



The Caribbean: The Lion Comes Calling

The frail little visitor, in full military regalia and a Sam Browne belt, stepped majestically into the waiting Bentley in Trinidad-Tobago's capital of Port-of-Spain. Thousands of cheering Negroes lined the streets, and one man gallantly pulled off his shirt and laid it in the path of the visitor's car. Later, 1,100 schoolchildren put on a dance extravaganza. Then, seated on a throne beneath a purple canopy in a makeshift church on Port-of-Spain's outskirts, the visitor watched impassively as incense-swinging priests murmured prayers and the high priest read a long eulogy. Thus last week did Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia, Lion of Judah, King of Kings and Elect of God, begin a week's visit to the three tiny Negro countries of Trinidad-Tobago, Jamaica and Haiti.

A Chance to Bask. What in heaven's name was the Elect of God doing in the Caribbean, 7,500 miles from his own kingdom? Family ties, of a sort. The people of the three countries, most of whose ancestors came from Africa, share a sense of brotherhood and a deep feeling for African rulers, especially for an African king such as Selassie. They also share a similar history of colonialism, mixed populations and economic problems. Since they gained their independence in 1962, both Trinidad-Tobago and Jamaica have seen their economies slow down and unemployment rise. As for Haiti, its economy has always been a mess, and only gets worse every year.

Selassie's visit, marked by pomp and circumstance from beginning to end, helped take the minds of the people off such problems for a few days, gave their leaders a chance to bask in Selassie's reflected glory. Trinidad-Tobago's Prime Minister Eric Williams, who extended the original invitation to Selassie two years ago, kept his visitor visible and on the go, attending receptions, laying wreaths and setting cornerstones. In the small, ornate parliamentary chamber of the country's "Red House," Selassie pleased everyone by calling for closer ties between "the two great peoples" of Ethiopia and Trinidad-Tobago.

Eaten & Trampled. At Selassie's second stop, in Kingston, Jamaica, the airport was mobbed by 2,000 members of a minority Negro cult called the Rastafarians, who worship Selassie as God and want the Jamaican government to send them "home" to Ethiopia. Prime Minister Sir Alexander Bustamante, 82, has discouraged such repatriation, saying wryly: "We must protect them. They would just get out there in the jungle and be trampled by elephants and eaten by the lions." Undiscouraged the Rastas showed up at the airport waving placards reading "Hail to the Lord Anointed" and chanting "Selassie is Christ" and "Welcome to our God and King." Somewhat taken aback, Selassie was quickly bundled into a waiting car and rushed to a reception, where he observed politely that he had found the welcoming demonstration "beyond my expectations."

During his stay, Selassie met with the ailing Bustamante, who is almost blind from cataracts, received an LL.D. degree from Kingston's University of the West Indies and

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visited Montego Bay. In an address to the Jamaican Parliament in Gordon House, he vague held out the hint of aid. "We must expand material and other cooperation he said. "We must remember that many states today representing major parts of the world were once weak, but through a process of assimilation and combination have become strong."

Dubious Honor. From one of the hemisphere's newest countries, Selassie was scheduled to proceed to one of oldest-Haiti. There, conditions are bleak under Dictator Francois ("Papa Doc") Duvalier that the country is hardly in better shape than when it won independence from France in 1804. Determined to give Selassie a proper reception, the government scraped deep into its depleted treasury for \$100,00 used it to plant flagpoles along the two-mile length of road from the airport to the capital of Port-au-Prince, place festive flags all over the city and pour fresh concrete along part of the route so that the Lion of Judah would not be overcome by dust. The high point of Selassie's crowded, one-day visit was the naming of the just-completed airport road "Boulevard Haile Selassie." Such are conditions in Haiti, however, that road dedications can be dubious honors. As he drives toward Port-au-Prince, Selassie can get a good look at Harry Truman Boulevard along the waterfront. It is now six inches deep in mud and completely impassable.

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