

ERITREA NOW



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18 YEARS OF ARMED STRUGGLE

It is 18 years now since a handful of Eritrean patriots raised arms, on September 1, 1961, in defiance of Ethiopia's blatant attempts to undermine the "Federal Act" - imposed on the Eritrean people from the outset. The Ethiopian regime's continued trampling of the meagre provisions of the "federation" had by then convinced most Eritreans of the impending annexation - formally announced in 1962, and the launching of the armed struggle was widely acclaimed.

The years of armed struggle, bitter as they are involving precious sacrifices and untold sufferings, have brought the Eritrean people not only spectacular military victories, but above all, the foundations of unexploitative social

formation. The EPLF has waged, throughout the years, intense struggles at the ideological, political and cultural levels to transform the feudo-capitalist and backward Eritrean society. And much has been achieved in these fields, even if the considerable military drawbacks incurred on us in the past year have somewhat affected the pace of these revolutionary changes. Nonetheless, the ideological and organizational foundations for a progressive social formation have been firmly set, irreversible social changes effected in the liberated areas under the EPLF.

Throughout the past year, in particular since June '78, the armed struggle has raged with much more increased ferocity. The colonial regime,

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MASS ORGANIZATIONS HOLD CONGRESSES

EPLF mass organizations in Europe - the Association of Eritrean workers in Europe (AEWE), the Association of Eritrean students in Europe (AESE), (regional branch of the Association of Eritrean Students), and the Association of Eritrean Women in Europe (EWAE), held their annual (3rd*) for the first two and 2nd for the last) Congresses in Bologna, Italy, from August 17/23, 1979, under revolutionary slogans epitomizing the banners of the on-going ideological, political and organizational struggles.

The Congresses were attended by members of the Central Committee of the EPLF, representatives of the mass-organizations of the EPLF in the Middle-East and Africa, and delegates from Eritrean Sup-

port Committees in Europe. More than 35 delegates of liberation movements - including the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Front - democratic and revolutionary parties and organizations in Europe attended the Congresses and delivered solidarity messages in support of the Eritrean revolution and its Vanguard, the EPLF. Over 46 telegrams and letters of support were also sent from friendly democratic and progressive organizations unable to attend the Congresses. (The complete list is printed on page 9).

The separate Organizational Congresses of the sisterly associations were preceded by a joint session held during the first two-days of the

(*) The Eritreans for liberation in Europe was ramified into the students and workers associations in its 8th Congress, held in August 1977.



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convening of the Congresses where the over-all aspects of the Eritrean revolution, the concrete situation at the moment, and, the international situation were thoroughly analysed and discussed. The EPLF Central Committee members, in particular, Comrade Sehat Ephrem, member of the EPLF Politburo and responsible for EPLF mass organizations, elucidated these points in the lengthy opening speech to the Congress. These issues were further elaborated in the one-day long joint Seminar held on the second day, 18th August, and presided by the EPLF Central Committee members.

In the opening speech to the Congress, Comrade Sehat said " ... Your Congress is being held at a time when our revolution is passing through a new phase. And in order to clearly understand the common struggle ahead and be able to chart-out correct lines in our protracted struggle, it is imperative to comprehend not only the present situation but also to study and assess our past experiences. In particular it is necessary to analyse, with due emphasis and thoroughness, those experiences and changes that have characterized the period from the mid of 1978 until the present time; i.e., since the fascist Dergue unleashed its first all-out offensive..."

Characterizing the present situation and the obtaining correlation of forces, Sehat said: "... The enemy has suffered incalculable human and material losses: of the 120 thousand enemy troops (initial), nearly 60 thousand have been killed, wounded, captured or have deserted, and the remaining have their morale shattered. Enormous trucks and transport vehicles have been captured or destroyed by the EPLF... As the developments of last year and the outcome of our struggle attest the overall situation of our revolution is changing in our favour. That the path ahead will be clear and full of victories is discernible at this stage..."

The salient aspects of the present situation, the overall impact of the strategic withdrawals-

the policy of the Ethiopian regime in the occupied areas, the unity process between the ELF and the EPLF, the international situation and in particular the nature of the relations of the EPLF within the broad anti-imperialist camp were, as stated earlier, thoroughly discussed with the active collaboration of the members of all the associations in the Seminar held on August 18. Additional joint Seminars on various organizational questions were also held during the rest of the week in the evenings, parallel with the separate organizational Congresses held in the day-time by the respective associations.

The 18th anniversary of the Eritrean people's armed struggle was also celebrated. A brief analysis focusing on the complex and protracted path our revolution has traversed in the past 18 years, the developments and victories achieved and the path ahead was presented and the historical event commemorated with revolutionary cultural show depicting the unity and solidarity of the Eritrean masses.

The different associations then proceeded with their respective organizational Congresses and after summing up their experiences in the last year and discussing organizational questions pertaining to publicity work, politicization and conscientization of the members and in general Eritreans abroad, and questions of generating material support to the revolution, successfully concluded their annual Congresses by adopting important resolutions on the various topics discussed and electing the executive bodies. (Resolutions on page 9).

The Eritrean Support Committees from the different parts of Europe, held, in accordance with the arranged program, their 2nd annual meeting on August 18th to exchange their experiences in the solidarity work and seek methods of better co-ordinating and enhancing their supportive work. An additional discussion-session was also held with the EPLF Central Committee members. (More details on separate report, page).

The evenings were packed, throughout the week long Congresses, with film shows, occasional se-

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The Congress
in Session



INTERVIEW

ERITREA NOW recently interviewed Comrade SEBHAT EPHREM, member of the EPLF Politburo and responsible for the department of mass organizations on the present situation.

The fifth enemy offensive, launched last month has been, as was widely reported then, totally frustrated inflicting perhaps the most severe losses on the enemy. Could you elaborate on the scale of enemy preparations and strategy in that offensive and, in particular, the significance and impact of this on the over-all balance of forces?

