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VANGUARD

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY ORGAN OF THE
ERITREAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT

- * The Main Source of our Brilliant Victories
- * Reportage: the Battle of Keren
- * Expose the Dergue's Colonialist Lies
- * Eleventh Anniversary of the Namibian People's Armed Struggle

August 1977

Volume II, No. **5**

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Editorial

GREAT VICTORIES AND NEW TASKS

Claiming that it has "trained and set up a huge army of 300,000 'volunteer' troops," the fascist Dergue has, for the last two months, been waging an intensive chauvinist campaign of threats and harassment to bully the Eritrean and other neighboring peoples. Placing its faith, like all reactionaries, on the size of its army and the quantity of its weapons, it has vowed to drown in blood the Eritrean people's just struggle. To this end, it has been airlifting thousands of aggressor troops, armed to the teeth with modern weapons, to the few Eritrean cities still remaining under its nominal control. Threatening to "quickly annihilate" the Eritrean national liberation movement, "safeguard its rights to the Red Sea through its red blood," "deploy one million peasant volunteers," etc., it has attempted to intimidate our people. This campaign has been designed to cover up the Dergue's defeats in the hands of the heroic Eritrean People's Liberation Army (E.P.L.A.), to alarm the world's peace and justice loving peoples, and to inject new hope into the crumbling Ethiopian colonial army which, with its backbone broken and morale sapped, is in deep crisis.

Unperturbed by these fascistic boasts and threats, the Eritrean people on their part, led by their resolute E.P.L.F., have, through calm courage and revolutionary perseverance, been giving appropriate practical answers to all these colonial machinations. During the last four weeks alone, they have liberated the towns of Dekemhare, Keren, Segeneiti and Digma, completely annihilated over 6500 Ethiopian aggressor troops (about 2500 of them taken prisoner) and captured a large quantity of various weapons. Moreover, the Ethiopian force of 10,000 men that launched a two-pronged offensive from Asmara and Mai Habar against our liberated areas in the south, aimed at the recapture of Dekemhare, has been completely routed in the fierce battles that raged on the Asmara-Dekemhare road from the 4th to the 13th of August.

The military situation and balance of forces prevailing in our country clearly show that our revolutionary army has seized the initiative and enjoys a clear strategic superiority over the Ethiopian counter-revolutionary army. The extreme barbarity of the colonial war has created among the entire Eri-

trean population a strong and deep hatred towards the Ethiopian army of aggression. The E.P.L.A. and the masses of the Eritrean people, fighting as one man, are steadily growing stronger and more powerful in the heat of the battles and the glory of their victories. It has been demonstrated in practice that whenever the Ethiopian colonial army escalates its aggressive war, it only augments its defeats, on the other hand whenever our revolutionary army and people intensify their resistance, they score more and greater victories. Thus with each passing day, the enemy becomes weaker and its defeats multiply while our forces become stronger and our victories grow accordingly. All this testifies that the heroic Eritrean people, who have risen up in arms under the revolutionary slogan of "nothing is more precious than freedom and independence," do not submit to any colonizer or bow down to any brute force.

The liberation of Dekemhare, Keren, Segeneiti and Digsu has a great strategic and economic significance for the further development of our struggle. The enemy has been deprived of its principal fortresses in western and southern Eritrea and its forces are completely isolated from each other. All its remaining camps are now exposed to our revolutionary attacks; they are being put under siege and destroyed one after the other. Today, the whole of northern Eritrea, the whole of eastern Eritrea except the Asmara-Massawa road, the whole of western Eritrea except Agordat and Barentu, and the whole of southern Eritrea except Assab, Adi Kailh, Senafe, Adi Quala and Mendefera have been placed under our total revolutionary control, completely free from any form of enemy presence. Rich and extensive agricultural regions have been put in our hands; an extensive network of communications has been placed in the service of the revolution; our revolutionary base areas have been greatly expanded and consolidated. The sun is rapidly setting for Ethiopian colonialism in Eritrea. These great and brilliant victories, however, have not been achieved easily or through smooth sailing. They are the outcome of strenuous efforts and enormous sacrifices and it must be clear to our revolutionary army and masses that our inevitably forthcoming victories shall require even more efforts and sacrifices. At the same time, our victories give rise to many problems and tasks that demand immediate solution and fulfillment.

In the political field, the organization, politicization and arming of the steadily growing population in the liberated areas is, as one of the fundamental tasks of our revolutionary struggle, proceeding at full speed. Without accomplishing this important task, it is impossible to safeguard the gains of the revolution, to consolidate the revolutionary base areas, and to firm up the foundation of the new society in the making. The masses of the Eritrean people are establishing their own popular democratic administration by setting up people's assemblies in the villages, districts and

provinces and correctly solving their day to day problems of life in the economic, political and social fields. While fighting for national independence and salvation, our vanguard organization is striving hard to facilitate and solve all the concrete short and long term problems of the people; it is providing all the necessary assistance it can. This is precisely why it has deep roots in and extensive support among the masses.

In the military field, we, in close collaboration with our masses, are fighting hard to liberate the remaining cities and defend the extensive liberated areas from any enemy encroachments. We endeavor to strengthen and consolidate our revolutionary base areas and we are ever ready and vigilant to mercilessly smash the enemy whenever it attempts to encroach on them. It is imperative that we train our People's Militia politically and ideologically, upgrade its military, technical and productive capabilities, and arm it well. We are working with all our might to ensure the full participation of the entire people of Eritrea, men and women, young and old, in our two-fold revolutionary struggle to drive out the enemy and develop production, because this is an important factor for our victory.

