



INTELLIGENCE NOTE

BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

February 27, 1974

*Ethiopia
5/6*

ETHIOPIA: THE WAGES OF MUTINY

Large numbers of Ethiopian enlisted men, NCO's, and some junior officers in the 46,000-man armed forces have mutinied, originally for economic redress, but now for political aims, and this has led to the resignation of the government. Asmara, Massawa, and other towns in Eritrea are under the mutineers' control. They have arrested senior military and civilian officials and secured key points, and may have taken hostage the Emperor's negotiating delegation, led by the army chief of staff. The mutineers' attempt to rally military units in other parts of the country is succeeding: air force NCO's seized the Debre Zeit base near Addis Ababa, and in the south units at Dire Dawa and Harar are reportedly supporting the Asmara elements.

Events can no longer be considered primarily in an economic context. Having challenged the Emperor, both by mutinying and by holding his officials hostage, the mutineers may find themselves obliged to stand together against the imperial wrath.

The potential implications are profound: while the mutineers insist that they are loyal to Haile Selassie, they have already brought about the resignation of the entire cabinet. If he tests the loyalty of his troops and finds some of them wanting, public order could break down.

For the United States, the dilemma is also potentially acute--how to maintain a close relationship in the midst of transition from the old guard to a new guard, whose leadership, intentions, and aspirations are not only unknown but are still being formulated.

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(Classified by D. Mark)

Mutinies ... The Eritrean mutiny has been but one of numerous manifestations of military discontent. On February 25 in Addis Ababa, two ordnance and engineering units seized their headquarters and exchanged gunfire with loyal troops. Still earlier, air force enlisted men went on strike for higher pay, returning to work after being assured of consideration for their case. There is no evidence that the military mutineers acted initially for other than economic reasons, although military morale has been deteriorating for several months, not only over low pay but also over arbitrary promotion policies and ineffective leadership.

Of the four Ethiopian army divisions, the most disgruntled has been the Second Division in Eritrea. Bugged down in a frustrating struggle with insurgents of the Eritrean Liberation Front, the division's troops have been severely critical of the incompetence of their commanding general and provincial governor. Heavy losses suffered by the division in a recent pitched battle with the ELF probably contributed to morale problems.

... and Economic Grievances. A week of strikes and demonstrations by teachers, students, and cab drivers--concentrated in Addis Ababa--preceded the mutinies. Inflationary pressures, which throughout 1973 reduced the real income of these economically insecure groups in the modern sector, intensified in January when fuel costs rose sharply. When violence broke out during the strikes, the police and military restored order, at a cost of several dead and numerous injured. The government moved to end continuing public unrest: it reduced gasoline prices, put price controls on essential goods, and took teacher pay demands under advisement. Most importantly, the government raised military pay and allowances, but not enough to appease enlisted men.

Military Cleavages. The mutiny has elements of class friction--enlisted men versus better paid and more privileged officers. Many enlisted men may also resent the enrichment of some officers in the grain trade at a time of acute drought and famine in parts of the country. Other cleavages also exist within the military--establishment Amharas and Tigreans versus non-establishment Gallas, and senior officers with close ties to the present regime

versus younger, reform-minded officers. These cleavages suggest that the military could fragment in a high-pressure situation inducing divided loyalties.

Prospects. The cabinet has already resigned. The Emperor himself does not appear to be threatened; some military elements, however, may try to limit his powers. In doing so, the mutineers face a dilemma: no credible successor is at hand. Both the ailing Crown Prince and his son, Zara Yacob, are in Europe, and for different reasons, neither is ready or able to replace His Imperial Majesty. But although the Emperor will probably weather the current crisis, the military, whether old guard or new leadership, is bound to play a crucial political role in the future. If this leads to prolonged instability, the ELF and Somalia could gain new opportunities to pursue their objectives at Ethiopia's expense.

Implication for the United States. The close military relationship which the US has maintained with Ethiopia for almost three decades will come into question even though American military advisers will presumably succeed in keeping out of the present troubles. The remaining units at Kagnew Station in Eritrea remain unmolested, and should be able to remain uninvolved. The Ethiopian authorities may see the United States as potentially helpful in furnishing emergency economic (or military) assistance, to get the government over the acute phase of its difficulties. All courses of action pose potential problems for the US, since it may be substantially more difficult to deal with the new ruling groups that may emerge in control of the Ethiopian Government.

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