

**THE IMPACT OF THE ADOWA VICTORY ON THE  
PAN-AFRICAN AND PAN-BLACK ANTI-COLONIAL  
STRUGGLE**

by

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*Ethiopian thou land of our fathers  
Thou land where the gods loved to be,  
As storm cloud at night suddenly gathers  
Our armies come rushing to thee.  
We must in the fight be victorious  
When swords are thrust outward to gleam.  
For us will the victory be glorious  
When led by the red, black and green.*

*Garvey's African National Anthem*

*The Ethiopians charging on their unbridled horses up from all sides.... With blood curdling  
scream..., a terrifying commotion... a hurricane broke loose. Cries seemed to emanate from  
the depths... it was Africa in stark black savagery.*

*Michelini in Bardi*

### **The Significance of the Adowa Victory to Blacks**

The importance of the Adowa Victory is underlined in the above two excerpts. The first one emphasises the black attitude toward Ethiopians and the second their heroism at the Battle of Adowa.

When you ignore Adowa then you overlook a crucial cogwheel of black history and an almost indispensable lubricant of the protracted decolonization struggle. The political and military underpinnings of Adowa were manifested in the evolution of the African anti-colonial struggle and the cultural and emotional history of blacks the world over. Its impact on the black diaspora as echoed in the above excerpts was for instance widespread in the African, Caribbean and US literary circles of the post-World War I period which culminated in the rise of Harlem as the cultural medina of the Black World.

But the significance of the Adowa Victory in Pan-black and Pan-African historiography is also amplified by the fact that it occurred at the time it did. Coming as it did a little over a decade after Britain sounded the first siren of a renewed colonial thrust into Africa by occupying Egypt in 1882, it was to resonate the fervor of the Arab-Egyptian nationalism of Arabia-Pasha in genuine African gusto and colors.

A paramount significance is also attached to the Adowa victory because of its inspirational value as a meaningful prelude and stimulus to a budding African anti-colonial struggle and a burgeoning Pan-African liberatory movement of ideas. Naturally, prefaced as it was by the General Act of Berlin over the scramble for Africa, signed in February of 1885, it is also venerated because it delivered a decisive body blow to the colonial myth of European invincibility. To blacks, or indeed to freedom loving peoples of all colours, this heralded the prized view that the colonial enterprise was not indomitable.

The other crowning glory of the victory of Adowa comes from the great African tradition of war it revived and immortalized. It was fought in the spirit and commitment of true anti-colonial trail-blazers such as Shaka, the Zulu of South Africa and reverberated in the mood and temper of the anti-colonial resistance began half a century earlier. The drama of genuine African fighting spirit was replayed with even greater craftsmanship by Ras Alula, the near-legendary General of Emperor Yohannes IV, without whose earlier dazzling victories the Adowa glory would scarcely have been fathomable. Seen against this backdrop, Adowa was a natural continuation of the heroic African heritage of Shaka, the Zulu of South Africa and Alula.

### **The Role of Yohannes and Alula**

The heroic achievements of Ras Alula, whom some historians have characterized as the most brilliant general in the annals of the anti-colonial struggle, include his victories over the Ottoman Egypt at Gundet on November 16, 1875, Gura 7-9 March 1876, Aylet 1 February, 1887, Sannhit 10 Oct. 1880; and against the Mahdists invaders at Kufit on 23 September 1885, at Gallabat (Metemma) 8-11 March 1889; and against colonial Italy at Sahati on 25 January, 1887, Dogali 26 January, 1887, Ambalage 7 December, 1889, Makale 7-18 January, 1896 culminating at Adowa on 1-2 March, 1896, all of which with the exception of Sahati were concluded with Ethiopian victories.

### **The Evangelical Role of Colonialists**

Fought in a country which had accepted the Christian creed long before the colonizing intruders did, it was to prove a veritable anti-thesis to the agenda of colonial evangelism with which Christian Europe tried to justify the plunder and colonization of the African continent. Indeed, while signing the General agreement of Berlin in 1885, the eleven European nations (including Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, Holland, Portugal, and Sweden and two non-European ones)- had “solemnly proclaimed” just to do that.

