongue.

The speech greatly applauded was broadcasted worldwide nevertheless it had no acute influence on Haile Selassie's requests. The League member states refuse to act and decided by 44 votes against one, Ethiopia, plus four abstentions (Chile, Mexico, Panama and South Africa) to lift the already non-effective sanctions against Italy only four days after the speech.

Haile Selassie exiled in Bath, United Kingdom.
Later, in May 1941 he returned to Addis Ababa.

Benito Mussolini

Officers! Non-commissioned officers!
Gregarious of all the Armed Forces of the
state, in Africa and in Italy! Black shirts
of the revolution! Italian men and women at
home and throughout the world! Listen!

Sylvia Pankhurst

And remember...

Benito Mussolini

With the decisions you will know in a few
moments and which were acclaimed by the
Grand Council of Fascism, a great event
takes place: the destiny of Ethiopia is
sealed, today, May 9, XIV year of the
Fascist Era.

Sylvia Pankhurst

Everywhere, always, Fascism means War and,
we stand for International Law and Justice.
'New Times and Ethiopia News' appears at a
moment when the fortunes of Ethiopia seem
at their lowest ebb; the greater then the
need for an advocate and a friend.

Benito Mussolini

Humpf.. Who are you?

Sylvia Pankhurst

I am Sylvia Pankhurst, a humble and
unofficial person with only one title:
I have been fighting for justice all my
life. And the cause of Ethiopia cannot be
separated from the cause of International
justice.

Benito Mussolini

All the knots have been cut by our shining sword and the African victory remains in the history of our country, complete and pure, as the fallen and surviving legionaries dreamed it and wanted it.

Sylvia Pankhurst

As friends of Ethiopia we most solemnly protest against the attack on her millennial independence; we condemn the atrocious barbarities employed against her, the bombing of her undefended villages, the use of poison gas, by which thousands of innocent women and children have suffered agonising death.

Haile Selassie

I, Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, am here today to claim that justice which is due to my people.

Sylvia Pankhurst

Ethiopia, the only remaining true native Government in Africa. We shall urge, in season and out, that the facts of the Italo-Ethiopian war and the reason for League intervention be broadcast in all languages to inform all peoples thereon, and especially those of Italy where free information is denied.

Haile Selassie

There is no precedent for a Head of State himself speaking in this assembly. But there is also no precedent for a people being victim of such injustice and being at present threatened by abandonment to its aggressor. Also, there has never before been an example of any Government proceeding to the systematic

extermination of a nation by barbarous means, in violation of the most solemn promises made by the nations of the earth that there should not be used against innocent human beings the terrible poison of harmful gases. It is to defend a people struggling for its age-old independence that the head of the Ethiopian Empire has come to Geneva to fulfill this supreme duty, after having himself fought at the head of his armies.

Sylvia Pankhurst

I offer my deep sympathy to you and your country, which is also shared by millions of British citizens. My newspaper is brought out in this hour of crisis, to uphold the sovereignty of Ethiopia, the Covenant of the League of Nations and the defence of the smaller powers against aggression by the great.

Haile Selassie

It is my duty to inform the Governments assembled in Geneva, responsible as they are for the lives of millions of men, women and children, of the deadly peril, which threatens them, by describing to them the fate which has been suffered by Ethiopia.

Sylvia Pankhurst

It is also my duty to speak. No decent man or woman could narrate what they saw without reluctance, and then reveal that white people like himself did.

Haile Selassie

At the beginning, towards the end of 1935, Italian aircraft hurled upon my armies bombs of gas. Special sprayers were installed on board aircraft so that they could vaporize, over vast areas of territory, a fine, death-dealing rain. In order to kill off systematically all living

creatures, in order to more surely to poison waters and pastures, the Italian command made its aircraft pass over and over again. That was its chief method of warfare. The very refinement of barbarism consisted in carrying ravage and terror into the most densely populated parts of the territory, the points farthest removed from the scene of hostilities.

Benito Mussolini

With the glades of Rome it is the civilization that triumphs over barbarism, the justice that triumphs over cruel arbitrariness, the redemption of the wretched who triumphs over the millennial slavery. The manifold races of the ex-empire of the Lion of Judah have shown for clear signs of wanting to live and work quietly in the shadow of the Italian flag.

Sylvia Pankhurst

Talk of slavery in Abyssinia should make all honest people blush.

