

AGAINST THE EMPEROR. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENT PROTESTS EVOLUTION DURING THE REIGN OF HAILE SELASSIE I (1960-1974)

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Abstract: *Contrary to popular belief, African populations have been able to force, through social protest, numerous changes in their societies. One such example is Ethiopia, where its last emperor, Haile Selassie I (1930-1974), faced fierce opposition in the streets during his reign, specially the one boosted by students. This study focuses on how student protests in the country have evolved since 1960, what were the causes of their development and what impact they had on the government of the Ethiopian negus. Finally, it will be analysed whether the protests against the emperor were connected with the 1974 Revolution and the military coup that provoked the coming to power of the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia, popularly known as Derg. In order to carry out this research, a detailed review of the bibliography has been conducted as well as an analysis of the period's newspaper and graphic material related to student protests.*

Key words: *Ethiopia; social movements; Haile Selassie; protests.*

Introduction

Contrary to popular belief, Africa has not been that static space, populated by immobile and passive societies, but rather social movements have become an indissoluble part of its history, especially since the colonisation promoted by Europeans. In fact, the African continent has a history full of massive protests: the colonial powers had to face resistance movements that later became national liberation movements, in addition to a whole series of strikes led by trade unions, street demonstrations and protests in the countryside. In addition, the seizure of power by single parties and dictatorships also brought an important part of the population to the streets, especially when the economic situation and austerity measures hindered social progress (Arnould, Tor & Vervaeke, 2006: 1).

A paradigmatic case is Ethiopia where social pressure was particularly evident among different sectors such as peasants, students, teachers and urban workers especially since the 1960s. Of them, we have chosen to analyze how the student protests evolved because we consider that this was a group with a capacity for constant and intersectional mobilization with other social movements. In terms of time, this article analyzes the evolution of the movement between 1960-1974. The chosen time period is justified because it is framed in the last years of the reign

of Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930-1974) It is precisely in this framework that the rapid development that was conceived in the student movement at both ideological and strategic levels is visible. In order to carry out this analysis, this work has been divided into three phases: the first is based on the awakening of the student movement and its first actions after the coup d'état of 1960; the second coincides with a period of consolidation of the structures of the movement and its radicalisation (1966-1973) and, finally, the third phase focuses on the role of students during the 1974 Revolution.

Throughout this research, the evolution of the Ethiopian student movement, the causes that led to its alteration over 15 years, its relationship with other social movements with which it shared time and space, its position with respect to the structure of the Ethiopian Empire and the figure of Haile Selassie I and the extent to which this group facilitated the outbreak of the 1974 Revolution have been deeply studied.

1. The awakening of the ethiopian student movement (1960-1965)

Haile Selassie had been crowned emperor in 1930 and except for the brief parenthesis of the Italian invasion (1935-1941) remained in power almost four decades (Pankhurst, 1983: 148-156). The emperor controlled directly the whole country, with the exception of Eritrea, which, due to its historical characteristics, had its own institutions. If Eritrea had state status and was linked to Ethiopia in the framework of a federation, had its own Parliament and political parties, Selassie dismantled one by one these institutions and ended up turning the country into a mere province of the empire around 1960. This event had repercussions on the country's subsequent historical processes since, together with social protests, the empire had to face guerrilla groups opposed to the Ethiopian administration (Hrbek, 1993: 151-152). Thus, in 1958, the Eritrean Liberation Movement ("Mahber Sheweate") was founded, a clandestine movement that defended Eritrea's independence and began to operate in urban areas. In 1961, armed struggle began with the creation of the Eritrean Liberation Front (Tseggai, 1976: 26). Furthermore, in 1963, in the Ogaden region, a revolt was started by part of the Somali population demanding the independence of the region and its possible annexation to Somalia. In January 1964 a brief war began with this neighbouring country and although Ethiopia came out victorious, signing the peace in March of the same year, this reflected the multiple problems faced by the crown (Arconada Ledesma, 2018: 97).