### **Effect of Adowa on African Americans**

There were many valid reasons which gave resonance to the Adowa victory in many parts of the world such as the Caribbean and the US. For instance, although blacks in the US were emancipated by law in 1863, social and even legal racism were a brisk reality throughout the reconstruction period which extended to 1890 and even much later in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In fact it was not until 1963 when the proud and courageous African-American woman Mrs. Rosa Parks boarded a segregated bus and took her seat in the section reserved for whites that the issue of racism received wide national attention under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King.

But even much earlier, despite the Atlantic rift which separated Africa from the Americas and the relative infrequency of travel in those days, Ethiopia, in general, and the Adowa victory, in particular, were not quixotic names of distant curiosity to the black diaspora. Ethiopian independence and the glory of the victory of a black nation over a metropolitan power was for instance invoked in the poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906) who was one of a few published blacks in the immediate Post-Adowa period. Dunbar's celebrated poem "Ode to Ethiopia" is informed with a historical memory of black glory and tragedy which Ethiopia symbolized in the immediate Post-Adowa period. He wrote:

*Oh Master race! To thee I bring  
This pledges of faith  
Unswerving  
This tribute to thy glory  
I know the pangs thou didst feel  
When slavery crushed thee with its heel  
With the dear blood all glory*

### The Message of Adowa

The Adowa victory was also seen as the epitome of African militancy, hardihood and heroism. Thus nostalgically musing over the heroic African past of resilience and "manhood," the Jamaica-born US poet, Claude McKay, had composed a militant literary master-piece called "If We Must Die" in the immediate Post-Adowa victory period.

*If we must die, O let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot.  
If we must die, let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed in vain:  
Then even the monsters we defy.  
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead.  
O Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe!  
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,  
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!*

*What though before us lies the open grave?  
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!*

The fighting spirit echoed in the gallant rhythm of Claude McKay emulated the Adowa victory, namely that brave people die once whether in defeat or glory – but all the same fighting for their pride, national worth and for the inviolability of their integrity. The self-same message is echoed in another poem by McKay entitled “To my White Friends,”<sup>5</sup> clearly evoking the heroic exploits of Adowa.

This mood was echoed even in the protest contributions of less radical poets like Countee Cullen and Jean Toomer whose poetry was imbued with a retaliatory and vindictive temper which echoed the spirit of the Adowa victory.

*Some man contemptuous of my race...  
Will strike me down for being black  
But when I answer I'll pay back  
The late revenge long overdue  
A thousand of my kind and hue.*

Writing decades later when the Italians made their vendetta comeback in 1935, the American Dean of Letters, Langston Hughes, also maintained the enduring identification and link of the black diaspora with Ethiopia in another memorable poem entitled “Broadcast over Ethiopia” which reads:

*The little fox is still.  
The dogs of war have made their kill  
Addis Ababa  
Across the headlines all year long.  
Ethiopia -  
Tragi-song for the news reels.  
Haile  
With his slaves, his dusky wiles,  
His second-hand planes like a child's  
But he has no gas—so he cannot last.  
Poor little joker with no poison gas!  
Thus his people now may learn  
How I Duce makes butter from  
An empty churn  
To butter the bread  
(If bread there be)  
Of civilization's misery.*

## **The Glorification of Ethiopia in African-American Literature Because of Adowa**

In the decades following the Adowa victory, Ethiopia was also an object of interest for the black literati who drew on its antiquated history. In the following lines taken from Count Cullen's celebrated poem “Heritage”, for instance, the poet focuses on the majesty of the

black woman who, in spite of the mockery of white folk, walks in regal dignity wearing a red hat which made her shine against the black background:

*She went to buy a brand new hat,  
And she was ugly black and fat:  
"This red becomes you well," they said,  
And perched it high upon her head,  
And they laughed behind her back  
To see it glow against the black.  
She paid for it with regal mien and  
walked out proud as any queen.*

It is interesting to observe that Cullen lends regal aura to black women in several poems in an attempt to elevate their status. This ploy is also evident in Hughes, McKay and other poets of the Renaissance inspired by Marcus Garvey's ideology, which capitalized on black beauty, and sagas like that of Adowa. For instance, Cullen was knowledgeable in black history. He knew not only of the legendary Queen of Sheba but also of modern black monarchs and dignitaries such as Toussaint L'Overture who was a governor-general, Dessalines who was an emperor and Christopher, the King of Haiti. In general, however, it is the black woman who was chosen as an appropriate regal symbol. Thus, in the lines from 'Heritage' quoted above, the African woman is described as 'regal'. Likewise the Ethiopian Queen Sheba is mentioned, in another poem called "Black Majesty", thus:

*Lo, 'I am black but comely,' Sheba sings  
'And we are black,' the shades reply, 'but Kings'*

These lines underline the black quest for ancestral heritage such as that of Queen Sheba and for sagas of full black humanity such as that of Adowa.