In the economic field, we fight to improve the living conditions of our people. All the factories and economic installations destroyed in the war must be rebuilt. Conducting careful studies, we are endeavoring to bring about essential economic reforms to promote production and raise the standard of living of the people in the cities and the countryside. Our seizure of the four towns in the last few weeks alone has placed over 200,000 people under our direct administration. It is not an easy task to supply this people with essential commodities and provisions at reasonable prices. An adequate supply of fuel is necessary to properly resume water, electricity and transport services and to operate the factories and large farms now in our hands. Providing all the factories with the required raw materials, solving the problems of workers and unemployed, performing a variety of administrative functions, assigning qualified cadres to accomplish all these tasks—these are a few of the problems we are endeavoring to urgently tackle in the economic field. Moreover, the E.P.L.A. must be properly provided for and supplied.

Enormous tasks await us in the social field. In the first place, the people's homes and buildings ruined in the war must be repaired and reconstructed. Citizens whose livelihood has been destroyed by enemy planes, tanks, artillery and mortar in the fighting must be cared for. The schools in the cities and towns must resume their work, new ones must be opened, and scores of thousands of children and youth have to be educated. It is essential to secure an adequate supply of materials, provisions, books and teachers. A new revolutionary curriculum based on the concrete conditions of our country, capable of serving the masses of our people and developing

scientific knowledge and consciousness, must be designed and put to work.

It is necessary that the limited number of urban hospitals resume their services in a better way. It is also necessary to repair the hospitals hit by enemy planes and heavy artillery, treat the civilians wounded in the fighting and eradicate the contagious diseases that are so widespread. Adequate medical equipment and a steady supply of medicines is essential. Medical and public health services are to be expanded both in the cities and the countryside. The thousands of orphans and needy families that are the daily results of the continuing war need considerable assistance just to survive.

So far, we are holding more than 3300 prisoners of war (POW's) from the regular Ethiopian army. The provision of these POW's with clothing, food, medical treatment, health care, education, etc., is in itself a heavy responsibility to shoulder. At a time when the war is intensifying, the few remaining cities are being liberated and the Ethiopian aggressor army is steadily being wiped out, it is certain that the number of POW's will considerably increase.

To properly accomplish all these revolutionary tasks brought forth by our victories, we rely primarily on our own efforts and resources. We are working hard to awaken and mobilize all the resources and energy of our people for the service of the revolution. The correct revolutionary principle of self-reliance is the tested foundation of the continued independent development of our struggle and the main means for solving our problems. Every patriotic and revolutionary Eritrean has a sacred revolutionary duty to properly grasp and implement this principle with all might and main. First and foremost, the masses of the Eritrean people at home and abroad, whether organized or unorganized, must be prepared to make great efforts and sacrifices in order to accomplish these tasks and solve these problems. For independence cannot be gained without difficulties and hardships, without blood and sacrifices.

Moreover, all our international friends and supporters must critically watch the events unfolding in our country and intensify their assistance and support. We request all friendly countries, organizations and liberation movements to provide us with all possible material, arms, financial, medical, technical, etc., assistance that can support and accelerate the fulfillment of our essential tasks, the consolidation of our victories, the safeguarding of our revolutionary gains, the smashing of the Dergue's "Zulu Project" of large-scale aggression already underway, and the achievement of our ultimate objectives. We have absolute confidence that we shall overcome our present difficulties with our own efforts and the support of our friends. We have absolute confidence that we'll wipe out the demoralized Ethiopian colonial army which is found huddled in the few

cities under a state of terror like a bunch of mice trapped in a cat's game. We are confident that we'll achieve and win complete and final victory.

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The Main Source of Our Brilliant Victories

Today, a great revolutionary storm is sweeping across Eritrea. A powerful flame of revolutionary people's war ablaze all over our country is turning the forces of Ethiopian colonial aggression to ashes. Having liberated the entire Eritrean countryside, the heroic Eritrean People's Liberation Army (E.P.L.A.) is liberating the cities one after the other by launching lightning attacks on the Ethiopian bases and fortifications, smashing and completely annihilating the Ethiopian colonial army. Scoring victories hitherto unprecedented in the history of the Eritrean people's struggle, it has so far this year alone liberated the towns of Karora, Nakfa, Afabet, Debarewa, Elaberet, Dekemhare, Keren, Segeneiti and Digsu by completely annihilating the occupying Ethiopian colonial army.

These brilliant victories have driven the fascist Dergue crazy, shaken its oppressive regime to its very foundations, and greatly astonished even those who are closely following the progress of the Eritrean revolution. No doubt, these victories have extremely pleased the friends of our people and the supporters of our revolution while, on the contrary, they have tormented and terrorized the enemies of our people and all reactionaries. Thus, the fascist Dergue and its practical collaborators, the reactionaries, have not refrained from shamelessly disseminating all kinds of slanderous propaganda in a deliberate effort to belittle our great victories and smear our revolutionary organization. Nevertheless, no slanderous lies can cover up or detract from our great victories because they are being won with the full participation of our masses.