Parallel to this absolutist change in Eritrea, which was aimed at avoiding at all costs its independence, Selassie launched a series of political reforms aimed at washing the face of the autocratic imperial system. From 1955 Ethiopia became a "constitutional monarchy" with quasi-representative institutions. In order to legitimise this transformation, a reform of the 1931 Constitution was made that allowed the creation of a parliamentary system in which the emperor elected the

Prime Minister and in which political parties did not exist. These reforms, although they did not generate a real change in the Ethiopian feudal system, did end up opening a debate that was reflected since the mid-1960s, when the feudal values of the old aristocracy were opposed to the democratic values defended by the new classes of workers and wealthy families (Keller, 1981: 541).

It should be noted here that, until the 1960s, the imperial system had not faced any kind of opposition, which was undoubtedly due to the high popularity of Haile Selassie after the liberation of the country in 1941. The images of that moment perfectly reflect the euphoria of the Ethiopian people and the celebrations of the emperor's return to Addis Ababa¹. However, in the early hours of December 14, 1960, Mengistu Neway, commander of the imperial guard, and his brother, Garmame Neway, provincial governor and intellectual, took advantage of the fact that the emperor was travelling in Brazil to carry out a coup d'état. They quickly took control of the Imperial Palace in Addis Ababa, arresting the emperor's eldest son, Prince Asfa-Wasan, as well as the Ministers of Trade, Defence and the Interior. The coup was joined by most of the imperial guard and other leaders such as Colonel Warqenah Gabayahu and Police Commissioner Tsege Dibu. That same morning, a proclamation issued by Prince Asfa-Wasan, acting under duress, denouncing the country's poor economic situation compared to other African countries, announced the formation of a new government headed by Asfa-Wasan and promised the beginning of a new era. The response of the university students was immediate, demonstrating in the streets of Addis Ababa in favour of the new government (Clapham, 1968: 495).

Before the coup d'état the students had not demonstrated in favor of a change in government, so it has traditionally been considered that the coup d'état also meant the birth of the student movement and the beginning of the struggle against the emperor. However, this support should not be understood as the search for a radical change in the imperial system. The fact that the person chosen for leading the change was a member of the royal family reveals the predilection of the military to keep the crown as an easy way to legitimise change and the students' interest not in overthrowing the imperial system as such, but in achieving real democratic openness. This is visible in a student publication of December 16, 1960, which specified that the new government would promote "freedom of speech, of the press, and of political parties"². Nevertheless, democracy was never mentioned by the coup plotters. In addition, the students became a beacon of opposition to the emperor since they were, with the exception of some military personnel, "the most outspoken and visibly the only consolidated opposition group" (Balsvik, 1985: 13).

¹ British Pathé. 13 abril 2014. Haile Selassie Returns to Addis ababa from exile (1941) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akChOvfHADs&t=32s>>.

² News and Views, 16 December 1960, published by the students of the University College of Addis Ababa.

In spite of the short-lived success of this putsch, the truth is that the Neway brothers only managed to control the capital, since no other uprising had taken place in the rest of the provinces. As of December 15, confrontations began to take place between the rebels and the military loyal to the regime. The emperor entered the city two days later, definitively aborting the coup d'état. An estimated 300 people died, most of them civilians surprised by the fighting (Clapham, 1968: 496). But why this uprising? In part it has to do with the expectations of national development that Haile Selassie had promised when she returned from exile in 1941. After almost three decades in power, the emperor had failed to keep these promises and had generated a wave of frustration in a significant part of society and especially among some circles of intellectuals and senior army commanders. However, as we have already seen, the coup failed for lack of support, which can be understood for two reasons: on the one hand, the emperor's semi-divine status and imperial tradition, and on the other, the lack of proposals that sought real change, such as the abolition of the feudal system (Adamu & Balsvik, 2018: 267).

