



Benito Mussolini and the invasion of Abyssinia

Benito Mussolini came to power in Italy in 1922, promising the Italian people glory and greatness. He intended to create a new Roman Empire. He invested large amounts of money in the army. By the mid-1930s, he needed some military victories to prove Italy's greatness to its people and to the rest of the world.

Ruled by Emperor Haile Selassie, Abyssinia (Ethiopia today) was between the two small Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland. Its lands were fertile and rich in mineral wealth. These were two reasons why Italian troops attempted an invasion in 1896 which failed.



Abyssinia was a member of the League of Nations. This was a worldwide organisation created after World War I to maintain peace by solving international disputes without resorting to war. Britain, France, and Italy were members of the League, but the USA was not a member. If a member was attacked by another country, the League was supposed to come to its aid, but in fact the League lacked the strength needed to back this up.

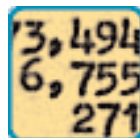
Throughout the summer of 1935, Mussolini amassed troops on the Abyssinian border. In October 1935, he launched a full invasion. Haile Selassie appealed to the League for help. However, League intervention was slow and, when it did occur, was half-hearted and ineffective. Mussolini conquered Abyssinia, creating an Italian East African Empire. This also delivered a fatal blow to the League of Nations.

Was Mussolini an Italian hero, leading his people to glory? Or was he an international bully, attacking a weak nation, defying international law and endangering world peace?

Find out more from the original sources in these case studies:



Why did Mussolini invade Abyssinia?



Was the Abyssinian campaign a great victory for Italy?



Was the League of Nations a villain in the crisis?