### **The Political Impact of Adowa on Blacks**

The political impact of the Adowa which was expressed by blacks decades after the victory is equally worthy of note. For instance, when the prominent black nationalist Marcus Garvey started his Afro-Centric "Back to Africa" Movement in 1914 in Jamaica and in 1917 in Harlem (New York) his motto of "One Aim, one God and one Destiny" for all blacks referred to an Adowa type of African liberation and the establishment of Black Supremacy.

### **Adowa Boosted Garveyism**

The colours of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) (red, black and green) were also of great symbolic significance for Africa. Red stood for the blood of the black people, black represented the skin of race, while green represented the green fields of Africa. The red blood of the universal black man, Garvey said, shall be shed to redeem the green fields of Africa for the African peoples of the world, those at home and abroad. Later,

these colors were adopted in the national flags of Kenya and Angola. Marcus Garvey also condemned European oppression, the final division of Africa of 1885 and the harsh racial discrimination of blacks in America. Garvey reminded his audiences that they had been taken away by force from their native land as captives, and founded the Black Star Line to transport his black brothers back to Africa.

Garvey had also made prophetic statements which foreshadowed the African liberation. In 1929, in Kingston, he spoke "Look to Africa for crowning of a black king. He shall be the redeemer." The following year, the Empress of Ethiopia died and Prince Ras Tafari ascended the throne, receiving the name Haile Selassie I, the Emperor of Ethiopia, the King of Kings and the 225<sup>th</sup> ruler descended from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

Later, the Jamaicans felt Garvey's prophecy had come true, and also referred to the Book of Revelation in the Bible (Chapter 19, Verse 16), which tells about the Second Coming of the Saviour. In other words, Emperor Haile Selassie became the black man's messiah, the Second Coming of God, Jah Ras Tafari. This also became the basis for the Ras Tafari movement which still uses the Ethiopian flag as its symbol. The children of God are Ethiopians, and the Rasta colors became the red, gold and green colours of the Ethiopian flag.

Largely because of the influence of Marcus Garvey, the African independence struggle was also given the backing of the black diaspora. In the United States, Afro-Americans, like the black poet Langston Hughes had begun to chant of Africa and its great heroes:

*Africa,  
Sleepy giant,  
You've been resting awhile.  
Now I see the thunder  
And I see the lightning  
In your smile.*

The sentiment among the true Garveyites was even stronger as expressed in the "African National Anthem" quoted in part in the opening page of this chapter.

*Ethiopia, the tyrant's falling,  
Who smote thee upon thy knees,  
And the children are lustily calling  
From over the distant seas.  
Jehovah, the Great One has heard us,  
Has noted our sighs and our tears,  
With His Spirit of Love has stirred us  
To be one through the coming years.*

The Garveyite view of black "valour" is also unmistakable in the following lines:

*Think you I am not fiend and savage too?  
Think you I could not arm me with a gun  
And shoot down ten of you for every one  
Of my black brothers murdered, burnt by you?  
Be not deceived, for every deed you do  
I could match-out-match: am I not Africa's son  
Black of that black land where black deeds are done?*

## The Effect of Militancy on Whites

The militant black assertiveness inspired by Shaka, Alula, Garvey and other black heroes did not pass without producing the desired reaction among well-meaning and critical whites either. For instance, Oswald Spengler has succinctly summed up the typical widespread white reaction of the period stating:

*Once they feared the white man; now they despise him. Our judgement stands written in their eyes... Once they were filled with terror at our power... Today, when they are themselves a power, their mysterious soul - which we shall never understand - rises up and looks down upon the whites as on a thing of yesterday ... At this point advancing history towers high over economic distress and internal political ideals. The elemental forces of life are themselves entering the fight, which is for all or nothing.*

As can be discerned from the verses quoted earlier, the ripples of the Garveyite mammoth project had also inspired blacks of all walks of life including the budding black literati who strongly echoed the defiant mood of the period through their pen which served as a cultural sword.