Perhaps, a short review of the military developments and the overall situation in the past year of continued enemy offensives is in place.

In the first three offensives, the enemy was able to capture some of our liberated areas. We had to withdraw from the Southern, Eastern and Northern cities and in the Sahel region, from Afabet. These pattern changed almost drastically and in our favour, in the fourth offensive. The enemy could not advance and the task force, 508A/B, spearheading the fourth offensive sustained severe human and material losses. The morale of the occupationist troops was seriously eroded and it was increasingly becoming difficult for the Dergue to boost the dwindling morale of its troops and maintain the momentum of the earlier offensives for future military undertakings.

So the fifth offensive was planned against the backdrop of the low morale of the occupationist troops, and their increasingly growing disillusionment with a costly war with no end in the foreseeable future. It had the twin objectives of demonstrating to the world and the Ethiopian masses in particular, that it was about to settle the Eritrean question with this "last push" and henceforth focus its effort towards stabilizing its war-torn economy, and, equally importantly, to restore the dwindling morale of its troops.

Obviously, if the fifth offensive were to meet the desired objectives, it had to be well prepared and planned. For failure this time would not only exacerbate the already acute economic contradictions besetting the regime, but most significantly, it would further plummet the low morale of the occupationist army to dangerously low levels, perhaps threatening its very existence. And in fact the offensive was well-planned, taking about four months of meticulous preparations.

The Dergue initially called a big meeting in Addis Abeba of all the higher echelons of its armed forces - Commissars and Officers of all the task forces and brigades - to discuss the strategy of the war in Eritrea and in particular the fifth offensive. Serious disagreements and dissensions emerged in this meeting, with some senior officers questioning the Dergue's whole strategy and military approach. The Dergue bought off and raised the ranks of most officers, liquidated the few hardliners which opposed its line and thus ensured unanimous acceptance of its proposed undertakings

within the upper hierarchy of its armed forces. Having secured this; it then focused its attention towards preparing the Ethiopian public and fully utilized its propaganda apparatus, (radio, TV, press etc.) to that end.

On the military side, the Dergue assigned TASK FORCE 503 for this offensive. This force, entirely composed of U.S. and Israeli trained regular troops was especially groomed for counter-guerrilla warfare and had till now been in reserve. The original idea was to use the assorted regular/militia troops for the offensives against the cities, and this special force to be used later when our forces have retreated and resorted to guerrilla warfare. However, the prevailing low morale and its incapacity to mobilize the war-weary troops for yet another offensive prompted it to assign task force 503, for the fifth conventional offensive.

All the officers of this task force were U.S. Israel trained and had been, at one time or another, to the U.S. for further military training. Another unique and important point to add is that this task force was not devoured by the internal militia Vs regular contradictions, endemic in all the other task forces. Moreover, in order to stall and dilute any contradictions within this force, the Dergue conducted a series of "seminars", usually accompanied with drinks etc. and brought new cadres and officers whose combat zeal was not blended by the harsh military reality in Eritrea. In brief, maximum emphasis was given to keep the morale of the troops in this task force at its pick, to physiologically prepare them for this "last and sure-footed" offensive.

Of course, the Dergue has never been short of sophisticated weapons in the previous four offensives too. But this time, special care was given in this respect too and additional sophisticated weapons, fuel etc. supplied to the enemy force by warships along the Red sea coast.

In brief, the preparations were meticulous, embracing all the decisive aspects. The enemy propaganda apparatus was even exerting considerable efforts to prepare international public opinion for the impending "final crush" of the Eritrean "bandits".

To answer the second part of the question, the fifth offensive was crucial with far-going implications for both of us. And indisputably, the failure of the fifth enemy offensive entails a change in strategic balance of forces in our favour. The Dergue would indeed be sailing in hot waters and at its wits end to mobilize again its armed forces for another of these offensives - unless, it introduces other qualitatively new elements.

The enemy troops had advanced in the first three offensives, were checked in the fourth offensive and have been completely repulsed and annihilated



in the fifth offensive. It is undeniable that the enemy previously enjoyed overall superiority over us, and although at very high costs, scored some victories in the first three offensives. Now in the fifth offensive, the best task force has virtually been wiped out; all the high ranking officers and commissars killed in battle; and all the sophisticated weapons amassed for the "last push" safely garnered into our hands. All these factors clearly indicate that we are approaching the stage, even if this has not yet crystallized, of the culmination of the stalemate phase and the ushering of the next phase, where we hold decisive overall superiority.

As confirmed by independent sources, the fascist Dergue has lost more than a third (almost 60,000) of its occupationist troops in the five offensives launched so far and a colossal amount of sophisticated weapons. In light of its apparent incapacity to militarily subdue the Eritrean struggle, and taking into consideration the economic and political crisis its military intransigence is breeding in Ethiopia, do you see a shift, perhaps enforced from without, in its war policy?

The Dergue, had in an effort to crush our revolution, mustered all its material and human resources to its war efforts in the unsuccessful five offensives. These adventurist military undertakings have, in turn, bred and exacerbated acute political and economic crisis within the regime.

In the political field, although the Dergue has liquidated or seriously weakened sections of the democratic opposition in Ethiopia through ruthless repressions, it is at this stage enmeshed in personal power-struggles and dissensions. The political alliances it had forged at one time with opportunist groups, (MEISON, MALERED, etc...), primarily in the hope of generating some social base and to give civilian/progressive facade to its military rule in the eyes of the world and the Ethiopian masses, has crumbled. The Dergue has largely decimated all these opportunist groups, forcing their remnants to go into clandestine opposition. The emptiness of its "socialism", although never seriously entertained by the majority of the Ethiopian masses, has been much more exposed in the course its counter-revolutionary wars in Eritrea and repressive rule at home. In brief, its efforts at securing a social base to its dictatorship has largely failed, the opportunist alliances it badly craved to forge, for purely political manipulations, dissipated and contradictions between the Dergue/Sedet members - the only para-military organization with a formal alliance with the former, aggravated.