Benito Mussolini

Italy finally has its Empire, Fascist Empire, because it bears the indestructible signs of the will and power of the Roman Littorio, because this is the goal towards which for fourteen years the irrepressible and disciplined energies of the young, vigorous Italian generations were solicited.

Hail Selassie

Indeed the Rome Government, as it has today openly proclaimed, has never ceased to prepare for the conquest of Ethiopia. The Treaties of Friendship

it signed with me were not sincere; their only object was to hide its real intention from me. The Italian Government asserts that for 14 years it has been preparing for its present conquest. It therefore recognizes today that when it supported the admission of Ethiopia to the League of Nations in 1923, when it concluded the Treaty of Friendship in 1928, when it signed the Pact of Paris outlawing war, it was deceiving the whole world.

Sylvia Pankhurst

We know that the difficulties facing Ethiopia are grave, but we will not falter, either in faith or determination that they shall be overcome.

Hail Selassie

It is in order to denounce to the civilized world the tortures inflicted upon the Ethiopian people that I resolved to come to Geneva. None other than myself and my brave companions in arms could bring the League of Nations the undeniable proof. The appeals of my delegates addressed to the League of Nations had remained without any answer; my delegates had not been witnesses. That is why I decided to come myself to bear witness against the crime perpetrated against my people and give Europe a warning of the doom that awaits it, if it should bow before the accomplished fact.

Sylvia Pankhurst

Let us put away the hypocrisy of compelling the Abyssinians also to keep the peace, for here we have the spectacle of this small country, pleading piteously to the League to intervene and the great League of civilised powers turning a deaf ear.

Haile Selassie

The Ethiopian Government never expected other Governments to shed their soldiers' blood to defend the Covenant when their own immediately personal interests were not at stake. Ethiopian warriors asked only for means to defend themselves. On many occasions I have asked for financial assistance for the purchase of arms. That assistance has been constantly refused me. What, then, in practice, is the meaning of Article 16 of the Covenant and of collective security?

Benito Mussolini

I solemnly promised that I would do everything possible to prevent an African conflict from spreading into a European war. I have kept this commitment and more than ever I am convinced that to disturb Europe's peace means to bring down Europe. But I must immediately add that we are ready to defend our dazzling victory with the same intrepid and inexorable decision with which we have won it.

Haile Selassie

In October, 1935. the 52 nations who are listening to me today gave me an assurance that the aggressor would not triumph, that the resources of the Covenant would be employed in order to ensure the reign of right and the failure of violence. I ask the fifty-two nations not to forget today the policy upon which they embarked eight months ago, and on faith of which I directed the resistance of my people against the aggressor whom they had denounced to the world. Despite the inferiority of my weapons, the complete lack of aircraft, artillery,

munitions, hospital services, my confidence in the League was absolute. I thought it to be impossible that fifty-two nations, including the most powerful in the world, should be successfully opposed by a single aggressor. 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.

Sylvia Pankhurst

We shall set ourselves resolutely to combat fascist propaganda and, to secure the continuance and strengthening of sanctions. We shall strive to induce measures by the League to resist the Fascist usurpation, and to aid and defend Ethiopia, and will persistently urge that Britain take the responsibility of initiating an active League policy.

We shall urge that Britain shall herself individually give aid to Ethiopia.

Haile Selassie

It is collective security: it is the very existence of the League of Nations. It is the confidence that each State is to place in international treaties. It is the value of promises made to small States that their integrity and their independence shall be respected and ensured. It is the principle of the equality of States on the one hand, or otherwise the obligation laid upon small powers to accept the bonds of vassalship. In a word, it is international morality that is at stake.

Benito Mussolini

Empire of peace because Italy wants peace for itself and for all and it is decided to wage war only when it is forced by imperious, irrepressible necessities of life. Empire of civilization and humanity for all the people of Ethiopia.

Sylvia Pankhurst

Peace?? Civilization and humanity for Ethiopians? 'This isn't a war - it isn't even a slaughter - it is the torture of ten thousands of defenceless men, women and children, with bombs and poison gas. The robbery, rape and murder of the conquered people by the Italian 'master race' was callously encouraged by you, the Fascist Dictatorship in Rome.

Benito Mussolini

With the peoples of Ethiopia, peace is already a fait accompli.

Haile Selassie

At a time when my people are threatened with extermination, when the support of the League may ward off the final blow, may I be allowed to speak with complete frankness, without reticence, in all directness such as is demanded by the rule of equality as between all States Members of the League? Apart from the Kingdom of the Lord there is not on this earth any nation that is superior to any other.