Although the coup failed, this event gave way to a new period of reorganization among social movements. The first part of the 1960s gave rise to various minor protests and gave greater prominence to the student groups that maintained their protest center on the campus of Haile Selassie I University. Similarly, rural revolts were increasing since 1960 due to poor social conditions in the countryside and the preservation of the feudal system in the hands of an old aristocracy, which prevented access to land. In fact, a meeting point between the countryside inhabitants and the students was the struggle for the abolition of the feudal system headed by the emperor (Cowcher, 2018: 47).

Although it is true that the land was still in the hands of the aristocracy, a modernisation of the agricultural sector began, with intensive farming and large-scale cultivation driven by foreign companies, which led to an increase in the number of workers hired. Most of this production went to urban markets or for export, which became a contradiction for a country that suffered from frequent shortages. In addition to the countryside, the student movement found another ally arising from Ethiopia's mild economic transformation, focused primarily on urban spaces, but also on the countryside. In the cities, the relative industrialization of the 1960s generated a new social class, a working class that began to organize. In fact, in 1963 the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions (CELU) was formed, the first trade union in the country with a fairly moderate position far removed from socialist theses (Ottaway, 1976: 471-474). The role of women's associations was also strengthened during these years. Although this is an issue that still needs to be investigated further, the fact is that the data reflect that women did participate in social movements, although their role was smaller than that of the men who led the protests in all sectors. However, it is essential to reflect the role of associations such as the Ethiopian Women Welfare Association founded in 1935, the Ethiopian Young Women's Christian Association which was born in the 1950s, as well as the Armed

Forces' Wives Association which was most active of all (Burgess, 2013: 98-99).

What can be affirmed is that between 1960-1965 social movements were quite moderate and did not represent a real threat to the status quo. The student movement maintained a rather prudent stance, which was due in part to the good conditions in which university students lived. In fact, before 1965, the system succeeded in co-opting most students by offering them relatively well-paid bureaucratic positions, which prevented them from giving political effect to their modernizing ideas. In addition, most students did not want to risk their good standing. This explains why between 1960-1965 there was greater organization within the movement, but this was not reflected in massive street protests (Brietzke, 1979: 26). Moreover, although the different social groups held a common position regarding the need to change the old regime, the 1960-1965 period was not characterized by a union between the different movements (Haile-Selassie, 1997: 86). The situation was very different from 1965 when the students, more radical and with a greater presence in the streets, began a new phase of protest and, in clear support of the camp, began to use the slogan "Meret Larashu", translated as Land to the Tiller in English (Cowcher, 2018: 48).

2. From lessons to streets. Maturity and radicalism in student protests (1966-1973)

In the second half of the 1960s, Ethiopian students became radicalized and joined the wave of protests already shaking large cities in the United States, Europe, and other African countries. If between 1960-1965 the student protests in Ethiopia were aimed at achieving democratic improvements such as freedom of the press and the legalization of free trade unions, by the end of the decade their demands were more in consonance with Marxist precepts and advocated a socialist reorganization of the system. Everything that had the stamp of the West came to be considered imperialist and colonialist, with a clear rejection of the policies of the United States and its allies. An example of this anti-imperialist stance occurred on March 30, 1968, when several students boycotted a fashion show promoted by the University Women's Club. The students, who attacked the retinue of models, important women of the elite and the wives of the ambassadors with stones and eggs, clamored against Western fashions that "prostituted Ethiopian and African cultures" (Lemma, 1979: 34). In addition, students were increasingly militant and attended demonstrations, many of which turned into violent clashes against the police. The emperor tried to calm the spirits and quell the demonstrations through methods already used, such as the television speeches on the unity of the country (Asserate, 2015).

Despite this, young intellectuals and students were the first to question the legitimization of feudalism and imperial absolutism, which later became a rejection of any system where the monarchy was present, including the constitutional one. Since 1965 the protests in front of Parliament were growing and recurrent, with strong messages against the emperor. In fact, the students distributed pamphlets

attacking his figure openly and defended radical social, economic and political reforms that broke with the established system (Koehn & Hayes, 1978).