The Ethiopian economy is in shambles. Contrary to its verbal protestations, the Dergue has never seriously attempted, indeed is incapable, of orientating the economy along socialist lines. It has geared all its resources to the war front. Throughout the years of its fascistic rule, the Dergue has not established a single hospital, school or any other developmental projects, pivoted on the welfare of the people. In contrast, it has evacu-

ated hospitals and schools on various occasions in order to house or medicate its troops. On a more general level, industrial production has progressively fallen due to shortages of raw materials, drainage of the work-force etc., agricultural production, and in particular, the so-called co-operatives have stagnated (refer to Mengistu's speech). The peasants, disenchanted by the Dergue's overall and in particular price policies, are prematurely cutting, hoarding etc. the coffee plantations - the key cash-crop and source of foreign reserve of the regime.

The regime is thus entangled in serious financial difficulties and is increasingly resorting to systematic and coercive fund-raising campaigns and extorting the masses to keep its war-machinery going. It has introduced fines of all sorts - in addition to increased taxes - and people are forced to pay from \$ 5-12 for not attending the kebelle and other meetings which they largely consider irrelevant and a nuisance in their wretched struggle to earn the bread of the day.

In brief, the Ethiopian economy as it stands to-day is incapable of internally generating the necessary resources for continuing the war and external aid has assumed a decisive and primary role.

Militarily too, the Dergue's position is no better. Inspite of the initial euphoria, it is now becoming increasingly clear that its much-acclaimed success in the Ogaden war is not that all real. Its troops are now bogged down and confined to the handful cities and towns.

In Eritrea, almost 60,000 of the 120,000 troops deployed at the start of these series of offensives have been incapacitated. The Tigrai and Oromo people's struggles are daily growing in military strength and popular support, with a markedly significant pace in the past year.

Inspite of all these political, economic and military crisis however, there is not as yet an organized democratic force in Ethiopia strong enough to assume state-power in the short-term. So the changes one can envisage are coup-inspired personality changes - reshuffling of leading members etc. - within, more or less, the same camp.

On the question of the continuity of its war in Eritrea, its occupationist troops, the numerous task forces, the Migs, the BM21's, etc. have failed it in the military ventures. The Dergue's war machinery has proved to be inept, incapable of bringing about the desired changes in Eritrea of realizing the Dergue's all-out pursuit to solve the Eritrean question militarily. And at this stage, with the prevailing low morale of its troops in the face of the repeated and devastating defeats, the Dergue is not militarily in a position to keep-up the momentum of its year-long offensives.

It is indeed inconceivable to see the Dergue on the offensive again with its present military institutions and capabilities. But its fascist nature and colonial logic will gravitate it to be on the offensive. And this cannot but imply the introduction of new elements, new factors,

into the war. Perhaps, as had happened in Vietnam, the Dergue would escalate the war employing other methods of warfare - biological; chemical; etc. Perhaps it will secure the massive intervention of external forces.

It would not be appropriate for us to speculate here on what the Dergue will ultimately do. The future, history, would have to provide the definitive answer.

It is being reported in various newspapers these days that the Dergue will announce the formation of a "Communist Party" in the forthcoming celebrations for the fifth anniversary of its military dictatorship. (Mengistu has already been nominated, self-appointed to be exact, as its president). Could you describe the nature of this grouping and the motivations underlying the Dergue's moves at this particular time?

This has infact been floating in the air for quite a long time now. That this "Communist Party" or whatever labels it may finally assume, is not a genuine political party representing the interests of the workers and peasants perhaps needs no more elaboration here. Sheer proclamations do not make genuine proletarian parties as we know them, in the dialectical and scientific sense of the term.

Indeed few, if any, would be taken in by the Dergue's verbal exercises. And its present manipulations only accentuate the prevailing, and getting wide currency, tendency among reactionary cliques in power to assume progressive cloaks so as to better neutralize internal opposition from the exploited classes, and also at times, as a means of securing external support.

The Dergue has infact since long resorted and quite excelled in this practice. In the early years, it had formed some alliances with so-called progressive groups. As I mentioned it earlier, these arrangements were dictated by the exigencies of the prevailing circumstances. There was no intention or conscious effort to build on these alliances and at the moment, all except Sedet, have been eliminated. This has of course helped to unmask the Dergue and show the banality of its numerous declarations.

This new "Communist Party" is infact no other than Sedet so transformed by one of the Dergue's numerous, even if devoid of content, proclamations. The heirarchy inside Sedet is of course the same as the Dergue.

One of the possible reasons for the announcement at this particular time is to blurr and underplay the military defeats and humiliation it has sustained in the fifth offensive in particular and the over-all military situation in general. To those intimately acquainted with the Dergue's tactics, it is obvious that this is just one of its slogans adopted at this time to deflect the attention of the world and Ethiopian masses from the reality of its military adventures and blunders.

The Ethiopian regime has conducted, more than ever before, intensive diplomatic campaigns this year to isolate the Eritrean revolution, a task also facilitated by the direct collaboration of

the Soviet Union both in its war of aggression and its propaganda campaigns. Could you elaborate on the extent of international support to the EPLF at this time?

It is undeniable that the Dergue has, throughout all the years, by far surpassed us in diplomatic activities. Clearly our limited capacity, even if the justness of our cause situates us at a vantage, is no match to the Dergue's propaganda machinery, buttressed at the moment by the active support of other forces.

Nonetheless, and in particular in the past year, there have been significant developments in the diplomatic field too in our favour.

In Africa, many progressive countries, including Guine Conakry, Mozambique, Algeria, Guinea Bissau, etc., have recognized our just struggle and are extending to it political support. The Pan-African Youth Congress recently held in Brazzaville has also officially recognized our struggle. These developments, taking into consideration the earlier positon of our revolution in the African context, are highly important.

In Europe, many democratic organizations and parties have recognized and are actively supporting our revolution. The numerous and impressive solidarity messages in the last Congress of the EPLF mass organizations in Europe are perhaps telling indications of the growing support our revolution is getting within the broad-left in Europe.