Through his lies, the enemy only betrays that his dreams have been shattered and his soul tormented by the very object of his vilification. As it

is said, an enemy paints one black; if our reactionary and opportunist enemies did not strive to malign and denigrate our vanguard organization and its brilliant victories, it would mean that the differences between them and ourselves are not clearly demarcated or that we are not properly achieving our goals. Thus, whenever our enemies endeavor to slander and vilify us, it means that we are waging our struggle well, properly achieving our objectives, and scoring excellent victories. Accordingly, it is only when our enemies stop slandering and vilifying us or, worse still, begin to speak well of us that we should be surprised and worried. In any case, the main point we would like to clarify here is that the brilliant revolutionary victories that our heroic E.P.L.A. has won and continues to win have not been achieved haphazardly or by miracles. Rather they are the outcome of various important and concrete factors.

The principal source of our continuous great and brilliant victories are:

1. The just nature of our patriotic struggle,
2. The correct line and leadership of our organization,
3. Our correct military strategy and tactics,
4. Our revolutionary policy of self-reliance,
5. The broad support and active participation of our masses,
6. The miraculous effort and determination of the E.P.L.A., and
7. The efficient administration and harmonious organization of our collective effort.

First, the war raging in our country has two aspects. On the one hand, the Ethiopian fascist regime is waging an unjust war of colonial aggression against the Eritrean people in order to impose its expansionist policy. Its objective is to occupy our country and subjugate our people under a colonial system of fascist oppression, exploitation and suppression in violation of our people's legitimate rights and just aspirations for national independence. To realize these aims, it is waging a brutal war of extermination against our people. The indiscriminate massacre of children, women and the old, the burning down of villages and crop fields, the poisoning of wells and streams and the destruction of the general livelihood of our people have become the daily practice of the fascist Dergue. On the other hand, the Eritrean people, refusing to submit to Ethiopian colonialism, are waging a just war of national liberation. They are fighting for independence and democracy so as to determine their destiny, arrange their life in accordance with their wishes, and regain their human and national rights. The Eritrean people are fighting for their life, land and property. They are locked in a life and death struggle against the fascist army of Ethiopian colonial aggression. They are waging an armed struggle for liberation, progress, prosperity and peace. And since their cause is just, their victory is certain.

Second, the justness of a given struggle along is not sufficient to guaran-

tee its victory. To guarantee its victory, the just struggle must be guided by a correct political line and leadership. The question of political line and leadership is decisive in any political movement or struggle. The fighting people of Eritrea have learnt from bitter experience that to struggle without a correct line and leadership is tantamount to wandering aimlessly and groping in the dark. The present crisis of the Eritrean Liberation Front in itself is a living testimony that the Eritrean revolution has not yet completely overcome the effects of this short-coming. Ever since its emergence as the embryo of the democratic force that for a long time had struggled with the E.L.F., the E.P.L.F., guided by a progressive leadership, has adhered to a national democratic line. It is precisely because the Eritrean national democratic revolution led by the E.P.L.F. is guided by a correct revolutionary line, based on a solid worker-peasant alliance, and uniting all patriotic social forces that it is guaranteed of complete victory. The experience of the world's fighting people has proved that it is impossible to achieve complete victory without a correct revolutionary line and leadership.

Third, to attain its goals, our national liberation struggle must adopt correct military strategy and tactics capable of annihilating the enemy step by step. It is by "liberating the land and the people step by step" through its tested strategy of protracted people's war that the E.P.L.F. has reached this stage. If an organization conducting armed struggle lacks a definite military strategy, it will perpetually be confined to the "hit and run" tactics of guerrilla warfare. Incapable of bringing about the qualitative transformation of the growing number of its fighters and quantity of its weapons, it disperses them thinly over the largest possible territory and renders them easy prey for the enemy. Hence, far from defeating the enemy, it cannot even assure its continued survival by itself.



"The heroic EPLA inspired by fervent patriotism and vigorous revolutionary enthusiasm and fighting with magnificent courage and resolve, is smashing the Ethiopian colonial army of aggression to shreds"

Learning from its rich experience of liberating the land and the people step by step, the E.P.L.F. has, in the course of the protracted people's war, passed from the stage of conducting guerrilla warfare, to that of conventional war. It has built a strong people's liberation army, and already liberated the entire Eritrean countryside and several cities. Politically mature and imbued with a high level of ideological consciousness, the E.P.L.A. has rock-solid unity. All its internal relations including the relations between ordinary fighters and leaders are based on complete harmony and warm comradely solidarity. It maintains close links with the masses—the inexhaustible source of the revolutionary struggle—based on mutual care and concern. It is precisely for this reason that the heroic E.P.L.A., inspired by fervent patriotism and vigorous revolutionary enthusiasm and fighting with magnificent courage and resolve, is smashing the Ethiopian colonial army of aggression to shreds. Despite its superiority in men and weapons, the aggressor army is rapidly crumbling in its fortifications and camps under the lightening attacks of our revolutionary people's army.

