

Appendix 19. The Rubicon was crossed

1) What is the Rubicon?

It is a stream near Rimini, Italy.

2) What is significant about the stream that crossing it is so well known?

Neither crossing the Rubicon nor the people who cross it is necessarily significant. Julius Caesar made it significant by saying "the die is cast" and by ceremoniously crossing the Rubicon as a symbol of defiance to the orders of the ruler of Rome, Pompey, and the Roman government. They had ordered Julius to return to Rome by disbanding his army, as he returned from defeating Gaul. As Julius Caesar marched to Rome, Pompey fled. Eventually the Senate elected Julius dictator for life in 49 BC. In 44 BC Senator Brutus stabbed Julius, the benevolent duce (leader) to death (Kubly and Ross, 1961).

3) Why would the defiance of a dictator become the cry that so many revere?

Julius Caesar was no simple dictator. He felt that he was a descendent of Jupiter. He studied and practiced law, and even was a Pontus Maximus (interpreter of the messages of the Gods) of Rome before marching as the general to subjugate Gaul (France). He always shared his exploits to the plebeians (landless Romans), who assembled in the Roman central town of activity (the Forum) as he marched along the Via Sacra (the sacred street of the Forum). He was well liked by the plebeians, though less so by the patricians (rich Romans including senators) of Republican Rome. He had a sense that he was going to reform the republic and make it more responsive to the

needs of the plebeians. He was a determined dictator, who was also known for the tersest dispatch to Rome the phrase "I came, I saw, I conquered" to describe his quelling effort in Asia Minor. Julius Caesar adopted a calendar, which bears his name Julian calendar, one that pays more attention to the heavens than to the earth, and one that is used in the Ethiopian calendar uses this day. To this day, every March on the date at which Julius was stabbed to death, Italians march to the structure that was erected by his successor Octavian Caesar (the grand-nephew and adopted son of Julius), who was named Augustus ("the increasing god"). Augustus Caesar was the first emperor of Rome, who built a structure at the place where Julius Caesar's body was cremated, a structure which survives to this day.

4) What does the phrase "the Rubicon is crossed" mean? It means that a significant effort has been undertaken and there is no possibility of returning to the old ways.

In the case of Julius, he used it to assert that he would not disband his army when he entered Rome. Historically, his crossing of the Rubicon changed the republican system of Roman governance. Since they freed themselves from rule of Etruscans by overthrowing the Etruscan king in 509 BC, the government of the Romans was a republic in which the rich had more say than plebeians, who had some form of representation by contributing to the selection of senators. After the death of Julius Caesar, emperors ruled the Romans.

Italy, which means calf-land in one of the tribal languages that predated the immigration of Etruscans from Asia Minor (800 to 200 BC), was a republic up to 49 BC. It was

Napoleon (1796 -1815), who first used the name Italy as the name of state of the peninsula south of the Alps. At any rate, in short 5 years, 49-44 BC, Julius changed the governance by making dictatorship palatable. His successor Augustus ruled for 42 years and seriously eroded the role of senators, by merely giving them lip service. Augustus unseated Mark Anthony and Cleopatra from Egypt, and Ethiopia benefited from Roman governance over Egypt. Tiberius succeeded Augustus, and was the emperor when Jesus was crucified in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. In AD 70, Titus sacked Jerusalem and the Jewish Diaspora began. Perhaps some Jews immigrated to Ethiopia then. An arch of triumph showing the exploits of Titus was erected by his brother (and succeeding emperor of Rome) across the sacred street (Via Sacra) in the Roman Forum.