In latin America, although there is a general understanding and sympathy with our struggle by most of the revolutionary movements there, much work in publicity needs to be done so as to extend and consolidate the existing relations.

In the Middle-East, we have broadly speaking, good relations with the revolutionary and liberation movements in that region.

Apparently, a lot of work remains to be done on our part in order to broaden and deepen international support and solidarity to our struggle. Nonetheless, the gains in the diplomatic field in the past year have been great even if not commensurae - (but this has been so over the years) - with our political and military achievements in the field and the overall content and nature of our struggle. The monopoly of the Ethiopian regime in this field has however been broken and its efforts to isolate us internationally largely frustrated. And the present trend is such that we reasonably expect, with redoubled efforts on our part, to achieve superiority in the near future in the diplomatic struggle too.

What is the present situation of refugees in the field? What has been the response of humanitarian organizations to the war victims in this difficult year?

Almost 1/3 of the Eritrean population are today, because of enemy repression and genocidal war, displaced and scattered all over the world in Africa, in the Middle-East, Europe, etc. and living a squalid life as refugees.

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DERGUE'S POLICY IN THE RE-OCCUPIED AREAS

We had briefly reported, in our previous issue (Eritrea Now N°6), on the alliance of the Dergue with the feudalists, particularly in the Afabet region. Here we will briefly deal with some aspects of the Dergue's policy in the re-occupied areas, with particular emphasis in the rural areas and city neighborhoods it has been able to re-establish its colonial presence.

The latter is comparatively more important for our purposes here since it sheds relevant light on the nature of the Dergue, its overall ideological position in relation to the peasant question. Indeed, all the apologists of the Dergue, and in this respect, even those harbouring the maximum reservations on its "consistent revolutionism" have invariably summoned its "sweeping land proclamations", "abolition of landlordism", and "radical solution" of the peasant question in Ethiopia to justify their political sympathy support to the Dergue. Its war crimes in Eritrea, the ruthless suppression of democratic forces, workers, peasants, in Ethiopia through the "Red" and other suitably labelled terror-campaigns have indeed been rationalized, apologetically cushioned as "inevitable war excesses", not more than the blunders, albeit with grave consequences, of a regime committed to radical change, if not always capable of evolving the best means of achieving this.

Regrettably, the pattern within these circles, has been to mechanically parrot its numerous seemingly progressive proclamations on the different democratic questions (land, urban housing, nationalization of industries, international alignment etc), and with this impressive chronological list of alleged measures, contend that the Dergue represents a (social) force capable of shouldering the historic responsibility of leading the Ethiopian revolution.

This wrong approach and its implicit, subjective, corollary on the nature of the dergue has, however, since long been strongly refuted, with substantiative arguments, by the EPLF and other revolutionary forces intimately attached to the reality obtaining in Ethiopia. The arguments have been forwarded several times before, hence we feel it is not necessary to replicate them here. And we will restrict ourselves, for our limited purposes here, to a sketchy formulation of the stated position.

We believe that the point of departure should not and cannot be the Dergue's positions on isolated questions, its international alliances and even actually effected measures torn-out of their contexts, let alone its proclamations. The Eritrean colonial question, the peasant question in Ethiopia, and in general, all the democratic questions of mass participation in production and political power are interrelated issues. And one cannot separate the parts from the whole, the

proclamations from the practical measures, and the measures from the external circumstances and motivations underpinning them.

Perhaps this otherwise obvious line of demarcation was somewhat blurred, to the external observer, by the Dergue's response and concessions to the popular demands in order to stay in power. And it is in this regard that the Dergue's present policies in the re-occupied areas in Eritrea became of special importance in exposing its nature. The contrast being that whereas in the first case, the change in power (i.e. the fall of the feudo-bourgeoisie Hailesellasie regime) and the need to hold the reigns of state-power in the middle of the not yet subdued mass upsurge gravitated the Dergue to proclaim anti-feudalist measures, the same political expediency prompted it to ally with the feudalists in Eritrea when it re-occupied EPLF held liberated areas. For here, there was not the slightest overlapping of interests between the overwhelming majority of the poor peasants who had already consolidated their democratic institutions during the periods of liberation, and the new occupying power whose power interests can only be served by forging the alliance with the camp of feudalists and reactionaries. It was a reversed situation for the same opportunist regime, hence the same political expediency dictated the adoption of a reversed class alliance.

CO-OPERATIVES DISMANTLED

The peasant question was largely solved in all the EPLF held liberated areas by the time of the enemy all-out offensives in June '78. Parallel with the liberation of the rural areas from Ethiopian occupation, the EPLF was naturally embarking upon the implementation of its revolutionary programmes. As widely covered several times in the past, the praxis evolved was to organize, or enlarge the underground cells formed in the pre-liberation years, and politicize the masses with emphasis on the poor and landless peasants, and, agitate and lead the struggle for the equitable re-distribution of land within the specific village. This movement, which had assumed an accelerated momentum since early '76 was nearing its completion. And by the middle of '78, land redistribution in the interests of the poor and landless peasants had been effected on a large-scale, people's assemblies, dominated by the down-trodden masses, formed in almost all the liberated villages. In short, the economic base and political privileges of the feudalists and rich peasants had been smashed and rural life largely democratized.

Furthermore, in the districts and villages where the politicization was relatively high and the political power of the poor peasants consoli-

dated, the process of forming agricultural co-operatives, even if small and on an experimental stage, had initiated. At the time of the strategic withdrawals, 17 villages (Gheremi, Azien, Defer, Zager, Afidena, Shimanejus Tahtai, etc...), in the North and South liberated zones had allotted and collectively harvested a substantial portion of the respective village communal land. The total produce, for the last harvest, of these not yet fully-fledged co-operatives was 2057 quintals of cereals. Plans for their future growth, the market of their produce etc were already laid down through the co-ordination the Association of Peasants, the local people's assemblies and the EPLF.