But what was the reason for this radicalization? Several authors have referred to the causes that propagated extremism among students. Thus Ottaway (1976: 476) emphasized the socioeconomic factor. Most of the students came from "urban families of traders, clerks, policemen, lower-level government employees - in other words, the Ethiopian petty bourgeoisie. On the other hand, relatively few of these students came from the really wealthy and important families, whose children were likely to be educated abroad. In other words, the student body in Ethiopia, although by no means representative of the population, was less skewed towards the upper classes than one might expect". This was partly because the low number of students allowed the university to cover tuition and basic needs such as accommodation and meals. In addition, obtaining a university degree until the middle of the decade ensured a position in the state administration and, consequently, access to the country's elite.

Nonetheless, the situation changed sharply at the end of the decade. By 1968 the administration was saturated and could no longer absorb the new graduates, which created enormous frustration among the young people. The worsening economic crisis at the end of the decade affected the solvency of the university. Students constantly complained about the deterioration of libraries, laboratories and classrooms, as well as the overcrowding of residences and the deficient supply of food. In addition, the number of students had increased during the decade and the university system had been unable to adapt, aggravating the situation year by year. By 1965 the agglomeration was beating all records, which was associated with the fact that no new infrastructure had been built since the 1950s (Kedebe 2008: 170). Faced with this image of deterioration and economic crisis, the emperor strove to disseminate the virtues of a modern country led by a leader who based his government on progress³.

In addition, other authors such as Kedebe (2008: 13) have highlighted different factors related to the autonomy that existed within the University. Certainly, the students had an unprecedented situation in the reign of Haile Selassie: greater flexibility and openness, giving them ample scope to form associations, discuss the regime openly and publish pamphlets and journals. In the late 1960s, however, freedom of expression and university association was suppressed, setting the students' spirits on fire. However, despite the suppression of rights, the emperor tried to vindicate to the world (and especially to Western countries) the image of a modern and benevolent monarch.

Lemma, on the other hand, highlights the link that is created in the change

³ British Pathé. 13 april 2014. Progress in Ethiopia (1969), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewJbZjfKBF8>.

of decade between imperialist positions and Marxist-Leninist ideas, favoured by the greater flexibility of the regime towards the university. Students developed a strong anti-feudal position. This character was so intrinsic to the system that it led them to take anti-imperialist positions, especially in relation to international imperialism, which had become a threat to national liberation movements. The radicalization reached such an extreme that, in January 1968, during the visit of U.S. Vice President Hubert Horatio Humphrey, students marched shouting slogans against the Vietnam War, hanging an effigy of President Johnson and carrying anti-U.S. signs. In addition, in 1969 protesters demanded the US Peace Corps (an agreement between Ethiopia and the United States that had filled U.S. teacher colleges) to be expelled with fairly violent means such as throwing stones at Peace Corps headquarters in Addis Ababa and throwing gasoline bombs at the embassy (Lemma, 1979: 38). Parallel to the expansion of anti-imperialist ideology, a heightened interest in Marxism-Leninism evolved. The fact that university professors ignored Marxism-Leninism ended up making it an object of attraction among students, who began to discover it on their own (Kedebe, 2008: 13). Likewise, within the logic of the Cold War, students began to feel comfortable with anti-Americanist postures, totally opposed to capitalism, gradually approaching communist ideology.

The movement further developed its character of solidarity with other sectors, which later affected its ability to converge with other protests. In addition to the well-known empathy towards the peasants and the anti-feudal struggle, the students, as reflected in the "Challenge"⁴ bulletin, mobilised against the so-called "Shola Concentration Camp". This institution was promoted by the government to empty the streets of Addis Ababa of vagrants and marginal sectors, especially in view of the celebration of the founding of the OAU in 1963. Thus, in 1966 some students secretly visited the facilities and, horrified by what they had seen there, made it public. Demonstrations in favour of the closure of the centre were not long in coming and it is estimated that around 2000 people took part in the demonstration.