Sylvia Pankhurst

Is the conscience of Europe dead?
Is there no honest thinking left in Britain? Cannot an appealing voice insisting on the Italo-Abyssinian question being taken up by the League with real determination?

Benito Mussolini

This is in the tradition of Rome, which, after winning, associated peoples with its destiny. Here is the law, or Italians, which closes a period of our history and opens another as an immense gap open to all the possibilities of the future.

Sylvia Pankhurst

We draw a profound distinction between the Italian Fascist Government and the Italian people, who are enslaved today, but whose freedom is slowly but surely being prepared by the martyrdom of thousands of heroic men and women, guardians of an inextinguishable faith: murdered, tortured, imprisoned, exiled in poverty and sorrow, they keep high and untarnished the ideal of justice.

Benito Mussolini

The territories and the people that belonged to the empire of Ethiopia are placed under the full and entire sovereignty of the Kingdom of Italy. The King of Italy and his successors assume the title of Emperor of Ethiopia.

Sylvia Pankhurst

New times and Ethiopia News is opposed to the conception of dictatorship. It understands that fascism destroys all personal liberty and it in fundamental opposition to all forms of intellectual and moral progress.

Benito Mussolini

Officers! Non-commissioned officers!
Gregarious of all the Armed Forces of the state, in Africa and in Italy! Black shirts! Italian men and women!
The Italian people created the Empire with its blood. It will fertilize it with his work and defend him against anyone with his weapons.

Sylvia Pankhurst

We who in 1918, cried "Never again", know that mothers of Italy wept for their departing sons. For my part, whatever the colour of the skin, I make no distinction between mother love, whether it be in Africa or Europe.

Benito Mussolini

In this supreme certainty, legionaries
raise your banners, your steel and
your hearts to greet, after fifteen
centuries, the reappearance of an
Empire on the fatal hills of Rome.

Haile Selassie

The Ethiopian Government sincerely
thought that an era of friendly
relations might be opened with Italy.
I loyally offered my hand to the Roman
Government.

Benito Mussolini

Will you be worthy of Italian Empire?
This cry resembles a sacred oath,
binding you before God and before men,
for life and for death!
Black shirts, legionaries,
Salute your King!

Haile Selassie

It is international morality, which is
at stake and not the Articles of the
Covenant. On behalf of the Ethiopian
people, a member of the League of
Nations, I request the Assembly to take
all measures proper to ensure respect
for the Covenant. I renew my protest
against the violations of treaties of
which the Ethiopian people has been
the victim. I declare in the face of
the whole world that the Emperor, the
Government and the people of Ethiopia
will not bow before force; that they
maintain their claims that they will
use all means in their power to ensure
the triumph of right and the respect of
the Covenant.

Sylvia Pankhurst

I assure you, with a deep sense of
responsibility that we will continue

to struggle, with all possible energy, for
the annulment of the fascist victories and
the complete vindication of the Ethiopian
cause.

Haile Selassie

I ask the fifty-two nations, who have given
the Ethiopian people a promise to help
them in their resistance to the aggressor,
what are they willing to do for Ethiopia?
And the great Powers who have promised the
guarantee of collective security to small
States on whom weighs the threat that they
may one day suffer the fate of Ethiopia.

I ask what measures do you intend to take?
Representatives of the World I have come
to Geneva to discharge in your midst the
most painful of the duties of the head of a
State. What reply shall I have to take back
to my people?

Sylvia Pankhurst

The situation is exceedingly difficult, but
I have faith that the clouds must break and
the fortunes of Ethiopia brighten. From me
will never come any mention of hauling down
the flag. It is a thing I have never done
in my life to any movement.

THE END

The *Triologue Act2* was composed using the original speeches of Benito Mussolini and Haile Selassie and extract from the first issue of New Times & Ethiopia News.

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About the author

Tatiana Letier Pinto is an architect and independent researcher based in Stockholm. After years of practice in her architecture office TAMABI in Rio de Janeiro, she engaged in research during the Master Building and Urban Design in Development at University College London. Her main research interests revolves around social inequalities, the political aspect of space and the responsibilities of architects in our society. Recently she has been granted by the Royal Institute Art (RIA), Stockholm, to map ownership in the built environment and its implication in the inclusiveness of the city of Stockholm. Her work combines architecture, art, activism, writing and public interaction.



Kungl. Konsthögskolan | Royal Institute of Art

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