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REVIEW ARTICLE

Italian massacres in occupied Ethiopia

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Ian Campbell, *The Plot to Kill Graziani: The Attempted Assassination of Mussolini's Viceroy*, Addis Ababa University Press, 2010. Reprinted 2015 by Eclipse, Addis Ababa. ISBN 978-99-944-5234-7.

Ian Campbell, *The Massacre of Debre Libanos, Ethiopia 1937: The Story of One of Fascism's Most Shocking Atrocities*, Addis Ababa University Press, 2014. ISBN 978-99-944-5251-4.

Ian Campbell, *The Addis Ababa Massacre: Italy's National Shame*. London: Hurst, 2016. ISBN 978-18-490-4692-3.

Matteo Dominioni, *Lo sfascio dell'impero. Gli italiani in Etiopia 1936-1941*, Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2008. ISBN 978-88-420-8533-1.

László Sáska, *Fascist Italian Brutality in Ethiopia, 1935-1937: An Eyewitness Account*, translated from the Hungarian by Béla Menezer, edited by Balázs Szélinger, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2015. ISBN 978-15-690-2416-4 (PB), 978-15-690-2415-7 (HB).

If Only I Were That Warrior. Directed by Valerio Ciriaci. Produced by Isaak Liptzin for Awen Films in collaboration with Centro Primo Levi, New York. 72 minutes. 2015.

Just before noon on 19 February 1937 nine hand grenades were thrown during an alms-giving ceremony in the courtyard of the Gennete-Li'ul Palace in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. Originally built for Emperor Haile Selassie, the palace had been occupied by the Italians less than a year earlier as their administrative headquarters after they had invaded the country from three sides, defeated the Emperor's forces with the help of bombs and poison gas and proclaimed their sovereignty and their civilised superiority.

The principal target of the attack was Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, whom Mussolini had installed as viceroy and who was officiating at the ceremony, flanked by other dignitaries. An estimated three thousand Ethiopian people, most of them poor and elderly and many with disabilities, were crowded in the courtyard and in an adjoining field. Graziani was wounded by shrapnel but not killed and he was promptly driven to hospital. The front of the palace was heavily

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guarded. Ninety-four Italian soldiers, thirty *carabinieri* and twenty-five *askari* – colonial troops recruited from Italy's other African colonies – responded to the attack, which had injured several other people as well as Graziani, by firing into the crowd. They used two large Fiat-Revelli machine guns mounted on tripods on the palace balcony as well as automatic rifles and pistols.

The killing lasted nearly three hours. The reports filed later that day by the foreign legations in Addis Ababa, as well as subsequent accounts by the few surviving Ethiopian eyewitnesses, said that almost everyone in the crowd was killed. The French envoy, Albert Bodard, described it as 'an indescribable mêlée. … Every Ethiopian was presumed guilty and had to be struck down.'

The killing did not stop there. This was just the first act of a massacre that would move out from the palace to residential areas of Addis Ababa, most of which at that time resembled a sprawling collection of villages more than a modern city. The killing of civilians continued for a further forty hours and resulted in the death of thousands more people. Most of the killing was done under cover of darkness, was interrupted during the daylight hours and resumed after nightfall. People of all ages were shot, bayonetted or stabbed with daggers, bludgeoned with clubs or shovels, burned alive by flamethrowers in their wattle and daub houses, run over by trucks, tied by ropes to the back of vehicles and dragged along dirt roads. Gold and silver jewellery was snatched from women's necks and homes were looted. Bodies were piled up, doused with petrol and burned and the remains were thrown into ditches or wells in an attempt to hide the evidence. Telephone and telegraph communications were cut and cameras were confiscated from foreign residents so that there would be no photographic records.

These events would become known in Ethiopia as the Graziani massacre or the massacre of Yekatit 12 – the month and day in the Ethiopian calendar corresponding to 19 February – and, despite the attempts by the perpetrators to stop information about them from getting out, and despite the fact the Italian media at the time, closely controlled by the Fascist government, were silent about them, they were reported in the foreign press. It was this negative publicity that prompted Mussolini to send an order to Graziani to stop the killing on the third day, 21 February. A number of eyewitness testimonies were also published later and a handful of photographic records survived. Ciro Poggiali, a journalist for *Il Corriere della Sera* who witnessed the massacre, kept a private diary that was published, after his death, by his son in 1971.

