

# Newsreel Cameras In The Shadow Of Haile Selassie's Palace

## Filming Events on the Ethiopian Frontier

In the following story, reprinted from the "Motion Picture Herald," a Paramount cameraman, John Dored, tells of the trials and tribulations of a newsreel cameraman in the most discussed town in the world—Addis Ababa. In a week or two New Zealand picture-goers will see in the theatres the very films that Dored mentions in this story.

**W**E are headquartered in the Imperial Hotel here, in the shadow of the palace of my personal friend the Emperor, Haile Selassie. This old town bums. Pierce native tribesmen throng its dirty, twisting streets. Supplies pour into the city. The hotel is already filled to near capacity. Foreign newspapermen are keyed to a high pitch. It is almost impossible to purchase a camel—the "news hawks" having bought them up to prevent latecomers from following the news to the front. Our war staff, however, is completely quartered and equipped. It rains every day, clearing occasionally for a few hours. At night it grows intensely cold, and there is no heating system in the Imperial, nor any other place.

Ethiopian officials are very courteous, very co-operative, but very firm. Our cameramen are permitted to make pictures of anything they want—with the approval of these officials. The fact that we were the first on the scene hasn't hurt matters. In fact it has helped us to become known, which is everything now. Without ready identification, a news man, especially a newsreel cameraman, might just as well have stayed at home. An army officer has been assigned to accompany each cameraman at all times. That makes things a lot easier.

A white man may not walk on the streets of Addis Ababa, nor may he carry any burden, not even a newspaper. That meant hiring a carriage and driver, at least ten porters, and an interpreter. After three days we were ready to take pictures. By this time an engineer from our Paris bureau had arrived with sound equipment.

The following morning we started up into the hills overlooking Addis Ababa. With us were the Ethiopian officer, all ten porters, the interpreter, and 12 mules carrying the bulky sound equipment and necessary accessories. All but the porters were mounted on wiry

native horses. It was slow going. The trail we followed could hardly be called a road. The rain poured down monotonously, reducing the path underfoot to an ankle and sometimes a knee-deep morass of mud. Ten miles of this twisting mountain trail must be covered before the elevation could be reached. Then all we could do was hope that the sun would come out momentarily; otherwise no picture would be possible, because of this distance from the city and with such poor light, it would be impossible to expose the film sufficiently.

Four hours of slow plodding and the miniature caravan was still a mile from its goal. Occasionally we met small groups of natives driving heavily-loaded mules before them. These wiry tribesmen, scarcely touched by civilisation, eyed our camera expedition with suspicion and muttered low remarks as we passed. They wore curious tent-like "raincoats" of stiff straw extending almost to their ankles to ward off the rain. The officer persuaded one group to pose. Our camera was set up while the open-mouthed natives watched. Mud and rain made the task a dreary, tedious effort.

Thatch mats were laid in the road to give cameramen and soundmen dry footing. The porters set up a flimsy canvas roof to shelter them from the downpour. By this time the fear and suspicion of the tribesmen was such

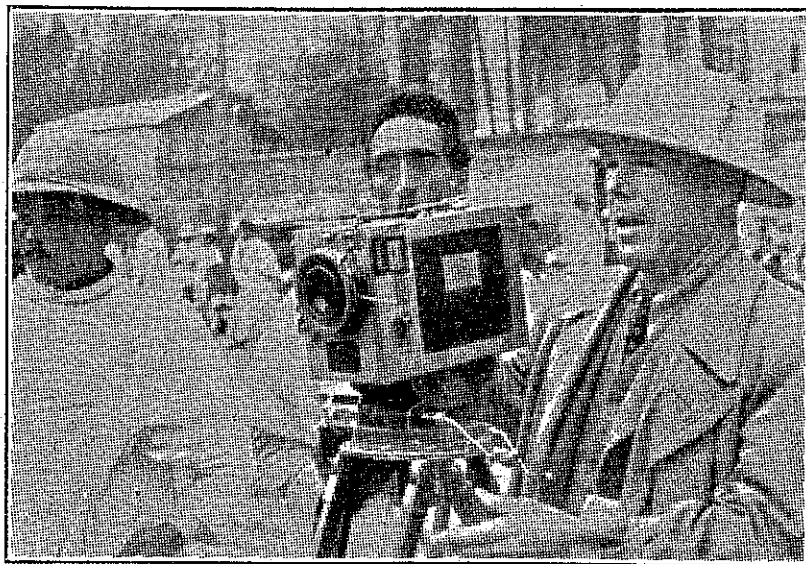
that they could not be persuaded to pass or stand in front of the apparatus that to them appeared to be an instrument of the devil. The Ethiopian officer prevailed upon them to remain, but they went muttering on their way and even the jingle of our silver coins could not tempt them. Two hours were wasted. It would be necessary to knock down our outfit and continue the journey to the mountain top, now near at hand.

Another group of travellers approached. After a half-hour's negotiations, involving persuasion to the extent of five dollars in silver coins, they agreed to be photographed. It was first necessary for both cameraman and soundman to stand in front of the running camera in order to show them that they would suffer no injury. The painful progress of the little group in their stiff thatch "raincoats," driving their mules over the muddy trail, was finally "shot."

Our outfit was again packed on the backs of the mules. In a half hour the elevation was reached and Addis Ababa could be seen faintly through the grey veil of rain. Now it was necessary to wait for the sun. The outfit was set up again, after which the natives prepared a midday meal. Our camera crew, army officer, and interpreters ate a lunch at the hotel. Six hours passed and all hope of the sun's appearance was gone. Fifty feet of

film were "shot" in the vain hope that it might be even faintly exposed.

Five days passed before the sun shone again over Addis Ababa. Each one of those days the same muddy, exhausting journey was repeated. But our pictures were made, at the end of the fifth day—just one scene that when finally shown to the public would run 10 feet at the most, for a period of six and two-thirds seconds. At the end of each exasperating day we returned to the draughty, unheated Imperial, soaked through and chilled to the bone. The menace of fever constantly



John Dored, the writer of the story on this page, photographed beside his newsreel camera at Addis Ababa. By this time Dored will have moved out of the capital to the scene of hostilities, filming war pictures for the picture screens of the entire world.

(Continued on next page.)