all fields of its struggle to win complete victory for our people's national democratic revolution. Grasping that our people and their resources are the decisive factor for our victory, it strives to mobilize all our national efforts and resources in the service of the revolution. It organizes, politicizes and arms the masses in a revolutionary manner. It carries out productive activities in several economic branches. It has already translated into practice the slogan of "Hit the enemy with his own weapons and bullets" and has reached the stage where it can raise the slogan of "Annihilate the enemy with his own tanks and planes." The EPLF endeavors hard to solve all its technical and material problems primarily through its own effort and struggle. It is this self-reliant effort that constitutes the principal basis of the continuous development and brilliant victories of our revolutionary struggle. This, however, does not mean that we belittle the role of external support. Indeed the assistance that comes from friendly countries and organizations is an important factor that reinforces our effort and accelerates our victory. Nevertheless, external support, no matter how extensive, can only supplement and never substitute for our people's effort and sacrifices. Thus, it is absolutely essential to strengthen and consolidate our revolutionary policy of self-reliance in order to assure the independent development of our revolution and its complete victory. And it is this qualitative feature that further distinguishes the revolutionary nature of the EPLF, expresses its solid internal life, and guarantees our people's inevitable victory.

Fifth, since revolution is a profound social process undertaken by the people and for the people, its complete victory requires the full support and extensive participation of the masses. No struggle can attain victory without

this vital factor. The EPLF, as the vanguard of the Eritrean revolution, fights in a harmonious coordination with the masses. It has worked and continues to work hard to raise the level of political consciousness of our people who, for many centuries, have been oppressed and suppressed by various colonizers and their traitorous local lackeys. Through politicization and struggle, the people come to distinguish between their real friends and enemies, strengthen their unity, and raise the level and quality of their participation in the revolution. The heroic EPLA fighting for the nation's independence and the salvation of the people does not let the people down under any circumstances. It has been demonstrated in practice that the EPLA fighter never shrinks from spilling his priceless blood and sacrificing his life in the defense of the people and the securing of their livelihood. It is for these reasons that our revolutionary struggle has been able to consolidate its foundation and deepen its roots among the masses.

The entire people of Eritrea, young and old, men and women, have all risen up against Ethiopian colonialism and are waging a revolutionary war of national independence and liberation. The politicized and armed People's Militia is fulfilling an important revolutionary task by defending the extensive liberated areas and fighting shoulder to shoulder with the EPLA. Defying the enemy's hail of bullets and bombs, women, old men as well as young boys and girls play a heroic role in the trenches by caring for the wounded, bringing food, water and ammunition, and encouraging the fighters. The EPLF-led Eritrean war of liberation is truly a people's war. If it were not so, it could not have scored all these victories. Without the broad support and active participation of the Eritrean masses, the EPLF would have been unable to assure its survival let alone reach the present stage of liberating the cities. It is because the political and military power of the EPLF is based on the broad masses that it has been steadily winning magnificent victories. Just within a period of one month, for instance, the EPLF has liberated Dekemhare (July 6, 1977), Keren (July 8, 1977), Segeneiti (August 3, 1977), and Digma (August 4, 1977), besides, on July 15, 1977, it freed 800 political prisoners from the Ethiopian maximum-security prison in Asmara through a spectacular operation. It is impossible even to dream of these great revolutionary victories being won one after the other at very short intervals without the active collaboration of the people. Thus, the EPLF's continuous and successive victories are based primarily on its correct, warm and intimate relations with the people, on the broad support and active revolutionary participation of the masses, and on the revolutionary combativeness of our people.

Sixth, the EPLA is a conscious revolutionary army fighting for the legitimate and just rights of the Eritrean people. It has a glorious tradition of great heroism and miraculous determination. Without any exaggeration,



Victorious EPLA in the heart of Dekemhare.

the heroism and determination of the EPLA is a phenomenon practically demonstrated in the fierce battles and lightning attacks raging to free Eritrea from colonial oppression and liberate its people. For instance, it is extremely astonishing to seize Keren, with all its natural and artificial fortifications, the big size of the enemy forces occupying it and the kind of modern weapons they had—within four days of bitter fighting. A progressive European journalist who had the opportunity to witness the battle of Keren expressed his astonishment by observing that “Keren is truly the African Dien Bien Phu. There has never been such a battle in Africa; nor do I think that there will ever be again”.

The EPLF has a rich experience of struggle accumulated in the course of its development. Born under difficult circumstances, it is an organization that has been built and steeled in the process of a bitter struggle against Ethiopian fascist aggression and the liquidationist attempts of reactionaries, on the one hand, and internal reactionaries and opportunists, on the other. It was able to ensure its survival from the very beginning and overcome all the difficulties and obstacles facing it all the way to the present stage because, on top of its correct political line, leadership and military strategy and broad popular support, it is ensured of the conscious devotion and magnificent resolve of its fighters.

Tempered by the lessons of this rich experience and inspired by the glory of his cumulative exploits, the EPLF fighter goes on raising his revolutionary combativeness, morale and confidence in total victory. Knowing full well that he is fighting for the independence and salvation of his country, the liberation, progress and prosperity of his people, and his democratic rights and human dignity, he is ready to sacrifice his life in order to attain his objectives. Thus, whenever locked in battle, he daringly storms the very trenches of the enemy with a resolute spirit of self-sacrifice and in complete defiance of the barrage of bullets and bombs directed against him. Once inside the enemy camp, he smashes the enemy troops through fierce hand to hand combat. Because he fights with this kind of heroism and determination, ever ready to pay his life for his cause, he concludes every battle in a brilliant victory.