Among the foreign eyewitnesses was László Sáska, a Hungarian doctor then working in Addis Ababa. 'The shooting never ceased all night', he wrote, 'but most of the murders were committed with daggers and blows with a truncheon at the head of the victim. Whole streets were burned down, and if any of the occupants of the houses ran out from the flames they were machine-gunned or stabbed with cries of "Duce! Duce!! Duce!!!"' Sáska's account first appeared in English translation in 1937, under the name Ladislas Sava, in *New Times in Ethiopia News*, the paper that Sylvia Pankhurst edited in London to support the Ethiopian people's cause, and it has now been republished by Africa World Press.

The massacre also remained deeply scarred into the memory of Ethiopians who survived it. Several first-hand accounts were later included in a two-volume dossier assembled in 1949 by the Ethiopian government in an attempt to have ten Italians, including Graziani, indicted for war crimes against their people. These crimes included the execution, ordered by Graziani in May 1937, of a large number of monks and deacons from the ancient monastery of Debre Libanos whom he maintained were collectively complicit in hiding the two men – identified as Abreha Deboch and Moges Asgedom – who had thrown the grenades at him and then managed to escape. Priests and monks were generally distrusted by the Italians because they were identified with the opposition to their rule by literate élites. Graziani instructed General Pietro Maletti to round up and shoot, without any legal process, all the occupants of the monastery. On two different days and in

separate locations – one near Debre Libanos, the other at Ingecha – they were driven in trucks to the edge of ravines, made to line up and shot in the back by machine guns so that they fell forward into the ravines. Mass graves were dug and the bodies hidden. As for the two conspirators on the run, they were allegedly both captured by the Italians and executed in 1938.

Thanks to the meticulous research carried out by Ian Campbell, who has spent most of the last twenty-eight years in Ethiopia, we now know much more about these events than before. Since the early 1990s he has interviewed dozens of elderly survivors and eyewitnesses of the massacres of Debre Libanos at both execution sites and, more recently, of the massacres in Addis Ababa. He has gone through all the extant published testimonies, the official Italian reports and telegrams, and the reports of the foreign legations and he has collected the surviving photographs. Most of the previous archival research was based mainly on Italian documents, but these are often unreliable. Campbell shows, in *The Massacre of Debre Libanos*, that the telegrams sent by Graziani and others about these events to Mussolini and his Minister for the Colonies, Alessandro Lessona, systematically under-reported the number of victims. Graziani reported only the first of the two sets of mass executions of monks and deacons and omitted to mention the one at Ingecha. His reports, as well as Maletti's, reduced the total number of victims of the executions from well over a thousand to just a few hundred. Campbell also provides evidence that the plot to kill Graziani, the subject of another book, involved a larger network of conspirators than was previously believed, that Abreha Deboch was an insider, a member of Graziani's intelligence unit who had secretly gone over to the resistance group known as the Young Ethiopians, and that members of Haile Selassie's former government were directly involved in the conspiracy.

Campbell's careful reconstruction of the events leading up to the attack, in *The Plot to Kill Graziani*, suggests that Abreha was not trusted by the Young Ethiopians, who suspected him of spying for the Italians. He was from Eritrea, which by then had been an Italian colony for nearly fifty years, and several educated Eritreans now worked for the Italians, just as many poorer Eritreans were recruited by them as *askari* to repress their own people and fight the Ethiopians. Abreha appears to have been something of a wild card in the conspiracy, acting more out of a desire to prove himself to the resistance and fulfil a personal vendetta for shoddy treatment by the Italians than out of political commitment to the cause of liberation. His role, like several other aspects of the sequence of events, remains unclear and it will perhaps never be fully understood.

Campbell's research suggests, nevertheless, that the attack at the palace did not follow the original plan of the Young Ethiopians, that something went badly wrong. Given that Abreha Deboch and Moges Asgedom, also Eritrean and also an insider at the palace, were authorised by the Italians to carry guns, why did they use grenades, which are imprecise weapons in the open air? Was the attack intended to cause confusion and a smokescreen and to trigger an uprising, which was forestalled by the swift retaliation of the palace security? Or was it simply a botched job? What is clear is that the attack, far from galvanising the Ethiopian resistance on that day, triggered a round-up and a massacre that did immense damage to it, at least in the short term. Many of the Young Ethiopian activists, already on the military police's list of suspects, were arrested and sent to Italian concentration camps in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. It seems unlikely that the conspirators would have carried out the attack if they had predicted the scale of this crackdown.

