

guerrilla fronts

Eritrea: well-defined objectives



In the last few months US imperialism and Zionism have aimed their blows at the national liberation movement of Eritrea,

in an effort to distort the nature and objectives of that revolutionary struggle.

Regarding these attacks the Syrian newspaper *Revolution* published a communiqué of the Eritrea Liberation Front (ELF) in which it rejects imperialist intrigue and points out that the revolution in Eritrea is not an Islamic revolt nor is it the result of the efforts of any power to rule the Middle East.

The ELF says that the revolution in Eritrea is an independence struggle and asks how, with this in mind, their movement can be considered of a secessionist nature.

Considering the revolution in Eritrea secessionist means accepting Eritrea as part of the Ethiopian empire, and that means being blind to historical facts. Eritrea was an Italian colony from 1890 until 1941. In 1890 the Ethiopian empire did not exist in its present form. It is important to understand that the evolution of Eritrea and that of the Ethiopian empire were simultaneous historical phenomena. That is, when the Ethiopian empire was evolving in 1899, Eritrea was evolving simultaneously as a modern nation.

The other historical fact worth noting is that until 1953 Eritrea and the Ethiopian



empire were two separate units. Thus, when in 1953 Eritrea and the Ethiopian empire entered into formal political ties, they took the form of a federation granted and guaranteed by the United Nations. After that, the Ethiopian empire began its partial annexation of Eritrea and in 1962 it considered itself strong enough to formally take over Eritrea. There can only be secession when there has been unity. In Eritrea's case there was no unity; thus there can be no secession. Eritrea's revolution is a struggle for national independence and liberation from Ethiopian colonialism. The people of Eritrea fight against the Ethiopian occupation forces in the same way they fought against the British military occupation from 1947 until 1952.

The people of Eritrea are not only

fighting for national independence; on the contrary, they struggle for all the democratic rights provided by the Constitution of Eritrea. Article 16 says "The Constitution of Eritrea is based on the principle of democratic government." Article 17 of the Constitution guarantees all persons the right to "human rights and fundamental liberties." Article 18 states that the "governing bodies are established by the people and act in their interest." Article 25 and 26 say that "there must be freedom of movement, conscience, and religion." Article 30 stipulates that "every resident of Eritrea will have the right to express his opinion in any way (press, word of mouth, etc.) and be informed of the opinions expressed by others." Article 33 says "every one in Eritrea, regardless of nationality,

race, sex, or religion, will have the right to work at equal pay for equal work, regular paid vacations, a guaranteed minimum wage, sick pay and workman's compensation, and a decent and healthy standard of living." Paragraph 2 of the same article says that "every resident of Eritrea will have the right to join trade unions to protect his interests." It is clear, then, that the people of Eritrea fight for national independence in order to regain their sacred democratic rights.

But the reality is that the people of Ethiopia remain in the grip of an especially primitive type of feudalism. All the rights guaranteed in the Constitution of Eritrea are a remote dream to the people of the Ethiopian empire. Today the Ethiopian peoples are awakening from their listless passivity. A small but organized progressive force has come to the fore. What is surprising, however, is that even the so-called progressive force has entered into an unholy alliance with Haile Selassie on the question of Eritrea. As a result we are forced to ask the following questions. Are the so-called Ethiopian progressive forces struggling against feudalism to win for the Ethiopian people what the Constitution of Eritrea provided for the people of Eritrea, i. e. basic civil and human rights, and true justice — economic, political, and social? If that is the case, how can they deny to the people of Eritrea what they want for the people of Ethiopia? The objective of a progressive must be to condemn repression wherever he finds it. But when a progressive adopts a double standard of progress he can only be a chauvinist where Asmara* is concerned, a shoen nationalist or simply a person who is ignorant of the facts.

* Asmara, capital of Eritrea.

Haile Selassie has deliberately and systematically cast a veil over the contribution of the people of Eritrea to the great anticolonialist movement of our time. The anticolonialist movement of Eritrea which has its roots in the period from 1890 until 1941, was only able to gain strength from 1947 on when the international situation became favorable.

History shows that Eritrea and Libya were the first African countries that obtained their independence. Nor can we overlook Eritrea's contribution to Pan-Africanism. Not imaginary Pan-Africanism but rather practical Pan-Africanism. The federation with Ethiopia was a genuine contribution to African unity. However, Ethiopian colonialism, with its usual brutality destroyed and abused the noble feelings of the people of Eritrea.

The revolution in Eritrea is part of the global anti-imperialist struggle.

The US that has made a political, economic, and military neocolony out of the Ethiopian empire supports the annexation of Eritrea. Thus it is clear that the people of Eritrea who struggle against Ethiopian colonialism are also indirectly fighting against the power of the United States. An article published in *US News and World Report* serves to illustrate what we mean. "The importance of Kagnew Station**," the article says, "goes a good way toward explaining the heavy commitment of the US toward maintaining the military strength of Ethiopia."

The article quotes a US official: "Our aid, plainly and simply, pays the rent on Kagnew Station." The article goes on to say: "Ethiopia receives more than half of all US military aid to nations on the con-



continent of Africa. The cost of this program now has climbed over the 100-million-dollar mark, and the US Military Assistance Advisory Group of some 110 officers and men in Ethiopia is the biggest in Africa. In addition, Ethiopia has received 150 million dollars in economic assistance."

The revolution in Eritrea is neither an Islamic uprising nor the product of the maneuvering of a powerful nation seeking to dominate the Middle East. As the Eritrean revolution achieves new and bigger victories it will prove that it is advancing the struggle in the Middle East as well as

Africa's struggle against imperialism. But perhaps the greatest impact of the Eritrean revolution will be on the tottering Ethiopian empire. The nationalities under the rule of the Ethiopian empire—following the example of the Eritrean people—will succeed in crushing feudalism and US imperialism. The prerequisite for unity in the African Horn is to crush the feudal imperialist shoa and the great alliance between regional feudalism and US imperialism.

** Kagnew Station is the US base in Asmara.