



Bloodless Mutiny

Clearly shaken, the Emperor of Ethiopia, Lion of Judah, Elect of God and King of Kings mounted the balcony of his lion-guarded Jubilee Palace in Addis Ababa. Speaking to 600 members of the armed forces, Haile Selassie declared in a faltering and cracking voice: "This is a poor land. Your country cannot afford to give you more. I appeal to your loyalty!" From the palace courtyard, the Emperor received the expected cheers of support. But in Ethiopia's key garrison towns, where thousands of his soldiers were mutinying, the appeal fell on deaf ears. There, junior officers and enlisted men continued their rebellion, demanding higher wages to offset an inflation that since January has doubled the price of flour, rice and bread.

The aging (81) monarch-who survived Mussolini's invasion in the 1930s as well as an abortive coup 13 years ago-really had no choice. He gave in to the rebels' demands, and last week virtually turned over the reins of authority to the military.

What was surprising was not that the mutiny took place, but that it was so long in coming. Well-trained by American, British and Israeli experts, the 42,000-man army is a modern outfit with-at least for Ethiopia-modern views. Its educated officers have long been unhappy about the appalling gap between rich and poor and the inefficiencies and inequities of a feudal agricultural system. Last year drought, landlord indifference and government mismanagement combined to produce a famine that left at least 50,000 dead.

Sheltered by oversolicitous courtiers, the Emperor was largely unaware of the desperate plight of his 26 million subjects until last month. Then thousands of disgruntled Ethiopians took to the streets of Addis Ababa and rioted against inflation for four days. Helmeted police finally cleared the streets but left five demonstrators dead, at least 35 wounded and 1,000 in jail. Afterward the Emperor made a rare radio and television appearance to announce a rollback of gasoline prices and a freeze on the cost of basic commodities. The Emperor's action calmed civilians, but left the armed forces dissatisfied. Although Selassie decreed a 33% increase in wages for the armed services, the military wanted pay raises of up to 100%, to bring a private's top pay to \$75 per month-far higher than the country's paltry \$65 annual per capita income.

The stage was thus set for last week's denouement, when the army's 2nd Division took the matter into its own hands. At dawn elements of the division quietly moved into the palm-lined streets of Asmara (pop. 200,000), the country's second largest city. Firing no shots, they closed the airport, sealed all roads into the city, shut the banks and government offices, and put Asmara's governor general under house arrest. They carefully avoided interfering with civilians. Proclaiming their loyalty to the Emperor, the soldiers demanded pay hikes, better pensions, housing and medical care, and the dismissal of many of the Cabinet's 19 members.

RAS TAFARI LIVES AND REIGNS!

Next day the rebels seized three of the four senior generals whom Haile Selassie had sent to Asmara to negotiate a compromise, and threatened to keep them hostage until the government agreed to all their demands. Meanwhile the mutiny spread until it included nearly all of the country's 47,000 soldiers, sailors and airmen.

Military Power. Panicked by the revolt, Aklilu Hapte Wold, who had been Prime Minister since 1961, quit, as did his entire Cabinet. When the Emperor did not immediately accept Aklilu's resignation, dissident soldiers in full battle gear moved into the capital's streets. In a show of strength, they took control of Addis Ababa's banks, its airport and key buildings. At that point, Haile Selassie capitulated. Appearing once more on radio and TV, he granted the armed forces virtually the entire pay raise they had demanded, pledged no reprisals and designated a popular career diplomat, Endalkachew Makonnen, 46, the new Prime Minister. Perhaps more important, he elevated one popular general to army commander and named another to the key post of Interior Minister.

Venerated by his people and respected by other African leaders, Haile Selassie is still head of state and a symbol of authority. But for the moment, at least, power in Ethiopia rests with the military. After Endalkachew took office, some army officers called for trials of many of the ousted Cabinet Ministers on the ground that they had "enriched themselves at the people's expense, maintained fat foreign bank accounts and took land illegally from the peasants." Thousands of students paraded noisily proclaiming support of the army and demanding freedom of the press and formation of political parties. As for the new Prime Minister, he promised "thorough economic and social change" — an indication that he intends to heed the army's yearning for Ethiopia to escape from the dark ages.

RAS TAFARI LIVES AND REIGNS!