One of the most interesting parts of Campbell's study of the plot to kill Graziani is about the way it later became manipulated in official memory in Ethiopia. For many people, including Haile Selassie after he was restored to power in 1941, the main outcome of the failed assassination attempt was to have brought the wrath of the Italians on the heads of thousands of innocent civilians and it was therefore best forgotten. Moreover, the revolutionary aspirations of the Young Ethiopian conspirators were anathema to an Emperor whose restored regime was a moderate

autocracy. No mention was therefore made of the plot at the early ceremonies to mourn the thousands of victims of Yekatit 12. After 1946 this started to change. Since Abreha Deboch and Moges Asgedom were Eritrean, and since Haile Selassie was now seeking to wrest Eritrea from British control and absorb it into a greater Ethiopia, it became politically expedient for him to commemorate two Eritreans who had sought to free the Ethiopian nation from the foreign yoke. So Abreha and Moges started to be remembered as heroes. It was not known exactly when and where they had been executed and buried, but two skeletons were found, exhumed, named as the two Eritrean heroes, flown to Addis Ababa and given a state funeral in front of a huge crowd on 1 May 1949.

Ian Campbell has now completed a third book, *The Addis Ababa Massacre,* to be published in November 2016, which I received in proof with a request for an endorsement. This also breaks new ground. Above all, it allows us to understand better that this was not a single event but a series of mass killings that unfolded in successive waves, involving different actors and different methods. Two main waves can be distinguished. The first, localised in the area around the palace, was an immediate response by the soldiers and *carabinieri* to the grenade attack, triggered by fear that the assassins were still present and may strike again. The second and longer wave, involving gangs of men going around other parts of the city clubbing, stabbing and burning people alive, was launched later that day, after the first wave had subsided. It took place in areas far from the site of the grenade attack and it was separate from the search for the conspirators and their accomplices and the round-up of suspects being carried out at the same time by the military police.

It is unlikely, indeed, that the main intention of this second massacre was to find the presumed conspirators and those who knew or were hiding them. It appears to have been a calculated act of revenge that escalated into the murder of whole communities living in neighbourhoods far from the initial event and unrelated to it. However, as with other large-scale massacres of this kind, one cannot really know what went on in the minds of the perpetrators or what their deeper motives were, if indeed they had any. Were they driven by a thirst for revenge or by sheer enjoyment of the possession of instruments of killing: firearms, blades and flamethrowers? Did they see their victims as subhuman, as 'things', as Simone Weil argued is a characteristic of violent killing in her 1940 essay '*The Iliad*, or the Poem of Force' (Weil 1965)? Or did they kill them precisely because they recognised their humanity and sought to reduce them, in a show of superiority, to the status of hunted animals, as Grégoire Chamayou (2012) has suggested is a recurrent feature of massacres in history?

What we do know is that most of the perpetrators of this second and longer wave of the massacre were members not of the army or *carabinieri* (a branch of the armed forces) but of the local Fascist Party militia. Some *askari* recruited in Libya also took part. According to several witnesses it was Guido Cortese, head of the Fascist Party federation in Addis Ababa, who triggered the second wave by telling his fellow blackshirts that they had 'carta bianca' (*carte blanche*) to go out and kill whomever they chose. There were barely concealed rivalries between the Fascist militia on the one hand and the regular Italian army and *carabinieri* on the other. The blackshirts were politically motivated volunteers, steeped in a culture of violence, and they sought to take control of the reprisals out of the hands of the army, which consisted mainly of conscripts. Although some soldiers and *carabinieri* appear also to have been involved in the mass killing around the city, they were not its main perpetrators. The army's normal methods of retribution in Ethiopia consisted, Campbell reminds us, of 'firing squads, mass graves and a certain amount of military discipline', whereas this protracted massacre was wholly unregulated.