In the face of massive student protests and continued criticism of the system and especially the crown, the emperor ended up using repression as a weapon to quell the revolts. This only confirmed "the general pattern: in opting for a repressive policy, the imperial government only succeeded in antagonizing students further and pushing them into the hands of radical students. repressive regimes give radical groups audience and attraction and end up propelling them to the leadership of discontented students" (Kedebe, 2008: 179). Thus, it can be said that the protests reached a new high point in 1969 and the government responded with increased repression by using water cannons and baton charges to dissolve the demonstrations. In addition, magazines such as Tagel (you must struggle) were

⁴ Ethiopian Students Association in North America (ESANA), Challenge, 6 n^o1 (August 1966), p.75-77.

banned from publication and the university was temporarily closed. In addition, on December 28, 1969, one of the leaders of the movement, Tilahun Gizaw, was assassinated in the vicinity of the campus. Although this episode was not clarified, the rumor of his assassination at the hands of the imperial police spread rapidly, increasing anti-government protests (Asserate, 2015).

It must also be borne in mind that, by the early 1970s, the student movement was the only well-organized and active social movement that maintained a pulse against the emperor. The New York Times echoed this situation in 1970: "Aside from the student movement, there is no organized political opposition in Ethiopia. Political parties are illegal, and the labor unions are in an embryonic apolitical stage. The students have put land' reform at the top of their list of demands, which include expansion of education, freedom of speech and of demonstration, abolition of the detention act and more social welfare, measures. Their conflicts with the authorities have often resulted in bloodshed and widespread detentions" (Howe, The New York Times, 1970). As a result, they began to see themselves as agents of change, rather than subjects of the emperor. However, the intention of the students was not to extend the protests beyond the boundaries of the university and education in general (Ottaway, 1976: 476). That is to say, it was not planning to generate a revolution as such in which all the people participated. A fact that, on the other hand, would have been very complicated because the majority of the population continued to suffer the consequences of illiteracy. It is evident that, although his slogans went against the emperor, the main objective was to recover good conditions in education and work possibilities that had been disappearing due to the rampant economic crisis. This situation, however, changed in 1974.

It is true that, since the late 1960s, the protests began to leave the University, with high school students joining in. This politicization of the younger students had a lot to do with the norm, imposed by the Ethiopian University Service, whereby university students had to work for a year in the provinces, especially as professors. This fact facilitated the rapid diffusion of the social movement outside the University, increasing awareness among the students of the institutes. Likewise, student agitation was also mixed in the field with anti-feudal and land tenure policies. The immobility of the regime and the lack of social, political and economic reforms convinced the students that the system had to be radically changed. To this end, they defended the constitution of a new regime based on social equality and obviously promoted through Marxism (Adamu & Balsvik, 2018: 268).

3. The role of the students during the 1974 Revolution

It must be mentioned here that throughout this section that the development of the revolution will not be only analysed, but we will also focus on the role played by the students, which is, after all, the ultimate objective of this analysis. The Revolution finally broke out in February 1974. The continuous student

protests, begun in 1960, were joined by different sectors with disparate interests. Although it has traditionally been exposed that the spark that ignited the spirits was the increase in the price of gasoline in February 1974 (Brietzke, 1979: 216) the truth is that the causes have deeper roots.

First, Ethiopia's economic and social situation was already catastrophic before 1974, which materialized in the great famine of 1973. Although the country had already experienced other famine episodes between 1958-1959 when an estimated 100,000 people died, more than two million people were affected in 1973. But, in addition, the government tried to ignore what was happening and in fact kept what was happening hidden from public opinion. Since March of that year, many peasants have moved to the capital to ask for help. However, the demonstrations were repressed, highlighting the government's position on this problem. The students, along with some professors, decided to investigate what was happening in the Wollo region. They returned to the capital with images of what was occurring and began to broadcast them. Three of the teachers who were part of this project were arrested (Lemma, 1979:40). The student movement, with its long history of solidarity, proposed that part of its daily food be distributed among the refugee peasants, to which the administration opposed. In addition, many peasants were expelled from the city and those who managed to stay were relocated to marginal areas, amplifying an existing problem. This treatment of people who asked for something as basic as food was opposed to the banquets that were held in Addis Ababa in June 1973, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the OAU⁵. To this terrible event was added unemployment in the cities and the countryside, inflation, the lack of oil and the worsening of the most basic comforts (Keller, 1981: 543).

