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ABYSSINIA

(RUSSIAN-MADE)

Making release of Soyuzdetfilm's production. At Cameo, N. Y., Dec. 8, '36. Running time, 63 mins.

(In Russian, with English Titles)

Russia behind-the-screen spokesman describes Abyssinia as a country of vast mineral wealth, having reservoirs of untapped oil and tremendous veins of gold. Italy is charged with starting the war in order to gain control of this mineral store. Worst of the indictment against Italy and Fascism comes when the camera shows Italian planes bombing Red Cross hospitals and defenseless non-combatants.

Sympathy for the Abyssinians is sought by showing natives how Europeans gyp the poor Ethiopians, in trade. The backward state of the country, however, also is shown in the methods which the natives employ in tilling their fields and the primitive means of manufacture used for soap or weaving.

The film also shows something of how the Negus' subjects lived in the cities and towns. One particularly curdling scene is that of a plane bombing a straw-thatched town, with the victims of the onslaughts shown after the bombardment. The wounded offer a gory sight.

It is a silent offering with an off-screen narration in Russian and additional titles in English on the screen. A slow film, particularly in its scenic forepart and repetitious to a good extent, but scores limitedly with scenes of battlefield horrors or very limited circulation, although if properly dissected it could make a good trailer argument against war, discounting the propaganda intent.

Film alleges Italy fought a raw, undisciplined, under-nourished army of the Negus. Against Italy's tanks, planes and poison gas, Selassie had only barefooted riflemen, in tattered clothing, most of whom were unversed in the use of firearms.

Forepart of the film is a travelog, slow and scenically dull, showing peaceful Abyssinia prior to the war. The Russian cameramen traveled with an Ethiopian contingent.

Personalities in the film include the cameramen and Emperor Haile Selassie. Latter is close-upped at the capital and at the front, and once is shown handling an anti-aircraft gun.

Picture has an amazing clip of the Negus' soldiers looking raptly skyward at an Italian bomber raining down death dealing missiles. But such action shots as are shown are not many and involve isolated groups of troops.

Shan.

Dec 16, '36