Interestingly enough, too, in much the same way as Garvey became a fountain of black inspiration to the black literati of the Harlem Renaissance, he himself was also greatly shaped by sagas of black heroic encounter with whites as the one consummated at Adowa. One consequence of the above was the resoluteness of the literary disciples of Harlem. For instance, McKay was convinced that the struggle for the liberation of the race ought to continue at the same tempo as the hatred felt by the oppressed. The black struggle was thus symbolized by a hot furnace in which one flame confronts another, equally hostile and antithetical one. This was also the central message of the poems 'Baptism' in which hatred instigated by hatred acquires a regenerative force and of other poems such as "The White City."

*Into the furnace let me go alone;  
Stay you without in terror of the heat.  
I will go naked in—for thus it is sweet -  
Into the weird depths of the hottest zone.  
I will not quiver in the frailest bone,*

*You will not note a flicker of defeat.*

In the poem 'The White City', he refers to the black man as a skeleton, a shell who resides in the hell of a white city which is projected as an inferno:

*I will not toy with it nor bend an inch.  
Deep in the secret chambers of my heart*

*I must my life-long hate, and without flinch  
I bear it nobly as I live my part.  
My being would be a skeleton, a shell,  
If this dark Passion that fills my every mood,  
And makes my heaven in the white world's hell,  
Did not forever feed me vital blood.*

The same determination to fight is expressed in the following lines:

*... as a rebel fronts a king in state,  
I stand within her walls with out a shred of terror.*

McKay does not speak only on behalf of those blacks of his generation but also on those who died in the chains of slavery and serfdom. The time had come to avenge them, even if that meant more sacrifice:

*... I am bound with you in your mean graves,  
Oh black men, simple slaves of ruthless slaves.*

### The Significance of the Mettema Victory

Despite the passing away of Yohannes, one positive consequence of his victory over the Mahdist was that it played a decisive role by humiliating the invaders whose interference in the wake of the Adowa Battle could have caused great damage by weakening Ethiopia's capacity to resist the Italian aggression. Thus, as Getachew Mekasha quite rightly observes in a recent article, Emperor Minilik was "particularly luckily to come after his illustrious immediate predecessors, Emperor Tewodros and Emperor Yohannes IV, who prepared the ground work for him." Further, as he rightly adds, "Ethiopia, though a powerful state in ancient and medieval times, was weakened by the era of the Mesafint or the baronial period."

Similarly, after Massawa was bought by an Italian company from Egypt and openly taken over by the Italian government in 1871, the South-ward thrust of the Italian army was brought to a speedy halt by Yohannes' brave general, Ras Alula, at Dogali in 1887. Yohannes had also tried to recover Saati in 1889, but he had to postpone the plan to attend to more pressing threat of the Mahdist invasion of Gondar. Not surprisingly,

therefore, when Emperor Minilik was proclaimed Emperor after the death of Yohannes in 1889, ironically but not surprisingly, it was the Italians who first greeted him as an ally. But the Italians sigh of relief on the death of Yohannes was destined not to endure.

The aim of the Italian connivance was to unveil itself more subtly in the Wuchale Treaty of November 1884 through which Italy tried to turn Ethiopia into a protectorate. But emperor Minilik, who was no less jealous about Ethiopia's sovereignty than his predecessor, denounced the whole treaty in September 1893 telling the European powers that he did not need a protector. That effectively set the scene for the Battle of Adowa in which Ethiopia under Minilik and great generals like Alula gave the Italians a lesson which they were not to forget until their vendetta return of 1935.

### Other Factors which Underline the Adowa Victory

What lent greater significance to the Battle of Adowa was not so much the immediate glamour of the victory itself as the larger historical context in which the drama was played. Thus as we observed in earlier allusion, the Battle of Adowa was a continuation of protracted colonial quest by foreign powers including the Ottomans, Egyptians and Europeans.

Adowa was also the venue of the signing of the Adowa or (Hiwett) Treaty, a tripartite agreement signed between the Ethiopian Emperor Yohannes IV, Queen Victoria and Khedive Tewfiq of Egypt which was still under British rule.

Under this agreement, the Ethiopian army under the command of Ras Alula had advanced into the Sudan and rescued the British garrisons and other besieged people virtually paving the death trial of Yohannes by igniting a legacy of a wrath of hostility in the Mahdists which, despite his victory over them, was to cost him his life.