Having put the entire Eritrean countryside under its control by “liberating the land and the people step by step” in accordance with its strategy of protracted people’s war, the EPLF had already begun to encircle and besiege the towns before the beginning of this year. The Battle of Nacfa that lasted for six months and the attendant Battles of Naro, Tekor, Habregeka, Ruba Anseba, . . . etc., have imparted the EPLA with an invaluable combat experience. The fighter saw in practice that he could confront the enemy from a distance of 100 - 200 m., staying firm in his trenches for a long time while providing for his daily food, water and ammunition requirements, and win certain victory over an enemy that enjoys superiority in men and weapons.

Our revolutionary army has practically demonstrated that it can successfully defend the liberated areas against any enemy force, irrespective of the number of its troops and the quality of its weapons, and victoriously smash any enemy camp or base at will. The Ethiopian aggressor army has learnt from bitter experience that it is completely annihilated whenever it tries to encroach upon our liberated areas or send reinforcements to any of its besieged camps. This has sapped the enemy’s morale and shattered his will and ability to fight while further raising the morale of our people and army and strengthening their will and determination to win. Our strategic military superiority over the enemy became an established fact. These experiences cumulatively showed that our struggle had passed from the stage of a guerrilla warfare to that of a conventional war. Thus, the EPLA’s glorious tradition of heroism and determination springs from the difficult experiences of the past, solidifies through the triumphant military operations constantly undertaken and becomes the unshakeable foundations of our successive victories.

Seventh, the presence of a correct and properly functioning leadership is an essential factor for the conduct of a serious revolutionary struggle. There

can be no efficiency or revolutionary victory without an organized and centralized leadership. The EPLA leadership at all levels lives in full harmony, equality and comradely solidarity with the masses of the fighters. Thorough and careful studies of enemy conditions as well as ours are conducted before each military operation and the general strategy and appropriate tactics outlined. Then, an all-out effort is exerted in the making of all-round preparations to ensure victory. Efficient communication and harmonious coordination are maintained along the various organs and units in the front-line and the revolutionary base. Any contingency that may arise during the preparatory phase or when the battle is in progress is immediately taken into account and appropriate steps taken. The coordination of the various fighting units in the battlefield and the provision of



Masses enthusiastically participating in Political education session in Dekemhare right after its liberation.

guidance and leadership while fighting under intense fire are tasks which require great skill and resolve. Many are those comrades who nobly give their lives in the fulfillment of these tasks in an exemplary manner. By strengthening further the combative spirit and determination of the fighters, their noble example becomes an important factor for victory.

Thus, the efficient administration and firm unity that characterizes the heroic EPLA, the correct relations that exist among leaders and ordinary fighters, the exemplary devotion and direct participation of the leaders manifested in the battlefield, etc., are important sources of our revolu-

tionary victory. It is impossible to achieve victory in the battlefield in the event that the relationship between the leaders and ordinary fighters is incorrect.

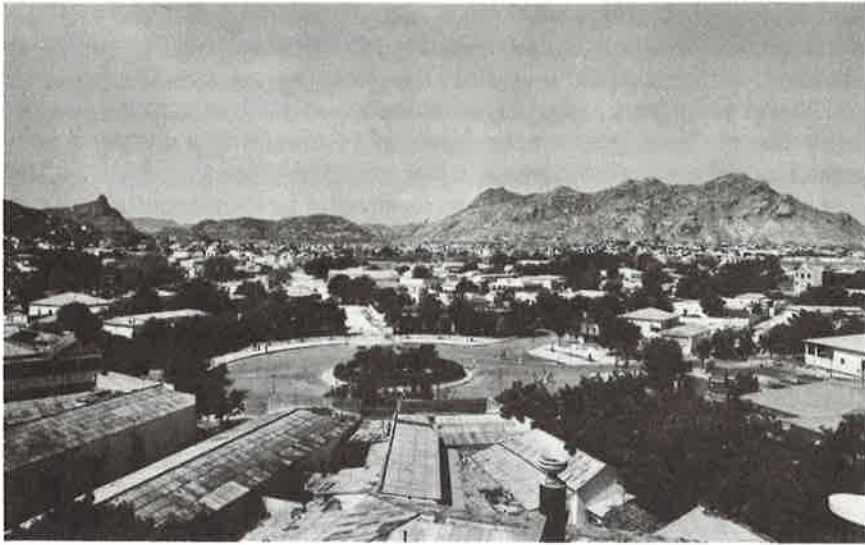
Today, our country, Eritrea, has become a major battleground where a fierce war is raging between the forces of revolution and counter-revolution. The outcome of this war will not only determine the destiny of the Eritrean people, but it will also exert a powerful influence on the struggles for liberation and progress being waged in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. It is inevitable that all the world's progressive and peace and justice loving forces take a definite stand on this struggle of great international significance in accordance with the correctness of their general line and the correlation of their internal social forces. In the final analysis, the stand taken by each state, party or liberation movement can, whether directly or indirectly, either support and strengthen the revolutionary forces or support and provide a breathing space for the counter-revolutionary forces. There is absolutely no other choice.