As for Graziani himself, although the massacre was triggered by the attempt to assassinate him and is sometimes remembered with his name, it is unlikely that he himself authorised it. It may

have been Cortese, too, who gave the cue for the initial reaction at the palace, since some witnesses reported him as drawing his pistol first. Graziani had already been rushed from the scene and for much of the afternoon he was doped with chloroform. However, he had remained alert enough before his operation to wire a short report to Rome and he received in reply Mussolini's explicit support for decisive reprisals, in other words executions. Fearing that the attempt on his life was the start of a generalised uprising, Graziani also wired the governors of the other regions of Ethiopia to tell them to act with 'maximum rigour' at the first signs of rebellion.

So, even if Graziani did not authorise the massacre at the palace, as military commander in chief he was responsible for it and he probably approved of it. As for the second wave of the massacre, he later claimed not to have condoned it. According to his memoirs, published in 1947, he told Cortese, when he came to visit him in hospital that evening, not to 'perpetrate excesses' and to let the army keep control of the situation. However, this may have involved some retrospective massaging of the facts. Graziani wrote those memoirs while awaiting trial as a war criminal for his collaboration with the Nazis in 1943-45 and he was seeking then to portray himself as a good soldier who had dutifully served his country, not as a fanatical Fascist. He also pointed out that it was he who, on 21 February 1937, had transmitted to Cortese the order from Mussolini to stop the massacre and he suggested that this proved he had always supported military legality. But this was far from the truth. It is amply documented that Graziani was directly responsible for ordering the subsequent incarceration and deportation to concentration camps of hundreds of alleged Ethiopian suspects, the execution of resistance leaders, including several who had given themselves up after being promised safe treatment as prisoners of war, and numerous acts of violent reprisal, including the Debre Libanos and Ingecha massacres.

A few months later, in November 1937, Graziani was removed by Mussolini from his position as viceroy and replaced by the Duke of Aosta, a member of the Italian royal family. Graziani's brutal and illegal methods were proving increasingly counter-productive. They had merely strengthened popular resentment and resistance towards Italian rule, as well as attracting further negative reports in the foreign press. The Duke promised to adopt a more conciliatory approach, and yet mass killings continued, though perhaps without his assent. A later massacre of which evidence, including material remains in the form of bones, was recently unearthed by a young Italian scholar, Matteo Dominioni, was carried out in April 1939 at Zeret in the highland region of Gojjam, where the armed resistance was being led by Abeba Aregai. The rearguard of Abeba's forces, made up largely of family members and civilians fleeing villages where the Italians were conducting roundups, took shelter in caves and clefts in the rocky hillside. General Ugo Cavallero ordered his subordinate, Colonel Lorenzini, to act. Perhaps misidentifying these people as active combatants, Lorenzini gave orders to use explosives, machine-gun fire and mustard gas (yperite). The latter weapon had been banned by the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which Italy had signed, but the Italians had already used it widely during the invasion of Ethiopia. Dominioni estimates that up to 1,500 people were killed, making the Zeret massacre comparable in scale to that of Debre Libanos and, he suggests, even 'perhaps more heinous and brutal because the victims were women, children and elderly people'.

None of these events was, of course, exceptional in a century that saw many mass killings and introduced the concept of genocide. The massacres during World War Two in Poland, Ukraine, Croatia, Romania and elsewhere, as well as the extermination of Europe's Jews and Roma, were still to come, as were the purges or ethnic cleansings in Cambodia, Rwanda, East Timor and former Yugoslavia, not to mention the disappearances and political murders in the 1970s in Ethiopia itself, when an estimated half a million people were killed by Mengistu's Derg regime. Already in the 1930s there were other massacres and mass executions with very high numbers of

civilian victims. In 1937 a quarter of a million Chinese inhabitants of Nanjing were slaughtered by troops of the Imperial Japanese Army. In 1937-38 a million Soviet citizens were executed in the Great Purge.

