

Lord Davies of Llandinam, (Chairman) speaking at a meeting in celebration of first anniversary of the liberation of Ethiopia, at the Central Hall, Westminster today, said:

We have met to celebrate the first anniversary of the return of the Emperor, Haile Selassie, to his people and his triumphal entry into the capital of his country. It was a day of rejoicing for the friends of Ethiopia and the protagonists of freedom in all parts of the world. Not only did it mark the end of foreign aggression and oppression in Ethiopia but it also may be regarded as the first milestone on the road to victory. It is the first act of liberation, the first instalment of our avowed war aims, the expulsion of the tyrant and the restoration of the rights of a free and independent people. We are celebrating the first positive achievement of the Allied cause, the first instalment of victory.

The peoples and governments of every country which has been over-run by the Nazi and Fascist hordes will rejoice with us, buoyed up with fresh hope in the knowledge and assurance that those nations who restored the liberties of Ethiopia will never sheath the sword until the dictators and their armies have been driven out of every occupied country.

Our message to the oppressed and tormented people is, "Even as Ethiopia the first victim of aggression has been delivered from the toils of bondage, so also will your freedom be assured".

But our immediate business this afternoon is to send a message of greeting and congratulation to the Emperor and his people. During the last seven years they have suffered many grievous hardships. They saw their country over-run by the henchmen of a Sawdust Caesar but they never lost heart. They continued to resist until the moment when deliverance came and the soldiers of the British Commonwealth, shoulder to shoulder with the patriot forces, expelled the enemy from their land and restored the Emperor to his throne.

The British Commonwealth has played a decisive part. We have undertaken to assist the Emperor in the difficult tasks which lie ahead in restoring law and order and laying the foundations of a stable, progressive and prosperous community. Abyssinia as a free and independent country working out its own salvation will become an inspiration to all those African communities who, under the mandate system of trusteeship, will gradually develop representative and self-governing institutions.

The Emperor is anxious to assist us in the prosecution of the war against the common enemy and has offered to raise an Ethiopian force under his son's leadership to fight on the side of the Allies.

We all desire to express our admiration for the Emperor and his leadership. We know that he is an enlightened ruler, that he is animated by Christian principles and inspired by one paramount desire, to lead his people along the path of progress and civilisation and to safeguard their liberties. In spite of overwhelming difficulties he has steadfastly pursued a bold and progressive policy.

It is proposed that we should send the following message to His Majesty the Emperor:

"This meeting pays tribute to the high statesmanship of the Emperor, as well as to his courage as General and warrior in the field. His steadfast devotion both to the welfare and freedom of the Ethiopian people through the long years of war and exile, has evoked world-wide admiration.

"We offer our tribute also to the doughty patriots who maintained their independent fight for freedom during the Italian occupation and who rallied magnificently to their Emperor when he returned with powerful Allies to vanquish the invaders.

"Rejoicing in the liberation of Ethiopia from the Fascist yoke, we look forward to the day when she shall take her rightful place as a free and independent partner in a world community of states based on the principles of the Atlantic Charter."