After the strategic withdrawals, the Dergue began to issue reactionary directives and to clamp-down on the co-operatives within its reach. Initially, it attempted to confiscate the produce of some co-operatives, as was the case in Shemanejus Tahtai, alleging that these were "bandits property". This policy was later abandoned because of mounting opposition from the peasants, and the Dergue instead ordered the co-operatives to freeze the distribution/selling of their produce and store it pending further "government" instructions. This scheme too was not on the whole successful, except in a handful of villages, (Azien, Adi-Teklezan etc.). The reason being that most of the co-operatives had, in anticipation of the Dergue's reactionary moves, even prematurely harvested and sold/distributed their produce among their members.

Nonetheless, the Dergue has succeeded in creating serious obstacles for their continued operations since even in the latter case, the distribution/ selling had mostly been made haphazardly and by abandoning the (previously) laid-down directives ensuring their continued existence and growth. Further, it has afterwards openly ordered the dissolution of the co-operatives under the pretest that they are not "feasible" in the present circumstances where modern agricultural machinery and fertilizers are lacking. Moreover it has systematically and effectively terminated their existence in the areas under its occupation through, as indicated below, the dissolution of the people's assemblies and the formation of feudalist and reactionary dominated Kebelles ("zone dwellers administration) in their stead.

And in these counter-revolutionary measures, the local feudalists and some rich peasants have all along collaborated with the occupationist force, supplying it with essential information on

the situation of the co-operatives, sabotaging and breaching the regulations and internal discipline of the production teams, and lodging grievances against the people's assemblies (prior to their dissolution) etc.

ASSEMBLIES DISSOLVED

As stated earlier, democratic organs of self-rule, defending and spearheading the revolutionary gains and changes were formed from the ranks of the mass organizations in almost all the liberated cities and villages. At the time of the strategic withdrawals, there were, on the whole, 44 people's : 2 in Sahel, 6 in Keren, 14 in the Northern zone, 7 in the Eastern rural areas, 4 in the Eastern cities, 3 in the Southern cities and 8 in the Southern rural areas.

After re-occupation, the Dergue began to dissolve the people's assemblies in the areas under its control and set-up the kebelles on their ruins despite its initial claims that it will not tamper with them, evidently made in the hope of neutralizing the opposition of the masses. Although the procedure followed in forming the Kebelles had varied from place to place, the underlying motivation was to place its stooges in power and the different tactics employed were designed to achieve this end. And the Kebelles are invariably dominated by notorious feudalists and in general, disgruntled elements whose interests and privileges had been curtailed in the liberation years.

In some occupied villages, the Dergue first appointed what it calls the "co-ordinating committee" from the reactionaries, village chiefs in the old order and even notorious collaborators of the Hailesellasie regime and entrusted this body to elect the 12 Kebelle members from its ranks. In other areas, it summoned an assembly of clan representatives within the specific area or village, reviving the decadent parochial sentiments and divisions long superceded in the years of revolutionary struggle, and formed the kebelles from them. Still in other places, mostly in the cities, the Dergue arbitrarily subdivided the administrative zones and formed the kebelles.

The Dergue has thus re-infested political power to the old local ruling classes in the areas under its occupation. And as pointed out in the earlier issue, these elements are agitating for regaining their economic privileges, going to the extent, as in the case of Afabet of demanding back their confiscated lands and compensation for their fines etc. paid in the liberation years.

MASS....

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minars, and cultural dances usually going into the early morning hours. These activities were additional sources of inspiration, charging and imparting the atmosphere with visibly radiant warmth and comradeship.

The increased number of Eritreans, members and otherwise, attending the Congresses; their determination, confidence and high morale as

reflected both in the smooth proceedings of the Congresses, the jubilations and enthusiastic participation in the ideological and cultural aspects of the gatherings, and adoption of resolutions and programmes of work solidifying their unity and preparedness for more revolutionary work at a time when the Eritrean revolution is passing through a difficult stage attest to one truism. That no force whatsoever can dampen off the determined march of an organized and politicized people.

INTERVIEW . . .

This is perhaps the biggest index, i.e. proportionately the highest in the world. And yet, the attention given by humanitarian and other concerned international organizations to this issue deplorably falls far below the gravity and stature of the problem.

Inside Eritrea, thousands of our people who had dug trenches in front of their homes to avoid enemy aerial bombardments, have abandoned these places and fled to the liberated areas and our bases after the strategic withdrawals. And since the withdrawals have affected our general activities and in this respect our efforts at all-rounded self-reliance, the problems we face are indeed great. Some humanitarian organizations have however appreciated the gravity of the situation and accorded us valuable and considerable support, for which we express our heartfelt gratitude.

Of course, as stated earlier, the problem is nowhere near solution although we are directing our efforts to that end. For the refugees inside Eritrea we need support in medical, food, clothing and other essentials. The bitter war we are waging also poses serious medical problems which we cannot totally solve by relying on our own meagre resources. We need medical support for our wounded, for the victims of aggression. Another point

perhaps to stress is the situation of the schools. Although we have succeeded to dismantle the schools etc. from the re-occupied areas in the process of withdrawals and re-install them in the liberated areas, we still face many material shortages. And for Eritrean refugees abroad, we call on all concerned governments and the U.N. refugee section to recognize their status as refugees and extend them due support.

As stated earlier, due attention is given to refugees from Uganda, Vietnam and other troubled areas by the international press and concerned organizations. Considerable support to this destitute people had therefore been forthcoming. In respect to Eritreans however, although no-less grave and proportionately the highest, the world is virtually silent on the issue. This is clearly an irony of the refugee question in the world.

The Eritrean refugees abroad face, in general, serious problems- most of them have no legal status. And yet their efforts to solve their own problems is indeed heartening. A big number, even if small when compared to the overall number of refugees, are organized contributing substantial material support to the struggling people back home. The level of organization and politicization reached is very high and although we do not claim that this is a new experience in the history of liberation struggle, we feel that this has no precedence in terms of revolutionary depth, commitment and extent.