The Adowa victory looms even greater than life viewed in the context of the colonial drama of the scramble for Africa. Particularly worthy of note in this context is that Britain is as much to blame, if not more, for the Battle of Adowa as the Italians are for two reasons. First, because Britain committed a serious breach of faith by not respecting the Adowa or Hiwett Treaty which was to be honored by the "heirs and successors" of the signatories but which barely lasted a year. But in some measure the betrayal of the British was matched by the gullibility of Emperor Yohannes who despite many signals of bad faith by the British was most reluctant not to count on their help. Thus emperor Yohannes was constrained by two factors – lack of a follow-up of his victories largely due to logistic constraints and secondly due to misplaced confidence in the British. Bahru Zewde confirms this view below:

*Starting the second factor appears to have been Yohannes's exaggerated respect for the British. This had been the case from the days of the Napier expedition when Yohannes, then Bezbiz Kassa, came out with the arms that assured him the throne. Hence the series of letters that he addressed to Queen Victoria complaining about first Egyptian, then Italian encroachment. It took him over a decade to realize the perfidious role of the British. After the Italians had occupied Massawa with the connivance of the British, he wrote to Minilik a bitter letter complaining that "this is all the work of the English". Even this, compared to the vehement language that he reserved for the Italians, was an expression more of despair than of anger.*

The Adowa or Hiwett Treaty was destined to be still-born in intent and spirit because the British right from the outset were keen on whetting the colonial ambition of the budding Italian state which was consolidated some 15 years earlier in a bid to halt French colonial expansion in the Red sea and Indian ocean areas. A. B. Wilde, a British vice consul for Red Sea area at the time, has summed the connivance of the British stating "look at our behavior from any point of view, it will not show one ray of honesty... England made use of king (Emperor) Yohannes for as long he was of any service and then threw him to the tender mercies of Italy who went to Massawa under our auspices." He went on "this fact is not known to the British public, I wish it was not true for our credit's sake, but unfortunately it is; and it reads like one of the vilest bits of treachery that has been perpetrated in Africa or India in the 18<sup>th</sup> century."

A.B. Wilde's brutally candid statement may have a somewhat redeeming effect on the British colonial conscience, but what makes it even more significant is that it elevates the encounter with colonialism at Adowa to a much higher plane in African and colonial historiography.

### **Factors which Contributed to the Battle of Adowa**

At the heart of the above dilemma was the basic flaw of the racist ideology of colonialism which was predicated on the inferiorization and denigration of all non-white peoples. This basic tenet of the colonial enterprise which turned out to be its Achilles heel was also manifest in the Ethio-Egyptian and Ethio-Italian confrontations of the 1880s and 1890s. A number of events in Ethiopian history bear this out. Sven Rubenson has noted, while the "reasons for the failure may include any or all of the following elements: political instability in Italy, insufficient financial resources or popular support for the colonial venture, international intrigue against Italy, the vacillation between a 'Shoan policy' (the protectorate) and 'Tigrean policy' (more territory in the north), quarrels between Italian Officers, Crispi's personality and Baratieri's generalship, or lack of it, etc.- all this is important, but does not go the heart of the matter. It must be assumed, after all, that Italy's leaders at the time were not unaware of their own problems. It was, in spite of the limitations and contradictions, that they pursued their policies. When they achieved so

much less than they had planned and expected in their relations with Ethiopia, the main reason was the same kind of underestimation as Khedive Ismail and his advisers had indulged in before them."

### The immediate Causes of the Battle of Adowa

As noted above the immediate cause of the Battle of Adowa was the disparaging view about Africans in general and Ethiopians in this case. And as rightly noted by Rubenson "this underestimation affected all aspects of the struggle. In the field of international relations, Minilik was not supposed to understand that Ethiopia's independence was at stake if he accepted the Italian version of Article XVII. If he did understand, he was not supposed to protest. If he did protest, he was not supposed to sustain his protest when those who made international law told him that it was too late, that no one had the right to listen to him any longer. That the Ethiopians had established an international recognition and gained diplomatic experience before Italy entered the scene was overlooked simply because it was convenient to do so." At the heart of this was the view that African's were incapable of thinking.