The Crucifixion of Jesus, and his resurrection (Risorgimento) has an even more profound effect than the mere crossing of the Rubicon. The Roman Empire had become too vast, and barbarians (Visigoths and Ostrogoths) from the north and others from the south (Vandals) were attacking it. Christians with their organization that included the use of underground catacombs were a serious challenge to traditional Roman rule. In the second half of the second century, Emperor Diocletian divided the empire into west and east, as a way of protecting Rome. Diocletian was also the last great Roman emperor to persecute Christians. Constantine, the weakest of four successors of Diocletian, placed the Cross on his soldiers' shields and defeated his enemies in AD 312. He declared Christianity as the religion of state, and made his city in Turkey, Constantinople. In short Order, Emperor Ezana of Ethiopia

also declared Christianity as state religion. Ezana was the first ever to place the Cross on his coinage. **Emperor Constantine's declaration of Christianity was another form of crossing the Rubicon.** Jesus took over the western world instead of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire essentially disintegrated for a variety of reasons decades after the death of Constantine. In AD 550, Emperor Justinian of Constantinople briefly stitched the old Roman Empire under his reign, though that effort did not outlast him. Emperor Justinian corresponded with Emperor Kaleb of Ethiopia, which resulted in Ethiopia marching to Yemen and stopping the persecution of Christians by Jewish rulers. Justinian's ambassador to Ethiopia gave an account of the richly adorned Emperor Kaleb that received salutations from his subject as he drove on elephant drawn chariot.

For about 1500 years, different governors and countries divided Italy into smaller city-states each ruled. Italy was in AD 1870, when finally even the Papal State was defeated and the Risorgimento (the resurrection of Italy, which Napoleon stitched together) was achieved. The different states of Italy, Piedmont, Lombardy, Venetia, Tuscany, Naples, Sardinia, etc. had made significant achievements as city-states. The renaissance (AD 1400-1527) saw a furious effort and superlative achievements by such geniuses as Michelangelo and Leonardo de Vinci, to mention only two among the many. Florence led the way as the Medici family nurtured such effort and learned Greeks emigrated to the west from Constantinople when that city was taken over by Muslims in AD 1450. Four hundred years before the renaissance period, in AD 10th century, the merchants of Venice had actually moved the remains of St. Mark from Egypt to Venice, and a huge Church of St Mark was built

in the 11th century, which forms one side of St. Mark Square, a famous landmark of Venice. Of course, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church belongs to the house of St. Mark, and to the adherent, seeing the remains of St Mark in a glass container at St. Marks Basilica in Venice ought to evoke quite a religious experience. Equally, seeing the Chains of St. Peter at St. Peter's Chain building in Rome, in which the sculpture of Mosses by Michelangelo is also housed, is quite a religious experience. That experience is surpassed by St. Peter's Church in the Vatican, which was constructed according to a plan by Michelangelo to replace the previous church constructed by Emperor Constantine over the burial ground of St Peter. The magnificence of St. Peter's Church, and the annex, the Vatican Museum, so richly decorated by sculptures and paintings by great artists such as Michelangelo (with the pieta sculpture and the fresco in Sistine Chapel) and by Bernine to mention only two of the geniuses who had worked on the church, would satisfy any admirer of art, and even any religious person who is impressed by artistry. The effeminate Leonardo de Vinci was not invited to contribute to the work on St. Peter's Church. However, his outstanding painting, the Last Supper on the mural in Milan, could not be moved to France by Napoleon, and it also luckily survived the bombing in the Second World War. The Gothic cathedral, the Duomo in Milan has innumerable spires carefully sculpted out of marble and is decorated by sculptures. It has tainted windows richly bedizened with scriptural drawings. It took 600 years to complete the cathedral. The magnificence of the Milan Duomo is to be contrasted with the humongous structure at the Milan train station built by Mussolini, before he was shot in a nearby lake, Como, and his corpse

hanged in a gas station in Milan, in accordance with Italian operatic treatment of dead heroes.