With the bulk of its fighting forces annihilated by the heroic EPLA, its morale sapped and its will and ability to fight completely shattered, the Ethiopian colonial army is today awaiting with immense fear and terror to be buried in its trenches. On the other hand, the triumphant and heroic EPLA, having already won victory after victory by totally annihilating the Ethiopian colonial army in several cities and seizing complete revolutionary initiative, is preparing for its forthcoming complete and final victory with vigorous combative spirit and revolutionary anticipation. An independent people's democratic Eritrea is bound to emerge in the near future.

REPORTAGE

The Battle of Keren

Our organization has long been translating into practice the military strategy of liberating the land and the people step by step. Adhering to this correct scientific strategy, the Eritrean People's Liberation Army (E.P.L.A.) has constantly been smashing the enemy's forces and seizing its bases and fortified camps. With the steady expansion of the liberated areas, the tasks of production, organization and reconstruction are today growing bigger and more complex.



“Keren: its liberation is a brilliant victory which heralds the complete economic and military demise of Ethiopian Colonialism in Eritrea and bears a tremendous significance for the development of our revolutionary struggle.”

One of the most significant and amazing projects which our organization has accomplished within a short time is the construction of the extensive transport and communications network connecting all our liberated areas by traversing big rivers, rolling flat plains, steep mountainsides and deep gorges. This has an immense importance because it means the elimination of one of the main factors of backwardness in regions like the Sahel Province. Revolutionary war, clear political goals, a developed military strategy and a revolutionary leadership tempered in struggle—these are among the distinctive features that characterize our organization. These characteristics are clearly reflected in the proper and revolutionary execution of the work of our organization.

It is a self-evident truth that the triumphant liberation of Keren is not a sudden or random phenomenon but the inevitable and cumulative outcome of the proper application of our organization’s clear scientific military strategy. The events of the liberation of NACFA, Afabet, Keren, etc., are themselves the outcome of a process that has unfolded step by step and in close coordination from the lower to the higher level. We, on our part, have utilized this experience to learn from our past mistakes, avoid committing similar errors in our future activities, develop our capability and consolidate our strength.

It is only the politically conscious human being who fights with boundless

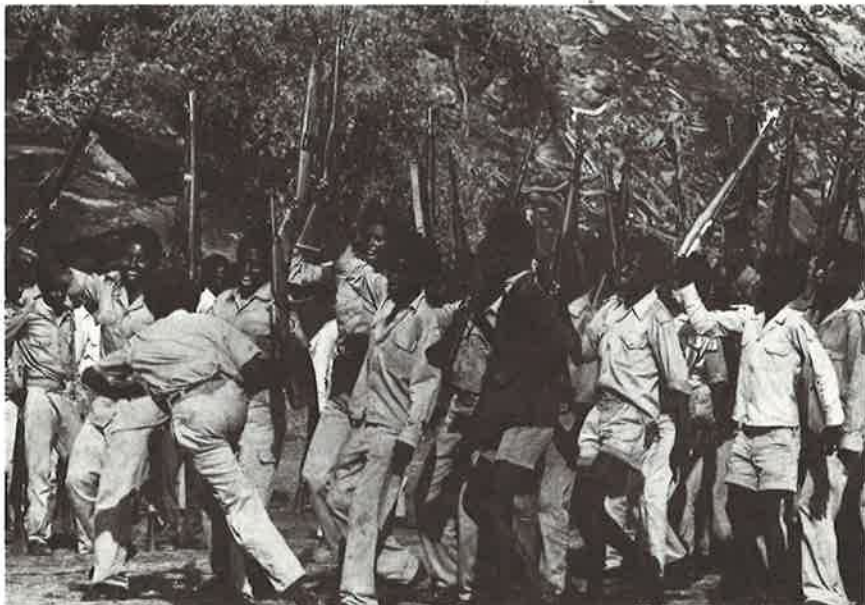
conviction in the justness of his cause and participates in production that is really capable of creating miracles. This is one of the principal and significant distinctive characteristics of our revolutionary fighter. The fighter of the EPLF is a conscious and productive worker as well as a steeled, disciplined and courageous soldier. Revolutionary war is a means for the realization of clear political objectives and the socio-economic transformation of a colonial and exploited society. Thus, it must be comprehensive and thorough-going in order to achieve its objectives and end in victory. It is with this general truth in mind that our revolutionary organization had made all-round and painstaking preparations before launching the Battle of Keren.

To ensure the proper flow of supplies, ammunition and men to the front lines, our industrious comrades constructed an extensive network of roads leading from our main bases to Senhit Province, built several bridges across the Anseba River to secure safe passage during its seasonal flooding and constructed more than 100 km. of feeder roads around the city of Keren alone. This was the first essential and important step taken before the beginning of the Battle of Keren. While these vital roads which created rapid links and efficient communications between the vanguard and the rearguard of the fighting were under construction, the initial plan of attack was also constantly undergoing further refinements in response to more detailed and thorough studies of the nature of the terrain of the battlegrounds. The enemy’s camps and fortifications were carefully studied and restudied to pinpoint his weak and strong points. It was very important that the battle plan was mapped out with built-in flexibility so as to accommodate necessary adjustments.