MORE ON DERGUE'S CRIMES

Not a single day passes without the Dergue committing atrocities on the Eritrean masses. Below we list a few of its fascistic crimes.

The fascist Dergue executed 47 out of 831 Eritrean political prisoners which had been languishing in its prison-cells for a long time. The regime had incarcerated these civilians for alleged collaboration with the EPLF etc under the flimsiest suspicions. The murder of these innocent civilians was announced by the Ethiopian radio, in its special release on July 15, 1979. It has been learned, from the radio release, that 41 of the murdered civilians were former "government" soldiers who have abandoned the military as conscientious objectors, some having been former prisoners of war and released by the EPLF after the usual appropriate orientation.

The Dergue further executed four Eritrean political prisoners in Quishot.

Enemy Soviet supplied Mig 21 and Mig 23 jets poured tons of cluster and other bombs at Ketarit, Een and Kebri Tsada on July 1 and 8, wounding two women and a child and killing numerous

camels, sheep and goats belonging to the poor nomads inhabiting these areas. On the same day its troops shot 4 and tortured and imprisoned 9 other peasants and plundered several camels in retaliation for the human and material losses they sustained as their trucks detonated by our land mines near Keren and Een.

On July 6, the mercenary occupationist troops, heavily shelled the surrounding villages of Keren, wounding 2 civilians and turning into rubble the properties of many poor peasants.

On July 8, the Dergue imprisoned six, four of them women, workers from the Bini shoe factory in Asmara.

On July 14, enemy troops looted the belongings of two travelling peasants near Mai Suhul (between Kaih Kor and Decamere), knifed them and threw their bodies under a nearby bridge. Another peasant who witnessed their inhuman actions from afar was traced and imprisoned. In addition, the enemy troops are arbitrarily stopping the people going from and coming to Dekamere at the city main blocks, looting their property and incurring all sorts of sufferings on them.

RESOLUTIONS OF A.E.W.E.

III CONGRESS

I. ON EPLF.

1. Fully supports the relentless struggle the Vanguard, the EPLF, has and is waging to bring about profound social changes in our society.
2. Commends the strategic withdrawals the EPLF undertook so as to frustrate the successive and large-scale offensives the fascist Ethiopian regime and its supporter the Soviet Union perpetrated - in their bid to crush our just struggle and thereby ensure the preservation and continuity of our revolution.
3. Upholds the political line of the EPLF of: condemning the barbaric offensives the Soviet Union is conducting against our revolution and the Eritrean masses by siding with the fascist Dergue and directly intervening in the war, and, combating and exposing the propaganda campaigns the Soviet Union is levelling against our revolution, from within the revolutionary camp and without deflecting from its principles.
4. Commends the struggle it is waging to foil the machinations of imperialism, zionism and its local puppets in the world in general, and in Eritrea and the region in particular.
5. Commends the victories the EPLA and the people's militias are scoring all over by persevering in the strategy of people's war.
6. Upholds the heroic struggle the Eritrean masses, organized along class lines and led by the EPLF are waging.
7. Condemns the resolutions passed in the "9th Congress of AESNA" and "2nd Congress of AEWNA" through the manipulations of the renegade "AESNA leaders" and the subsequent vilification and distortion campaigns against our revolution in general and the Vanguard (EPLF) in particular conducted by these traitors. Calls upon those democratic Eritreans who have rejected the resolutions of the 9th Congress of AESNA to embrace the correct line and continue their struggle under the Vanguard, the EPLF.

II. ON NATIONAL UNITY.

1. Commends the painstaking effort the Vanguard waged and is waging to realize national unity, which is an important strategic question.
2. Supports the Agreements reached between the EPLF and ELF on January 21, 1979 and struggles for its practical implementation.
3. Opposes and actively struggles against those opportunist and reactionary groups and individuals frantically engaged in disrupting the unity process.

III. ETHIOPIA.

1. Condemns the barbaric offensives the fascist Dergue is perpetrating in a bid to prolong its colonial presence in Eritrea; Calls upon all peace-loving people's of the world to side with

the Eritrean people and condemn the fascist Ethiopian regime.

2. Condemns the Soviet Union for the crimes it is committing against our revolution and our people by siding with Ethiopian colonialism and directly intervening in the war, and for the political campaigns it is waging in a bid to discredit our revolution. Calls upon all peace and justice loving peoples of the world to condemn this erroneous position. Strongly calls for the rectification of this Soviet policy which is against the interests of the exploited people of the world in general, and against the interests of the oppressed masses in the region in particular.
3. Condemns the barbaric crimes the fascist Dergue is committing against the Ethiopian masses. Supports the struggles the Ethiopian masses are waging against the fascist Dergue for justice, democracy and progress in general, and the democratic struggles of the Tigrai, Oromo and Ogaden peoples in particular.

IV. INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY.

1. Condemns the wars, exploitations and denial of human rights world imperialism, zionism and reaction are perpetuating in the world.
2. Supports the struggles of the workers and revolutionary and democratic forces in the capitalist countries, and the revolutionary forces all over the world.
3. Supports all the liberation struggles, in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, against colonialism, imperialism, zionism and reaction in general and, the struggles of the peoples of Palestine, Oman, Western Sahara, Azania, Namibia, Zimbabwe, East Timor and Portorico etc. in particular.
4. Expresses its jubilation at the victories achieved through struggle, of the Iranian masses over the fascist and imperialist puppet regime of the Shah; and the victories, achieved through struggle, by the masses of Nicaragua in toppling the imperialist stooge and fascist regime of Samoza.
5. Expresses its revolutionary gratitude to all the countries and organizations supporting the Eritrean revolution and calls upon them to step up their support.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE III CONGRESS OF AEW.E.