Evidently, along with the causes of the revolution, we should ask ourselves why such a social explosion did not take place before. Firstly, until 1974 there was no urban or rural mass movement that could illuminate the revolution. It seems evident that once the protests became massive and organized among different sectors with the aim of overthrowing the system, it could not survive (Hiwet, 1984:33). Until then there had been a strong student opposition, but it was not enough to generate a massive mobilization that would put the system against the ropes. Somehow, the policies carried out by the emperor and his Prime Minister ended up constructing different social groups opposed to the instituted order. These groups included peasants, workers, merchants, students and also soldiers (Markakis, 2016: 94). Thus, it seems clear that, in addition to hunger, the economic crisis and widespread instability, other factors such as a cholera epidemic and rising inflation were added, as basic consumer goods such as rice and bread and gasoline doubled in price in just

⁵ Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP). 1974. "Ethiopia: Famine and Revolt" MERIP Reports, 27: 23-25.

three months. Thus on February 18 the streets were already taken by taxi drivers, students, unemployed, urban workers and teachers. The repression suffered by the demonstrators between February 18 and 24, with 20 people killed and 560 arrested, was the straw that broke the camel's back⁶. The emperor was aware of the size of the protests, already turned into revolution, when some military joined the protests a few days later. The loss of military loyalty was a very hard blow to the stability of the regime (Keller, 1981: 544).

By the end of February Haile Selassie was aware that the situation was out of control and that for the first time since 1960 the danger of losing the crown was a reality. The emperor therefore announced a series of reforms and forced Prime Minister Aklilu Habte-Wold to resign, a measure without comparison as he had been in office since 1961. Lij Endelkachew Makonnen took over the post of Prime Minister from that moment onwards and began his mandate with the promise of reforms, including land distribution (Kedebbe, 2008: 8). It is precisely at this point that students became the key to keeping the flame of revolution alive. The promise of new measures to alleviate the bad economic situation, together with democratic reforms such as the creation of a multi-party system, a new constitution and freedom of expression, convinced some sectors to abandon the revolution, especially among taxi drivers, workers and peasants (Brietzke, 1979: 218-219). However, the students were aware that they had become a key part of the revolution and regained their role as agents of change. They were determined to see the end of the monarchy.

In order to do so, they soon pointed out as traitors to the revolution any sector that wanted to withdraw from the protests. Student activism was key to maintaining the revolution during the first weeks of Endalkachew's government. The most radicals saw in his figure an extension of the status quo since he was part of the aristocracy. It was precisely the students who soon demonstrated against the new government with pro-democracy slogans and against the Prime Minister, even burning his effigy on March 11 (Lemma, 1979: 41). By then the students were suspicious of all those who did not support the end of the imperial regime and the revolutionary process they were undergoing. Nor did they trust the growing role that the military was beginning to play since April, when they formed the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and Territorial Army, popularly known as Derg, which began to occupy the political and public space (Darch, 1976:13).

Admittedly, the military began to occupy the public sphere, but also the political arena, and succeeded in leading a revolution that until then had been conducted by civil society. The Derg carried out a series of purges in June, arresting different officers, parliamentarians and even members of the imperial council, the army and government ministers. Finally, Prime Minister Makonnen was deposed with the excuse that his leadership had increased the instability of the country and

⁶ *Ídem.*

was replaced on July 22 by Mikael Imru, a member of an aristocratic family, but with a long socialist reputation (Ottaway, 1976: 479). The revolution ended when Emperor Haile Selassie I was definitively deposed on September 12, 1974 (Balsvik & Ronning, 2018: 270) although protests against the Emperor remained active even after his dismissal⁷.