We shall revisit Mussolini below, but first the construction of modern Italy, which was inspired by democratic movement in 1840s across Europe, is to be mentioned. It took, the contribution of 3 significant individuals, Camilo Cavour, a diplomat who worked with the French, a firebrand visionary Giuseppe Mazzini who fanned the flames of resurrection to students and idealists, and the military action by Giuseppi Garibaldi, who helped defeat Austrians in the north before subjugating the south and delivering it as a nation to be ruled by the former King of Sardinia and the Piedmont, Vittorio Emmanuelle. King Vittorio used to correspond with Emperor Yohannes IV of Ethiopia, and Negus Menelik used to speak of him as "my brother". Before Vittorio died from malaria in 1878, he asserted that "Italy must not only be respected she must also make herself feared". Vittorio's successor, Umberto I expanded the desire for foolish prestige even further. "It was under the iron rule and the proud and pathologically sensitive Sicilian premier, Francisco Crispi, that Italy foolishly started a tariff war with France, which bankrupted its economy. Undaunted Crispi decided that only the conquest of Ethiopia would free Italy from its imprisonment in the Mediterranean, fulfill it 'mission ' in Africa and, incidentally, detract attention from the corrupt nature of his reign. A badly managed military campaign resulted in a humiliating defeat at Adwa in 1896" (Kubly and Ross, 1961, p. 45. ". The tariff wars between Italy and France would explain why the French Counsel in Massawa was constantly informing Emperor Yohannes of the activities of Britain and Italy. This was done despite the

fact that Yohannes IV evicted French Catholics from the Bogos. Later, the French sold better canons to Menelik, supplied military trainers and disseminated the Ethiopian side of the war throughout Europe.

Born in Romagna, his blacksmith socialist father named him after a Mexican revolutionary Benito Juarez. By 1912, at the age of 28 Benito Mussolini had scored a roaring oratorical success shouting in favor of class revolution. That clown would cross the proverbial Rubicon and change his cry in favor of a non-socialist and anti-democratic movement called fascism. He wanted to be the duce (leader) comparable to Caesar. Initially, students, idealists, and unemployed malcontents were his followers. But that would change, and even the pope, Pius XI, would praise him as "the man sent us by providence". His exploits, notably the conquest of Ethiopia, would be exalted by the king of Italy as "the greatest colonial war ever recorded in history" (Kubly and Ross, 1961). The greatness of Ethiopia was not lost to King Umberto I of Italy when he made this remark, though Ethiopia was not completely defeated as her warriors were waging guerilla warfare thought the four years of occupation by Italy.

Nonetheless, Ethiopia has been defiled by that occupation. Firstly, a ploy enunciated in one of President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points Principles, namely the right to self determination, which was used to disassemble the Hungaro-Austrian empire in the First World War, was reportedly used by Nazis and fascists for dividing Ethiopian into homelands of language groups. History has recorded that while President Wilson used his principles to give additional lands to Italy (Trieste and some 9000 square

miles of territory from Hungary-Austria- Kubly and Ross, 1961, p.47), he never used "the principle of self determination" to ask Italy to surrender its colony of Eritrea. Astonishingly, an Austrian consul who was expelled from Ethiopia in 1934, was, according to Aleme Eshete (2003) the first to propose the use of "self determination" as a means of dismembering Ethiopia into gossa homelands, and that his 1935 book, "Abyssinia the Powder Barrel" was translated into major European languages including Italian. Fascist Italians invaded Ethiopia and implemented the divisive ploy of "self determination". Many years after the defeat of Fascist Italy, Ethiopian cadre politicians and the regime in Addis Ababa (from 1991 to 2005) had implemented "self determination" for dismembering Ethiopia into Eritrea, and FDRE, and for dividing the landlocked FDRE into language-based or "gossa" homelands. Secondly, Ethiopian artifacts, literary and historical books, and documents which survived the burning of churches by Ahmed Gragn in the 16th century and the ransacking of Ethiopia's capital by the British conquest under Napier in the 19th century, were looted. Thirdly, since the British, to whom the Italians in Ethiopia wished to surrender, entered the Ethiopian capital city before the Ethiopian emperor did, the British ransacked Ethiopia again. An eyewitness account of the action of the British is given below.