1. Calls upon all AEW.E branches to step up their efforts at organizing the erstwhile unorganized Eritrean workers in Europe.
2. To step-up the contributions of members to better implement the slogan of "self-reliance". forwarded by the Vanguard; Exert more efforts at and seek ways of fund-raising.
3. To wage intense political struggles to fores-

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INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique's official daily government newspaper, "NOTICIAS", in its editorial of July 19, 1979, expressed resolute support for the Eritrean cause. The Mozambican paper's correct stand is one example of the increasing support our just and popular struggle is gaining from African countries and progressive forces throughout the world. Following is a verbatim translation of the editorial.

"Last weekend the Ethiopian forces launched a large-scale offensive against the national Eritrean forces, the second of such a massive offensive that has been launched over the past year.

Whatever the imperatives of the Ethiopian revolution may be, in the reconstruction of the country freed from the regime of Hailesellasie, it is necessary to consider the Eritrean question as a colonial one, in spite of the annexation of the territory having taken place one year before the founding of the Organization of African Unity.

"The consolidation of the Ethiopian revolution, the birth of a new revolutionary society must necessarily entail the solution of the question of Eritrea, a national entity that is different from Ethiopia. Addis Abeba cannot demand a ceasefire from the Eritreans without the demands that

led to the unleashing of the armed struggle for national liberation have been satisfied: i.e. the legitimate claim to which every people aspires for autonomy and independence.

"The objectives of the programme of the Eritrean movement for national independence are clearly progressive ones. Its definition of economic, social and cultural policy puts it in the perspective of the construction of a society that is socialist and non-aligned. But, independent. Only after independence, on the basis of mutual respect, of equality of rights and non-interference in internal affairs, can a dialogue be set up which will bring peace to that region. And which will leave behind it once and for ever the problems inherited from the Selassie regime".

SUPPORT COMMITTEES HOLD MEETING

The second annual meeting of the Eritrean support Committees, formed in the past years almost in all West European Countries, was held in Bologna on August 18, 1979. This meeting was attended by seven Support Committees and other affiliated organizations. RICE, Research and Information Centre for Eritrea, was also present.

The meeting was opened by Comrade Sebhat Ephrem, who, as stated earlier, had come from Eritrea to attend the Congress of the Eritrean Workers, Students and Women Associations in Europe. Sebhat thanked the Committees for the efforts they have and are making to alleviate the sufferings of the Eritrean people and for rendering moral and political support for the Eritrean struggle and for publicizing the Eritrean cause.

After the speech of Sebhat, all Committees present reported on the activities they undertook to raise funds, on the information campaign they launched, on their relationship with other local organizations, on the cultural evenings they held and the publications they have issued.

During this meeting, it was evident that the Committees have been more active this year than last year. Many Committees have distributed thousands of leaflets soliciting help for the war victim Eritreans; many had cultural shows held and many had translated or written articles in the

languages of their residence. And to-day pamphlets, booklets, brochures etc can be found in the English, French, Dutch, Spanish, German, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and Italian languages. Many have also held numerous film and slide shows.

The meeting emphasized on the problems encountered in the solidarity work, particularly in regard to co-ordination of the various committees and the question of the constant flow of current information. And after lengthy and fruitful discussions on these and other related issues, the meeting resolved to hold a co-ordination meeting in the near future, and adopted some practical measures expediting the flow of information.

The next day, August 19, a special program was arranged for the Support Committees and foreign delegates who have come for the Congresses. On this date, the new film, "Eritrea '79" was shown, followed by a discussion with Sebhat Ephrem. The discussions centered on the new military situation in Eritrea, on the problems the Ethiopian offensives have caused on the Eritrean struggle as well as the civilian population, the contradictions within the Ethiopian army, the unity efforts between EPLF and ELF and future prospects. This discussion has certainly helped delegates and members of Committees to have a deeper insight of the Eritrean problem and present reality.

SOLIDARITY MESSAGES TO THE CONGRESSES

DELEGATES PRESENT

ITALY.

Partito Comunista Italiana (P.C.I.); Partito Socialista Italiano (P.S.I.); Democrazia Proletaria; CGIL-CISL-UIL - Provincia Firenze; CISL-Bologna; Movimento Lavoratori per il Socialismo (MLS); Medicina Democratica - SARDA; Medicina Democratica National; Lega per i Diritti e la Liberazione dei Popoli; Comitato di Solidarietà - Pisa; Iranian Students (FUSI), member of CIS; Unione Nazionale Studenti Siriani - Bologna.

WEST GERMANY.

Kommunistische Bund in Germany (KB); Kommunistische Arbeiter Bund Deutschland (KABD); Lig Gegen den Imperialismus.

SWITZERLAND.

Organization Communiste Fronte Rouge; Femmes in Lutte; Groupe de Travail Afrique; Eritrean Support Committee.

NORWAY.

Socialist Left Party; Workers Communist Party; Socialist Youth Norway; KA-KUL Norway;

FRANCE.

Eritrean Support Committee

AUSTRIA.

Kommunistischer Bund Österreichs (KB).

UNITED KINGDOM.

Workers' Film Association; Eritrean Support Committee - London; Eritrean Support Committee - Sheffield.

SPAIN.

Party for the Basque Revolution; Instituto de Estudios Políticos para América Latina y África IEPALA.

ETHIOPIA.

Tigray People's Liberation Front; Oromo Liberation Front; Union of Tigreans in Europe.

LETTERS/ TELEGRAMS

C.G.I.L. - National; U.I.L. - National; C.I.S.L. National; C.G.I.L. C.I.S.L. U.I.L. - (Regione Toscana); Comitato Provinciale Arci - Pisa; FGCI di Bologna; CGIL-CISL-UIL-Torino; PSI - Pisa; Circolo Ricreativo Culturale Spotivo - Moncalieri; FGSI; CGIL-CISL-UIL-Bologna; Partito Socialista - Lazio; PDUP.

W. GERMANY.

Federation of Iranian Students (National Union); Kommunistische Arbedersorganisatie (M-L) KAOml.; Eritrean Committee of the League against imperialism, West Berlin.

SWITZERLAND.

