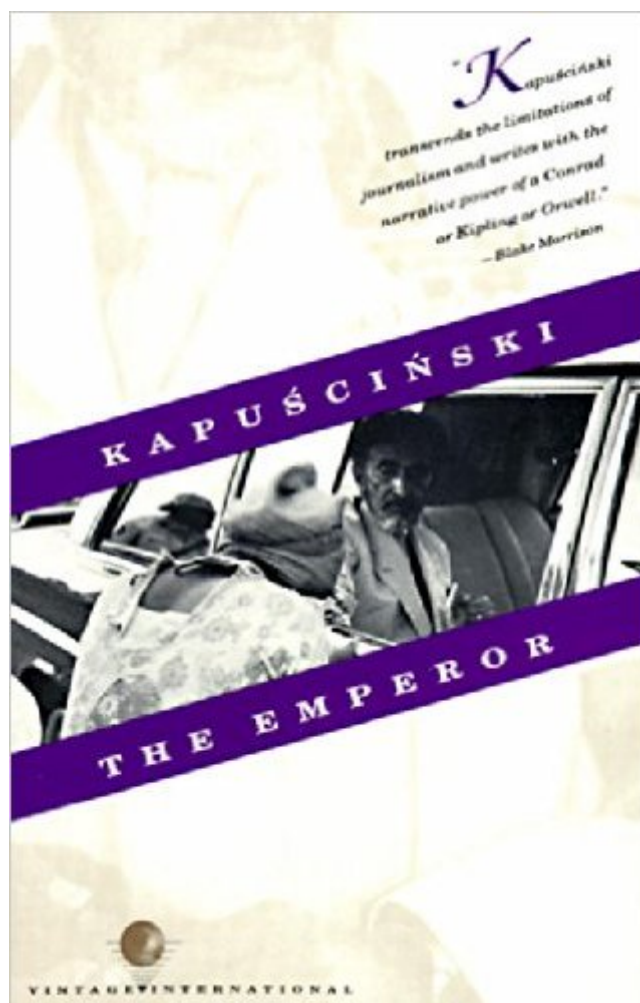


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# The Emperor: Downfall Of An Autocrat



## Synopsis

Haile Selassie, King of Kings, Elect of God, Lion of Judah, His Most Puissant Majesty and Distinguished Highness the Emperor of Ethiopia, reigned from 1930 until he was overthrown by the army in 1974. While the fighting still raged, Ryszard Kapuscinski, Poland's leading foreign correspondent, traveled to Ethiopia to seek out and interview Selassie's servants and closest associates on how the Emperor had ruled and why he fell. This "sensitive, powerful. . .history" (The New York Review of Books) is Kapuscinski's rendition of their accountsâ "humorous, frightening, sad, grotesqueâ "of a man living amidst nearly unimaginable pomp and luxury while his people teetered between hunger and starvation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

You can read a lot of books about Ethiopia, many very good. Similarly, you can read many studies of tyranny, studies of the worst of that ilk like Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Idi Amin, Franco, Pol Pot, Trujillo, Duvalier, and dozens more. Perhaps you've read Garcia-Marquez' "The Autumn of the Patriarch". Kapuscinski's amazing, deeply ironic book on Haile Selassie, last emperor of Ethiopia, bears more than a little resemblance to that latter volume. In fact, it's hard to believe that Kapuscinski was not influenced by that novel, which came out only three years before THE EMPEROR. Whatever the case, in this short book, the famous Polish journalist captures the psychology of tyranny and the tyrannized better than almost any other book I know. It also captures the mood in the capital as the Ethiopian Revolution was breaking out. The author claims to have ferreted out the last surviving officials in the palace and royal administration in Addis Ababa with the help of an elderly former

official in the Ministry of Information. THE EMPEROR is a kind of collage of their testimony as to what went on in the palace, about the psychology of those who worked or made appeals there. It is heavily larded with Kapuscinski's own words, and own insights into how things had happened. These in turn must have developed from his experiences and observations in communist Poland, but he never mentions that (he wanted to keep on working). Though the book is ostensibly about Ethiopia, it can be read as a study of absolutism and its evils. A kind of black humor suffuses the pages. Haile Selassie is referred to as Venerable, Benevolent, Worthy, Unrivaled, Distinguished, Exalted, Noble, August, and many more titles as in "His Most Unparalleled Majesty"---all tongue in cheek, and probably not uttered by the informants.

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