While underestimation typified the colonial enterprise, nevertheless, the ploy of divide and control cannot be underestimated. Thus the interplay between external intervention and internal division, which belong to the political engineering colonialism had to some extent played had a pivotal role in the whole sordid affair. The way the Italians exploited the differences between Emperor Yohannes and King Minilik is for instance most revealing as noted below:

*The coming of the Italians opened for Minilik a new opportunity to fortify his position and work patiently and assiduously for the throne. It was a case of reciprocal need. Minilik sought a steady supplier of arms. The Italians (particularly after 1887) were desperate for an internal ally against the Emperor. Thus, as in the case of Tekle-haymanot and the Mahadists, we see the interconnection between the external and the internal. Yohannes's early call for a common front against the Italians was not attractive to Minilik. On the other hand, he was careful not to commit himself fully and openly on the side of the Italians and he kept them in suspense as to his final intentions. The role of mediator that he briefly assumed after Dogali therefore fitted in very well with his strategy. Until, that is, Yohannes devastated Gojjam in the summer of 1888 and stood poised to inflict the same fate on Shoa. Then, Minilik threw all caution to the winds and openly declared his alliance with the Italians.*

Viewed against this backdrop, although the primary cause of the Battle of Adowa was imperialist expansionism its other less pardonable factor was domestic conspiracy. Although Minilik did play an admirable role in mobilizing Ethiopians against a foreign aggressor, his achievement is diluted by the connivance with which he prevented Yohannes from just doing that. This was to advance his own drive to the Ethiopian throne which

Yohannes held until his death in 1889. Thus, Minilik ended up solving a problem which he helped create and snowball but which Yohannes could have solved earlier with minimal cooperation from him. Even so, Minilik's victory would have scarcely been assured without Yohannes' work which prepared the ground for him. This view is confirmed by Bahru Zewde who observes:

*Minilik, of course, drew much benefit from his friendship with the Italians. Paradoxical as it may sound, the Adowa victory would have been inconceivable without the arms that this friendship secured for him. Ultimately, but not altogether surprisingly, as it became a matter of his own political survival, Minilik turned against the Italians. While one is forced to admire the political astuteness with which he played the whole game and his success in leading a untied Ethiopia at Adowa, one has to come to the inescapable conclusion that he inherited a problem which his harassed predecessor might have managed to solve had Minilik not contributed to making life too hard for him.*

#### Factors Behind Minilik Success

Minilik thus owed his victory to the earlier victories Emperor Yohannes and Ras Alula had achieved earning Ethiopia a place of honor in anti-colonial historiography. But equally importantly he owed it to "the successors of Yohannes," notably the Tigrean general, Ras Alula and "other Tigrean aristocrats" who could have been expected to do what Minilik did to Yohannes but did not. Sven Rubenson has developed this theme further stating:

*At the crucial moment, Minilik commanded the loyalty of every important chief in the country. Old enemies or rivals such as Ras Mikael of Wello and Nigus Tekelehaymanote of Gojjam were present at Adowa, together with Mekonnen (who might have excused himself with the problem of the security of Harer) and the great men of the north. In fact, the two most important Tigrean allies of the Italians, Ras Sibhat and Dejjazmach Hagos Teferi, defected to the Ethiopian side with 600 men only two weeks before the Battle of Adowa. There were even reports that Eritrean 'bashi-bazouks' refused to enter the battle with the excuse that 'though we eat their money, we will not fight our country and our king.'*

It is also worthy of note that Baratieri was later to describe the defection of the Tigreans disparagingly as 'a semblance of the idea of nationhood in the guise of hatred against the whites.'

Indeed, as Rubenson hastens to add, it is not necessary to prove here that this idea or feeling was either widespread or conceived in the terms of nineteenth-century European nationalism. The important fact is, however, that it existed and might well have turned the rank and file against any chief who had decided to collaborate with the Italians in a decisive moment. The removal of Minilik would not have solved the problem. Behind the leaders was this feeling of attachment to the 'country and king.'

#### The Lessons of the Adowa Victory

The upshot of Adowa taught imperialist Europe in general and Italy in particular that they had grossly underestimated the cohesiveness of the Ethiopians and their fond affection for freedom and sovereignty. Viewed in this context Ethiopia, through its long string of victories which culminated in the Adowa victory, had served as the anti-thesis of colonialism and the colonial enterprise and a true trail-blazer of the global de-colonization struggle.