Conclusions

From this analysis it is not difficult to extract a series of reflections on the evolution of the student movement in the period 1960-1974 and the role played by this social group over almost 15 years. Although this study has maintained the traditional division of the stages through which student protest passed, the truth is that not a few new conclusions have been drawn.

First of all, it is evident that the student social movement followed a logical evolution since its birth in 1960. After the coup d'état that year, the students woke up, demanding democratic changes and greater freedoms, within an imperial framework. From 1965 onwards, the spread of socialist ideology, the economic crisis, the worsening of living conditions and the university, the rise in unemployment and the lack of expectations generated a logical radicalization. From 1965 onwards, students were aware that the lack of reforms was stagnating their possibilities and that Haile Selassie I and the imperial system was ultimately responsible for these problems. Finally, this radicalization reverted to a revolutionary process in 1974. Although this evolution is logical if we compare it with other student movements such as the Spanish student movement against Franco's Regime or the French May protests, the fact is that the Ethiopian student movement had an unusual characteristic: even before its radicalization they supported a coup d'état that sought to dethrone the emperor in 1960.

But were the students really looking to overthrow the imperial system? Or were they looking for the emperor's office to be replaced by someone willing to carry out democratic reforms? It is evident that in 1960 neither the military who carried out the coup, nor the students, had foreseen the end of an imperial regime. This was visible in the election of Prince Asfa-Wasan who had the aim of legitimizing the coup, but also of keeping the royal family in power. Equally, the euphoria of the moment may well have led the student movement to support the military attempt, without stopping to think beforehand what they were endorsing. As we have already seen, the military never spoke of democracy, nor of parties, nor of freedom of expression.

In addition to evolution, the student movement played a key role in social awareness. Although it had its limits, especially if we think that the majority of the

⁷ Associated Press Archive. 19 September 1974. "Student demos against Haile Selassie continues", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9tcnRIJWul>.

population was illiterate and forms of communication were very limited, they managed to reach different social groups such as peasants, urban workers, secondary school students or their own teachers, for instance. This was undoubtedly due to their intersectional character, supporting demands from other social movements such as the reform of peasants' land with the slogan "Land to the Tiller" that we have already mentioned or their enormous solidarity with disadvantaged groups such as the prisoners in the "Shola Concentration Camp". In a way, these links were generating a space of protest and camaraderie that facilitated the social outburst in 1974.

Students also assumed their role as agents of change from 1965, which enhanced their ability to lead the protests against Haile Selassie and made visible the need to transform the established system, gradually spreading to other sectors. However, it cannot be said that the students started the revolution of 1974, nor that they played a leading role in it. In fact, they were the first to be surprised by the social outburst. With the analyzed data, it is evident that the revolutionary process was initiated by the hand of the taxi drivers due to the rise of gasoline. It did not take long for all the social movements against Haile Selassie I and the corrupt system he headed to join in. However, the student movement was key to maintaining the flame of the revolution from February 28 onwards when the first governmental change took place in almost 15 years with the election of Makonnen as the new Prime Minister. Despite the promised reforms, the students were clear that their goal was none other than to overthrow a system that had been making promises for more than a decade that never materialized. The rejection of the new Prime Minister ended up spreading among other social sectors, including those who, with the announcement of new reforms, were determined to abandon the revolution.

Therefore, we can affirm two facts. Firstly, that the Ethiopian student movement had an unusual origin, when it began to organise itself after a coup d'état that they themselves supported. And, secondly, that its solidarity and intersectional character and its continuous opposition to the emperor Haile Selassie, generated a space of confluence with other social movements and other sectors that allowed a social outburst as never before seen in the history of Ethiopia. However, it should be noted that the students did not lead the revolution, but rather became the last piece of a puzzle that once completed, germinated and promoted the 1974 Revolution.

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