And yet it is important to talk about the Ethiopian massacres because they have never received the same amount of historical attention or juridical investigation as those other killings and have therefore remained less visible to the outside world. In Italy itself few people have heard of them – certainly far fewer than know about the massacres perpetrated against Italian civilians by the SS in 1944, which are commemorated annually and where there are monuments, memorial grounds and organised school visits: the Fosse Ardeatine, Civitella, Sant'Anna di Stazzema and Monte Sole (Marzabotto). Italy was, after all, a minor colonial power and a more short-lived one compared to Britain or France. It acquired its first two colonies, Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, in 1885-90, added Libya in 1912 and Ethiopia in 1936, and then lost all of them during the Second World War. But in that half century its military leaders and personnel, as well as its Fascist militias, carried out numerous atrocities. These included a protracted massacre of civilians in Tripoli in October 1912 that had characteristics in common with the second phase of the 1937 Addis Ababa murders, a mass deportation in 1930-31 of around 100,000 people living in Jabal al-Akhdar, the mountain region in north-eastern Libya, which resulted in the death of around half the deportees on marches and in concentration camps, as well as the Ethiopian massacres and mass executions discussed here. Graziani, together with Marshal Pietro Badoglio, was responsible for ordering and carrying out the Jabal genocide. Badoglio, like Graziani, also authorised the use of poison gas in the invasion of Ethiopia.

There are three main reasons why these massacres are not well known. First, as Ian Campbell's research confirms, the official Italian records at the time, together with the Fascist-controlled media, did a very efficient job of masking or minimising them. Second, most Italian historians after World War Two were either unable or unwilling to deal with the history of colonial occupation: unable because access to the relevant archives was restricted for years and the archives were guarded by the apologists of colonialism; unwilling because Italy's colonial adventure had ended with the fall of Fascism, so it was easy for postwar Italians to view it, incorrectly, as bound up with Fascism, part of a generalised badness from which Italy was now moving on, and to forget that it had started much earlier, in the pre-Fascist era of liberal government. The first important historical work to expose the violence and illegality of the Ethiopian campaign, based both on archival research and first-hand testimonies, was Angelo Del Boca's *La guerra d'Abissinia 1935-41*. It was published in 1965, a full thirty years after the start of the Ethiopian war and twenty years after the end of Fascism, and was translated into English in 1969. But even then Del Boca's claims about the use of poison gas and other Italian atrocities in the Ethiopian campaign, including the deliberate bombing of Red Cross hospitals, which he supported with additional documentary evidence in several subsequent studies, were rejected by former colonial soldiers and others in Italy as exaggerated, distorted or simply false. Prominent among the negationists was journalist and historian Indro Montanelli, himself a veteran of the invasion of Ethiopia, who died in 2001.

Third, and most scandalously, none of the perpetrators of these massacres was ever brought to justice for them. Despite the Ethiopian government's attempt to get Graziani, Badoglio, Cortese, Lessona and others indicted for war crimes by the United Nations, and the mass of incriminating evidence they produced, trials of these men were never held. Because the atrocities in Ethiopia had taken place before the start of World War Two they were treated as outside the remit of the UN War Crimes Commission, even though the Japanese were held to account by the same Commission for their atrocities in China in the 1930s. In addition, the British refused to consider Badoglio a war criminal because he had come over to their side in 1943, negotiating the armistice that had pulled Italy out of its alliance with Germany and Japan. To have prosecuted him and

others, according to the British government, would also have risked fuelling anti-Fascist revanchisme and tipping the precarious postwar balance of power in Italy towards the Communists.

So Badoglio was never brought to trial. On the contrary, when he died in 1956 he was buried with full military honours. However, not everyone was satisfied with this outcome. The retrospective allegations of war crimes against Badoglio, as well as against Graziani and General Mario Roatta, who ordered atrocities against civilians during the Italian occupation of Yugoslavia in World War Two, were to be repeated over the years by Del Boca and other historians in Italy, including Giorgio Rochat and Nicola Labanca. In Britain they were the subject of a two-part television documentary, *Fascist Legacy*, written and directed by Ken Kirby and shown on BBC 2 in November 1989. RAI bought the two films from the BBC but only to hide them away in the vaults in a remarkable case of continued censorship. It has never shown them. An Italian dubbed version was finally shown in Italy on the private channel La 7 in 2003, and it has since been uploaded on YouTube.

