

October 30, 1970 – 40th Anniversary of Haile Selassie's Coronation

From the official Ethiopian post office folder:

His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, destined to be classed among the outstanding leaders of history, and to undertake the future enormous responsibilities as Monarch & Head of State, was born on July 23, 1892 at Egersa Goro in the Province of Harrar.

The Ethiopian dynasty to which he belongs is amongst the oldest of those that have survived in recorded history. According to verified records, 3,000 years ago the Solomonic dynasty emerged through the union of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon of Jerusalem, through an issue which inaugurated the dynasty of which Emperor Haile Selassie I is the 225th active successor.

As a young Prince, he showed exceptional talents and ability at a very early age. His ability attracted the attention of Emperor Menelik II, who delegated to him the responsibility of Governor in his adolescence and bestowed upon him the title of Dejazmatch, one of the highest ranks of the nation.

The outstanding ability of Dejazmatch Teferi swiftly brought him to the highest position in the realm. In 1916, the daughter of Menelik II, Her Imperial majesty the Empress Zawditu, was crowned Empress, and Dejazmatch Teferi was appointed Regent of the Realm and Heir apparent to the throne, with the title of Ras and decorated with the Grand Cordon of the Order of Solomon.

Not only did Regent Ras Teferi introduce far-reaching internal reforms but in the international sphere, he made the master stroke that ushered Ethiopia definitely on to the world stage. Upon his insistence and instigation he led Ethiopia to become a member of the League of Nations in July, 1923 and followed this up by making a tour of European and Middle Eastern countries in the following year, which, upon his return, was reflected in several schemes for the modernization of his country.

Empress Zawditu, the then reigning monarch, died in April, 1930 at which time Regent Ras Teferi, in the interim proclaimed Negus or King, ascended the throne as Emperor of Ethiopia on November 2nd in the same year, with the style and title of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie the First. The Coronation ceremonies even then reflected Ethiopia's growing international contacts, for they were attended by many high foreign emissaries and representatives.

One of the most spectacular and far-reaching events during the reign of Haile Selassie I took place only 7 months after his accession to the throne. He decreed the nation's first written constitution in 3000 years, and thus brought Ethiopia into the framework of separation of powers. The constitution provided for a bi-cameral parliament, a cabinet and an independent judiciary.

Emperor Haile Selassie I broadened the relationships initiated by his predecessor, Menelik II, with foreign countries. He opened a number of avenues and opportunities to his people and country in the fields of education, industry, trade, etc., and engaged foreign technicians and military experts to assist him in his modernization program.

As leader and sovereign of one of the oldest independent countries of the world, the Emperor's position in Africa cannot escape recognition. Even during the African Summit Conference, His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I was universally recognized as an effective factor in achieving the great measure of unity and solidarity that sprang therefrom.

On the continental level, it was the Emperor who convoked, in his own national capital, the successful African Heads of State conference in May, 1963, and who played a key role in the establishment of the Organization of African Unity.

The achievement was most significant for it clearly demonstrated the Africans' resolve to settle amicably, and without the interference or intervention of non-African interests, any disputes that might arise among themselves.

Expressively human, Emperor Haile Selassie I is popular with the youth. One of his burning interests is manifested in the school-house, where he never loses an opportunity to be asking personal questions of the pupils and preferring his fatherly advice and encouragement.

His Imperial Majesty's graciousness is particularly exemplified in his attitude to, and care for the unfortunate. Hardly a week passes but he is found in the hospitals, orphanages, institutions for the blind and other organizations for the unfortunate. A great part of the Emperor's private financial interests has been turned over to the Haile Selassie First Foundation that plans and administers institutions for the invalid and the indigent.