"However, our goodwill toward the British was sadly negated by their actions when Ethiopian warriors marched to Addis Ababa and hoisted the Ethiopian flag and began to assert their rights immediately after the British advance. On one hand the British instigated fights on the pretext that Ethiopians should not enter in the same coffee houses with

them; on the other hand they looted all factories and industries built by the Italians and we saw them tear down whatever structures they could not take. Since their fundamental aim was to weaken Ethiopia and govern it, the British rapidly gathered armaments that were in the hands of Italians, and collected war implements that were stashed in stores so that none of these may fall in the hands of Ethiopians. Yet, because the war situation did not permit them to transport the materials to their land, the British transported the goods in lorries and threw them in the lakes at Abba Samuel and Bishoftu, actions that we will not forget for they happened so recently." - translated from an Amharic book by Tekle Tsadiq Mekuria in Tewedros, 1981 ethi, P. 477- 478)

Clearly, Ethiopia has paid and continues to pay dearly for its independence and for defeating a European power at the Battle of Adwa in 1896. More than any nation on earth, Ethiopians know that freedom is never free. The blood of its warriors wins freedom. We will come back to recent actions of Ethiopians. But first, we return to examine the background of Mussolini's ascent to power in Italy and perform heinous crimes for which he and his wife were shot and their corpses hanged upside down.

Two years after demonstrating his oratorical prowess as a socialist, Mussolini established his fascist movement in 1914. Six years later, a gathering threat to freedom ascended to prominence when Mussolini promised solution to problems that the democratic Italian government could not produce a satisfactory solution. The nationwide railroad and postal worker strikes of 1920-21, and the inability of Italians to immigrate in large numbers to America because

the US immigration law of 1921 cut Italy's quota drastically, resulted in large numbers of unemployed or underemployed Italians. People along with bankers and industrial leaders were in search of solutions, and some of them yearned for the emergence of a powerful leader. Mussolini and his black-shirt cohorts began to capture the Italian imagination. By allying with respectable parties the fascist took 35 parliamentary seats in 1921. At the age of 39, Mussolini became the youngest premier in Italian history. Soon, he maneuvered to take control of the parliament by persuading the members to pass a law (Acerbo law), which gave automatic parliamentary majority and 2/3 of the deputy for the party winning the largest number of votes in national election. Fascists had 65% of the vote. Il duce (the leader) Mussolini formally became a dictator in 1925. He tried to resolve the problems of Italy. The 1929 Lateran Treaty with the Pope gave the Pope complete authority over the newly independent Vatican State and resolved the lingering papal non-recognition of Italian unity that was forged in 1870. However, internal conditions, particularly overpopulation became an insurmountable problem and he looked for exploits outside of Italy's borders. "He had been planning for years to invade Ethiopia, and although English and French diplomats secretly offered to give him a part of the country, he insisted on conquering it militarily" (Kubly and Ross, 1961,p.48). Despite the assertion by Kubly and Ross (1961), neither the English nor the French diplomats have any rights or abilities to give away any part of Ethiopia. A so-called Anglo-Italian agreement to accord Italy a sphere of economic influence in western Ethiopia in return for Italy providing diplomatic support for a British plan to cause Ethiopia to build a dam in Lake Tana with a

view of regulating the waters for irrigation in Egypt and the Sudan was protested by Ethiopia in the League of Nations. The exposure of that shameful act had strained relations between the parties. At any rate, Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in October 1935 (Meskerem 22, 1928- Getatchew Haile, 2000) from Eritrea and later from Somalia. Marshal Pietro Badoglio entered Addis Ababa on May 5. However, resistance movements against foreign occupation continued first in the west under Ras Imru, and then under Ras Abebe Aragaye in Gojam and Shewa, among other patriots. Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, "the butcher of Libya", replaced Badoglio, and an attempt to kill him in 1937 was followed by a long, cruel, and inhuman repression ["yekatit 12,1929, be Graziani lay bomb seletawarwara sefir kuTr yeletatchew ityopiyaweyan beTyet besanja bakafa tetchefechefu"- Getatchew Haile, 2000]. In November 1937, Amedeo succeeded Graziani as viceroy. Yet, the resistance continued mainly in northern Shewa. The League of Nations had imposed token sanctions on Italy as a way of opposing the invasion of Ethiopia. Apparently, European refusal to recognize Italy's new empire pushed Mussolini to be an ally to Hitler.

