

Next comes the case of the four soldiers killed in an ambush on December 31st, 1935, in the province of Tigre. The Italian Government is indignant because the bodies were found naked and abandoned in a stream. From the very fact that the Italian military authorities found these bodies, however, they admit not only that they were in possession of the battlefield but also that as possessors they were responsible for burying all the bodies on the ground held by them. Consequently this accusation should be laid at the door of the Italian military authorities and not of Ethiopian forces.

As regards the mutilated body of a lieutenant killed on December 18th at Abbi Addi, the Italian communiqué No. 76 of December 21st referring to this battle states that only a non-commissioned officer and not an officer was killed. Moreover, the Italian Government which, in the four cases that follow, sent photographs in support of its allegations, has not been able to do so in the case of this lieutenant, who, according to its official communiqué was not killed.

As regards the four cases mentioned above in which the Italian Government sent photographs, we refuse to admit that there were any mutilations. The photographs of the bodies of Privates Amato and Frangioso show that the ravages of the wounds and the decomposition which has occurred preclude any possibility of establishing the alleged mutilations. In the case of Private Mazzeo, it is not possible to tell from the photograph whether there has been any mutilation. Lastly, in the case of Corporal Cereda, there is nothing to prove that the photograph was not faked. We recall the fact that the Italian Government did not hesitate to act in this way on the occasion of its memorandum to the League of Nations of June 21st, 1935, as was clearly shown in M. van Melle's letter of September 10th, 1935, sent to His Excellency Baron Aloisi and published in the official journal of the League of Nations of November 1935, p. 1587. The same observations apply to the cases of the Italians said to have been mutilated after the battle of December 28th in the Makale district.

The Italian accusations in regard to atrocities cite finally the case of the Italian pilot Tito Minniti who is said to have made a forced landing at Dagabur, where he was taken prisoner by the Ethiopian troops, and decapitated, his head being carried in triumph to the headquarters of the officer commanding the military area. The following are the facts. The aeroplane in question landed at a distance from the town of Dagabur and at a distance from any military post or concentration of troops. The aviator Minniti was captured and killed on the spot by local nomads, who live by raising cattle. They do not belong to the Ethiopian army, and they are much incensed against the Italian airmen who never cease bombing and machine-gunning their peaceful villages and flocks (see Annex, page 28). Such incidents may be deplored, but they do not constitute any justification for the Italian attempt to saddle the Ethiopian army with the responsibility for their occurrence, or for the claim that the officer in question was at any time a prisoner of war. After the continual bombing of open towns and the burning of the peasants' huts - not to mention the hecatombs of herds and flocks for which the Italian airmen are responsible - is it not too much to ask of the most reasonable person not to lift a hand against the very individuals