Once the conditions for the launching of the attack were fulfilled and the necessary preparations completed, all the units that were in a state of full readiness in their specified positions were awaiting the order to fire with vigorous revolutionary enthusiasm. The sense of responsibility and revolutionary consciousness with which every fighter was following the guidelines and directives issued played a decisive role in the speed with which the battle was completed. At the moment when our units were advancing to take up their assigned positions, the enemy moved a large force to seize the towering Mt. Lalmba overlooking the city so as to place the principal gates to and out of Keren under his control. This took place four days before our forces launched their attack on Keren. The unit that was assigned to Mt. Lalmba quickly moved to take up its positions and, laying an ambush, smashed the enemy troops approaching it. The enemy troops were forced to retreat in disarray after six hours of fighting, leaving behind many dead and captured soldiers and a large quantity of weapons. Mt. Lalmba was then put under the total control of the EPLA. Before the encounter at Lalmba, the enemy

had lacked adequate intelligence concerning the nature of our preparations around Keren. But once he realized the gravity of the situation after his unexpected and devastating reverses at Lalmba, he began making frantic preparations for the defense of his camps and fortifications in the city. The Battle of Lalmba served the EPLA positively by providing a clue as to the enemy's state of preparedness and his strength. From Lalmba, our forces were able to follow up enemy movements and closely examine his camps. Although occurring ahead of schedule, the Battle of Lalmba did not effect any changes in the charted plan of attack; on the contrary, it enabled us to rapidly gain a commanding position by raising the morale of our comrade fighters even higher. At Lalmba, the heroic EPLA fighters confronted the enemy and his heavy artillery and tanks with light and medium-size weapons. The rapid shattering of the heavily armed enemy forces raised the morale and self-confidence of our fighters and proved our decisive superiority.

The EPLA units surrounding Keren were in a state of total alert, patiently and enthusiastically waiting for the hour of attack. Finally, on July 5, 1977, at exactly 11:45 hours, the central command gave all units the order to attack simultaneously. Our heavy artillery immediately began to pound all enemy camps and fortifications and, under its cover, all our forces began advancing forward at the same time to realize their planned goals. Within a few minutes, the enemy camps and fortifications were flaming, ablaze with



The resolute EPLA jubilantly celebrating the liberation of Keren.

rising clouds of smoke, and hand grenade explosions began to reverberate in the camps slated for first targets. Ziban, the enemy's southern camp, was the first to fall to our forces in the first hour. Ziban was the highest enemy fortification around Keren. When our comrades overran it, the enemy troops rapidly retreated to their camps in the center of the city, leaving their wounded and weapons behind. At the same time, fierce fighting was raging all around Keren. An hour after the capture of Ziban, the fortress of Hashelit on the south-eastern front fell to the hands of the heroic EPLA. With the fall of Ziban and Hashelit, the most difficult stage of the battle was over and our complete strategic superiority over the remaining enemy camps and fortifications was certain. Since Ziban had the highest elevation



“The tanks --- that were the instruments of oppression, death, murder, --- source of fear and terror in the hands of the Ethiopian Colonial Army have today become the instruments of liberation, life and salvation --- the sources of peace and tranquility in the hands of our EPLA.”

of all enemy camps and the presence of a sizeable enemy force, the battle for its capture was not an easy one at all. Although the enemy troops in the said camps with all their variety of heavy artillery and tanks were raining bombs and bullets, the resolute EPLA fighters were, through miraculous heroism, speed and tactics, able to convert the battle from one of an artillery duel at a distance to that of close hand-to-hand combat and considerably shorten its duration by rapidly seizing the camps one after the other. Fierce battles continued in the enemy's northern, eastern and western camps until their fall at 12:00 hours on the second day. The surviving troops fled to their camps inside the city, to their command headquarters of the “Brigade” camp in the south-western section of Keren, and to their main

camp of the "Forto." Once all the enemy troops were confined to the big fortress of the "Forto," the "Brigade" and the other bases in the center of the city, the immediate fall of Keren became imminent.

Whether before and after or during the heroic battle for the liberation of Keren, the broad and active participation of the masses was one of the decisive factors for victory. The peasant masses around Keren worked very hard constructing storages and transporting supplies and provisions while the members of our mass organizations in the city gathered essential intelligence and information useful in waging the battle. And when the fighting began, they served well in the battlefield by caring for the wounded and bringing supplies and provisions for the fighters.

Then, preparations were rapidly completed for the launching of the final and decisive attack on the enemy forces gathered in the two main camps and armed with tanks, armoured vehicles, heavy artillery, and a variety of medium and small arms. At exactly 13:00 hours of the fourth day, the EPLA unleashed an unprecedented attack of heavy artillery on the two remaining enemy camps with devastating effectiveness. Our resolute comrades, defying all the rain of bombs and bullets in their heroic tradition, overran the two enemy camps with great courage and military prowess. The desperate enemy soldiers then began to surrender in small groups. Some who tried to flee towards Agordat were smashed by our units on the western



"Our people used to run away and hide at the sight of enemy tanks, Today they all come out and crowd around the tanks with great joy and excitement."



Keren: captured enemy weapons in display.

front, and their two tanks hit and captured. A large number of the enemy's ordinary soldiers and officers, the likes of which the Eritrean revolution had never seen before, were taken prisoner. Thus, the heroic Battle of Keren was triumphantly concluded within three and a half days. Calm was immediately restored to the city that was deafened by thundering mortar and artillery shots. Before long, an artillery salute reverberated from the biggest fortress of "Forto" and our flag was raised heralding the end of colonialism and the beginning of liberation for the city of Keren. The city's residents flocked into the streets shouting "Victory," "Victory" and joyously embracing and kissing the heroic EPLA fighters who had just won them their long-denied freedom. A brilliant life returned to the city where a festive atmosphere of joyous excitement and happiness reigned.