The impunity of Graziani was an even graver case. The evidence of his responsibility for ordering the use of poison gas in the Ethiopian campaign, executing Ethiopian leaders who had surrendered to him and ordering the massacre at Debre Libanos was overwhelming already in 1945, when, in the last days of the war in Europe, he handed himself over to the British army in Italy. His position at the time was Defence Minister in Mussolini's final government, that of the Italian Social Republic (RSI). In that role, true to his old colonial form, he had given orders to shoot anyone who refused to be conscripted into the army of the RSI. Surrender to the British was a calculated move on his part that saved him from the worse fate of falling into the hands of Italian partisans, who would almost certainly have shot him, just as they shot Mussolini. He was put on trial in 1948 by a military court in Rome, not for his crimes in Ethiopia or in Libya but for having collaborated with the Nazis. Graziani's trial was widely publicised and it divided public opinion. He was found guilty on several counts, and sentenced in May 1950 to nineteen years, but he was immediately given remission of nearly fourteen of them on the extraordinary grounds that his wounds (including the shrapnel from Yekatit 12, which had never been fully removed) and the fact that he had acted with 'motives of particular moral and social value' (namely with patriotic intentions) were significant extenuations. The military judges, in other words, accepted a large part of his defence narrative that he had always put his country first – the memoirs he wrote and published as he awaited trial were called *Ho servito la Patria* (*I Served the Fatherland*) – and, since his country had made an alliance with Nazi Germany that had never been rescinded by Mussolini, he had stayed on what he considered the right side. His actions, he had claimed during the trial, had been those of an honourable soldier, not of a politicised Fascist.

In fact, Graziani served only four months, because his time in prison awaiting trial was further deducted from the sentence. Far from retiring to a quiet life, in 1952 this 'apolitical' soldier attempted to build an extreme right movement of ex-combatants to resurrect the Fatherland and the following year he accepted the honorary presidency of the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano. In 1955 he died peacefully at his home in Affile, a small town fifty miles east of Rome. Fifty-seven years later, in 2012, the mayor of Affile, Ercole Viri, obtained €130,000 from the regional government for a park to commemorate the war dead but then proceeded to spend it on a monument to Graziani. Designed in the Fascist style, a brick and marble cube with the words 'Patria' and 'Onore' (honour) inscribed on the front, the monument caused huge controversy in Italy. The case also reached the foreign media and triggered outraged protests in Ethiopia and elsewhere. The monument was soon defaced with anti-fascist graffiti and with a large white silhouette of a hanged man recalling the mass killings authorised by Graziani in Libya. In Bologna, pranksters 'twinned' the Affile monument with a

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similarly-shaped public urinal on which they flyposted the words 'Patria' and 'Odore' (smell). Viri's action was subsequently overruled by the President of the Lazio region, Nicola Zingaretti, as an improper use of public money, but in 2016 the future of the monument is still uncertain.

The story of the Affile monument is used as a narrative frame for the crowdfunded American documentary, *If Only I Were that Warrior*, directed by Valerio Ciriaci. Following the tradition of *Fascist Legacy*, the film examines the unpunished war crimes of Graziani in Ethiopia. A group of Ethiopians in New York demonstrate outside the Italian Embassy against the Affile monument with placards saying 'Italy: stand up against the revival of Fascism'. At a meeting in Addis Ababa an elderly man with tears in his eyes says 'In one morning my five brothers and sisters were burned alive by the Italians'. An eyewitness of the Debre Libanos massacre says 'I will pray and cry for Debre Libanos for as long as I live'. But the film also shows an Italian agronomist working in Addis Ababa today who is an avid collector of Graziani's books, as well as residents of Affile who consider Graziani a hero. One of the experts interviewed in the film is Ian Campbell.

I suggested that this research matters because these massacres are still not well known. It is, however, reasonable to ask whether the works discussed here will actually have much impact on public knowledge and understanding of the events they deal with. Apart from Dominioni's book, published by Laterza, they are all published by small presses and are not likely to be widely sold except to academic libraries, which will probably need to receive specific requests to order them (academic readers please take note). Ciriaci's film has won several awards, including a Globo d'Oro in 2016 from the Foreign Press Association in Italy, and has been shown at various festivals and in special screenings, but like most documentaries its distribution remains limited. As those who study the history of Italian colonialism know well, it is a history that has not been adequately transmitted to later generations in Italy. When it is known at all to a non-specialist public it is generally in simplified and falsified forms, most notably through the tenacious stereotypes of a 'soft' colonialism and *italiani brava gente*. It is also prey to politically tendentious distortions, sometimes of an obscene kind, like the Affile monument. The opposition to that monument shows that at least some people have access to critical accounts of that colonial past, but the truth about it still remains at high risk of total erasure from Italy's collective memory. That is why, even if the audience for them remains small, these books and this film are necessary.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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