Africa - Komitee BASEL; Un Groupe de Sympathisants anti-imperialiste.

NORWAY.

Arbeidernes Kamunist Parti (M-L) Norway; National Union of Norwegian Students.

FRANCE.

Association Francaise Amite Solidarite Peuples D'Afrique; Mouvement de la Jeunesse Communiste de France, Parti Communiste - Marxist Leninist; CEDETIM; Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail; Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire - French Section; SUIT; Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire Marxiste - Leninist.

UNITED KINGDOM.

Eritrean Support Committee - Manchester; Eritrean Support Committee - Glasgow; Malaysian and Singapore Students Association (London); Tricontinental - Norwich; General Union of Arab Students in U.K. and Ireland; National Committee Communist Workers' movements of Britain.

BELGIUM.

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

PORTUGAL.

Centro de Informação e Documentação Amílcar Cabral, (CIDAC).

GREECE.

Political Party of the United Democratic Left, (EAA); Committee of the Communist Party of Greece Interior; Greek Communist Youth.

HOLLAND.

Bureau voor Achtshulp Rotterdam;

SWEDEN.

Young Communist League; Left Party Communists; Emus Bjorkaa Association, Sweden.

DENMARK.

Left Socialist Party; Communist Workers Party of Denmark;

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organizational problem.

5. To increase their activities of popularizing the Eritrean revolution, informing the European peoples on the just nature of our struggle and in order to secure principled political and material support for our revolution from the progressive and democratic forces in Europe.

tall weaknesses among members and combat erroneous tendencies reflected in the past year; to prepare seminars to deal with timely and important questions.

4. To intensify alphabetization programmes and combat illiteracy, which still remains a big

18 YEARS...

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which was on the verge of total collapse, had secured the massive and direct support of the Soviet Union. Soviet supplied sophisticated weapons, Migs, warships, tanks, heavy artillery and Soviet high-ranking officers and troops have taken part in the all-out offensives, committing innumerable crimes on our just struggle and people. This escalation of the war has aggravated the sufferings of our people, increased by tenfold the number of the homeless and destitute, the number of the maimed and wounded - by enemy anti-personnel bombs and all sorts of lethal weapons. It has constrained us to withdraw from some of our liberated areas.

But it has not, as it will never do, subdued the fighting spirit and morale, the conviction of the Eritrean people and the EPLF on the inevitable victory of their just struggle. Indeed the efforts of the Soviet Union to relegate the Dergue from its death throes seem to have evaporated

into thin air. Five successive and large-scale offensives have not weakened the Eritrean revolution but backfired incurring colossal material and human losses on the Dergue and fomenting acute economic and political crisis in Ethiopia.

And the Eritrean revolution is surging, after momentary setbacks, forward with daily growing popular support and determination; with growing international solidarity and support. The Eritrean people's determination to raise higher the banner of struggle, to march forward with the torch of sacrifice of our heroic martyrs, is growing every day. This is concretely manifested in their heroic perseverance and perfecting of their methods of struggle under escalated enemy repressions and spectacular victories achieved over it.

LONG LIVE SEPTEMBER 1!
ETERNAL GLORY TO OUR MARTYRS!
VICTORY TO THE MASSES!

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

SPECIAL ISSUES:

MEMORANDUM: an EPLF document clarifying in a brief and compact presentation, the historical perspective, the anti-colonial nature and progressive content of the Eritrean people's struggle and its correct solution.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PROGRAM OF THE EPLF: this contains a brief historical introduction, and, the programme adopted at the First Organizational Congress of the EPLF in January, 1977. It is also available in Spanish, French, Italian, Dutch and German.

REVOLUTION IN ERITREA: (Eyewitness Reports): a collection of documents published in internationally distributed newspapers and written by well-known journalists who had been to Eritrea.

THE ERITREAN REVOLUTION IN PICTURES: a largely pictorial presentation of the deep-going social changes being effected by the EPLF in the liberated areas.

ERITREA:- A RESISTENCIA DUM POVO - by Centro de Informacao e Documentacao Amilcar Cabral (CIDAC). **CONTENTS:** short historical background; EPLF Memorandum (1978); National Democratic Program of EPLF. Available in Portuguese only. Can alternatively be ordered from: CIDAC, R. Pinheiro Chagas, 77, 2- ESO - 1000 Lisbon, Portugal.

ERITREA Y LA QUESTION NACIONAL: by Instituto de Estudios Politicos para America Latina Y Africa. (IEPALA). **CONTENTS:** historical introduction, EPLF Memorandum, classes and the national question, EPLF programme. Available in Spanish.

ORDER FROM: Via Firenze 15/3, Rome, Italy. Cheques payable to: "ERITREA OGGI", Accnt. N°. 78844008.

FILMS:

ALONE AGAINST THE MIGHTY :

a 50-minute, 16 m.m. color film made in 1977 by G. Troller. The film concentrates and sufficiently illustrates the social aspects and revolutionary transformations being effected in EPLF held liberated areas. English and German versions.

SAWRANA:

a one-hour film made by Christian Sabatier in 1978. It covers the historical background, the social aspects, the on-going revolutionary changes and military confrontations. 16 m.m. and black and white. English, French, Italian, Spanish, Arabic versions.

ERITREA '79, THE STRATEGIC WITHDRAWALS:

a 19 min., 16m.m. documentary color film made by the CINEMATOGRAPHIC DEPARTMENT OF THE EPLF. The film includes the withdrawals from Keren, involving the dramatic side of the evacuation of the hospitals, schools, the refugees etc.

PERIODICALS:

VANGUARD: EPLF monthly organ.

RESISTANCE: bi-monthly Newsletter of the Association of Eritrean Students.

Annual subscription rates: **VANGUARD:** - U.S. \$ 5.00
RESISTANCE: - U.S. \$. 1.00; **ERITREA NOW** - U.S.\$2.00. (Postage included).

ALSO AVAILABLE:

Posters, badges, metal pins, and cassettes of revolutionary songs.