Meanwhile, in 1939, Mussolini and Hitler supported General Francisco Franco of Spain in a civil war that continued for years and drained Italy's military strength. However, Hitler was able to invade Czechoslovakia, and in 1939, he attacked Poland, which started World War II. As a show of his strength, Mussolini attacked Greece only for the Italian invaders to retreat. German troops had to rescue the Italians in Africa and the Balkans. Eventually, Germany had to occupy part of Italy. The Italian resentment of Mussolini's governance led the Grand

Council of Fascism to pass a vote of no confidence in Mussolini in July 1943, a month after the Allies invaded Sicily. [In a round about way, one is reminded of the manipulations of Themistocles who increased the defenses of Athens and who fought valiantly against invasions of Athens by Persians firstly under Darius in 490 BC then under Xerxes in 480 BC, but who was eventually ostracized by Greeks at the end of his efforts.] The king placed Mussolini under arrest, and appointed Marshal Pietro Badoglio, the general who earlier led the invasion of Ethiopia, as premier. The Italian government, luckily for Italy, signed an armistice with the allies. The Germans who had a firm grip of Italy north of Naples sent paratroopers and retrieved Mussolini from prison and made him head of a "Republican-Fascist" government. However, after Italy formally joined the Allies to fight against the Germans in April 1944, partisans captured Mussolini and his mistress near Lake Como, shot them dead and hanged their bodies upside down in a gas station in Milan. The Allies bombed Northern Italy, particularly Milan, while the rest of Italy was saved from punishing bombardment and destruction that Germany suffered.

The Second World War was over in May 1945 after the Germans surrendered. However, Italians were routed from Ethiopia in 1941, much before the end of the Second World War. And in February 1947 Italy surrendered any claim to its colonies in Africa. Unfortunately, Britain became a major obstacle to Ethiopian freedom and unity. ["Itlia Ertran, huletun yeSumale hagerotch Ityopiyan aand hager yadaragetchehun yeItyopia 'wedaj' Engliz indegana kefafeletchathew" Getachew Haile, 2000.] Eventually, Britain was removed from Ethiopian territory,

firstly from Eritrea in 1952, and then from the Ogaden in 1954. Ethiopia became free from British machination from 1954 to 1991. However, Britain had gathered enemies of Ethiopia for a meeting in London, which under the chairmanship of the government of the USA gave Ethiopia to the hands of the TPLF and EPLF. Since 1991, Britain has paid funds to the budget of hated TPLF regime in order to maintain it in power and to implement TPLF's divisive language-based politics. The TPLF entered Addis Ababa with the help of its mentor the EPLF, and others such as the OLF and SEPDC. Followers of the TPLF prospered by the implementation of a fascist version of the doctrine of "self determination" and by forming and using an organized means of siphoning off Ethiopia's wealth. In contrast, SEPDC and OLF were fellow travelers in the language-based political enterprise to oppose a so-called oppressor Amhara Nation, and for the added cause of the TPLF to make the OLF revel in the use of the Latin instead of the Ge'ez for writing Oromiffa. Accordingly, a section of Ethiopians are being de-Ethiopianised and uprooted from their heritage, as they are made to despise the ancient and historic Ethiopian Ge'ez in preference for a European Latin script. As SEPDC and OLF, and other recently formed language-based entities such as the ONC continue to further language -based politics, they serve as useful idiots in the destruction of Shewa and the creation of Oromia, which a TPLF ploy for weakening Ethiopia. The TPLF continues to dominate Ethiopia by increasing its economic might and by transacting with gossa entrepreneurs. The TPLF and its language-based party brethren would want Ethiopians to believe that the proverbial Rubicon is crossed and only they are entitled to political leadership of Ethiopia. Indeed, TPLF official have

become multimillionaires while Ethiopia is famished, diseased, impoverished and politically disunited. Yet, Ethiopia survived. Pan-Ethiopianism revived, as on May 15, 2005, a pan Ethiopian party, the coalition for Unity and democracy (CUD) won by majority of the voters of Ethiopia. According to independent polling by EU (European union) after the election 49% voted for CUD, 37% for TPLF and associates, and 17 % for UEDF (United Ethiopian Democratic Forces). The election results were not officially agreed upon by July 31, when this piece was completed. Regardless the Ethiopians crossed the proverbial Rubicon on May 15, 2005.

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