

Italian aggression in abyssinia

[People](#), [Adolf Hitler](#)



Background: Benito Mussolini was the dictator of Italy. He wanted to increase Italian influence in Abyssinia (today's Ethiopia). Long before Mussolini came to power, Italy had tried to take over Abyssinia in 1896 and had suffered an embarrassing defeat. Mussolini wanted revenge for this defeat. He also wanted the natural resources of Abyssinia. Mussolini dreamed of building a big empire for Italy that would be like the ancient Roman Empire.

The attack: In 1934, Mussolini made plans to invade Abyssinia. The Emperor of Abyssinia, Haile Selassie, asked the League of Nations for help.

Between January and October 1935, Mussolini held talks with the League about avoiding a war in Abyssinia. However, he continued to prepare his army for an invasion of Abyssinia.

In October 1935, Mussolini began a full-scale invasion of Abyssinia. The Italian Army had an advantage because it was more modern than the Abyssinian Army. The Italians had guns and planes, while the Abyssinians had spears and bows.

What the League did: The League held a meeting to discuss the crisis in Abyssinia.

The League's members had a long debate before deciding that they would stop selling their goods to Italy. However these goods only included rubber and metal. The League took a longer time to decide if it should ban the export of oil to Italy.

The League had another way of stopping the war. The fastest way for Italy to send Italian troops and supplies to Abyssinia was by ship and these ships had

to pass through the Suez Canal to get to there. The Suez Canal was under British control, so the British could have blocked the Italian ships that were on their way to Abyssinia. However, they did not do this as they thought it would lead to war with Italy.

British Foreign Minister Samuel Hoare and French Foreign Minister Pierre Laval held secret talks with Mussolini. They wanted to avoid a war, so they were willing to give Mussolini two-thirds of Abyssinia if he withdrew his troops. Britain and France called it the Hoare-Laval Plan.

News of these talks was leaked by the French press. People in Britain and France were angry that their governments had not stopped the Italian invasion. They forced their governments to drop their plan to give Italy control of Abyssinia. The fighting in Abyssinia continued, so Mussolini turned to Hitler for help. Italy completed its takeover of Abyssinia in May 1936.

The Munich Agreement Chamberlain went to Germany three times in September 1938 to ask Hitler not to start a war in Europe.

At the first meeting on 15 September, Hitler said that he only wanted those parts of the Sudetenland where there were many Germans and only if they voted to join Germany. Chamberlain felt that Hitler's request was reasonable. On 19 September, the British and the French informed the Czechs of the outcome of the meeting and that it was agreed to let Hitler have certain parts of the Sudetenland. At the second meeting on 22 September, Hitler said that he wanted all of the Sudetenland. He said the Czech government was ill-treating the Germans living there. It looked as if Hitler was ready to go to war at any moment. The British Army was mobilized

but Chamberlain was still determined to avoid war. He wanted a third meeting.

The third meeting, arranged by Mussolini, was held in Munich, Germany on 29 September. Representatives from Britain, France, Italy and Germany attended the meeting, which was called the Munich Conference.

Czechoslovakia and the USSR were not invited.

Britain and France said that they would not stop Germany from taking the Sudetenland. In exchange, Germany promised Britain and France that it would not take any more land in Europe. Chamberlain returned to Britain a very happy man. He had prevented war from breaking out. He said that the Munich Agreement had brought about 'peace for our time.'

From 1939 to 1941, Hitler and his allies won many battles. They conquered most of Europe, except Britain. In 1941, Hitler turned East and invaded the USSR. The harsh winter and strong Russian defence forced the Germans to retreat by December 1942. By early 1944, the Soviet Army began to regain most of the land that it had lost. It also liberated the East European countries and the Balkans from the control of German troops. By 1945, it began to move towards Berlin.

In the Battle of El Alamein, the Allied powers won and drove the combined forces of the Germans and Italians out of North Africa. They soon moved into Italy through the island of Sicily on 10 July 1943, with the Italian capital of Rome falling to the Allies on 4 June 1944.

On 6 June 1944, a multinational force of British, American, Canadian and other Allied soldiers landed on the beaches of Normandy in Northern France.

These amphibious landings became known as the D-Day landings. In August the same year, Paris was freed from Nazi rule. Soviet troops were advancing rapidly into the German capital of Berlin from the East, while the combined British and American forces moved in from the West. On 30 April 1945, Adolf Hitler committed suicide so that he would not be captured by British, American or Russian troops. On 7 May 1945, Germany's armies surrendered. The war in Europe was over.