The people of Keren and the EPLA immediately began cleaning the city, burying the enemy corpses that littered the streetse, caring for and taking wounded enemy soldiers to the hospitals, and gathering the enemy weapons scattered all over. Normal life returned to Keren on the second day and all activity were resumed. The more than 40,000 residents of Keren who stayed home during the fighting and the thousands who were forced to flee because of the enemy's atrocities began to lead their normal lives right away. Those who had taken refuge in the countryside or abroad are now returning to their warm homes and beloved city.

There were several thousand enemy troops garrisoned in Keren. 1,800 of them were taken prisoner, a few escaped while the rest were all killed. Many of those who had escaped were later caught by our forces and People's Militia and they are still being caught. A considerable quantity of weapons, vehicles, tanks, armoured cars, big garages and other enemy property have fallen to the hands of our revolutionary organizations.

In an interview with *Vanguard*, one of the captured colonels briefly explains the situation prevailing in Keren in the following words:

"We never thought that you had such a great military capability. Assessing from my 20 years' experience as a soldier, I think that there are five factors which enabled you to gain victory over us. These factors that were so conspicuous right from the beginning of the battle are:

1. The ability to make a detailed study of your target and to formulate a plan based on the study;
2. A great military ability and knowledge to direct the battle from the center of the battlefield;
3. A high ability to properly use weapons at your disposal;
4. A great ability, to accurately hit your targets; the targeting accuracy of your heavy artillery had caused us to think that there were foreign experts amongst you;
5. The most decisive factor, and the one which we had wrongly conceived as madness or intoxication, is your determination. It is really startling to watch you advancing forward and overrun our positions, utterly defying the bombs, bullets and artillery fire raining on you. Your great courage and incredible determination in the fighting shows your devotion to your cause."

The heroic Battle of Keren was a historic battle which astonished even the enemy's soldiers. As a strongly fortified city, it took two and a half months for the allied forces to seize Keren from the Italians during the Second World War. The Ethiopian army of occupation, however, could not stand up to our heroic EPLA for more than three and a half days. This attests to the ability of the leadership that was guiding and directing the operations and the distinctive heroism, devotion, firm discipline and military ability of every fighter of the EPLF. Contrary to the claims of those who try to belittle it, the Ethiopian army, with its considerable combat experience in Korea and the Congo, is, both in its size and military ability, one of the major reactionary armies in Africa. But, it was helpless in the face of the efficacy, military ability, determination and heroism of the EPLA. And this shall always be remembered in our history.

Expressing our profound appreciation and gratitude to our revolutionary comrades who laid down their lives in the battlefield fighting with great courage, resolve and devotion to regain dignity, freedom, peace and



"---an artillery salute reverberated from the biggest fortress of 'Forto' and our flag was raised heralding the end of colonialism and the beginning of liberation for the city of Keren"

prosperity for their people by destroying the enemy camps that for many years have remained the citadels of colonialism, exploitation and fascism, we extend the masses of our people in the city of Keren and elsewhere our best wishes and revolutionary greetings. Our struggle shall continue until all our remaining cities and the last square meter of our land are completely liberated. Our victory is certain.

How Do Others Oppose Our Victories?

It is an incontrovertible truth that our First Organizational Congress has ushered in a new stage of great developments and brilliant achievements and brought forth the finest days of our revolutionary organization. Even if we were to attempt to describe these victories in detail, our words would still fail to adequately express their greatness and brilliance. This is no exaggeration for our victories in the Eritrean field are being won in broad daylight with the full participation of the masses of our people.

Ever since the triumphant conclusion of our First Organizational Congress, the various departments and units of our organization have, heeding its revolutionary calls and recommendations to the people and the fighters, resolutely taken the initiative to perform revolutionary tasks in various fields of activity. The victory won at Nacfa was the harbinger of the victories that have been and continue to be won elsewhere with stunning effects. These victories are not the result of miracles or random chance. They have been achieved through the determined revolutionary effort, resolute struggle and incredible spirit of sacrifice of our comrade fighters engaged in various areas of struggle and production. They are the outcome of the conscious implementation of our National Democratic Programme which guides our struggle and lights the way to the practical attainment of our goals. It is this character of our struggle that primarily exposed the bankruptcy of the cheap propaganda disseminated by the weak and reactionary counter-revolutionaries at home and abroad.

It is now crystal clear that Ethiopian colonialism is steadily being driven out of Eritrean soil. Having been dealt telling blows by our revolutionary EPLA, Ethiopian colonialism is already in the throes of its death bed. The balance of power has markedly changed in our favor. We have achieved strategic superiority and seized revolutionary initiative. With all its political and military machinations ending up in miserable failure, the enemy is in a frenzy like a mad dog. Irrespective of whether it recognizes it or not, its defeat in and expulsion from Eritrea is certain.

The military and political victories we have scored in Dekemhare and Keren are truly great and brilliant. No amount of vicious lies or malignant slanders can change this fundamental fact. When the swindlers who have confined themselves to the slandering and denigration of the EPLF try to malign these victories, they only expose their reactionary and counter-revolutionary essence in front of the masses. The cheap peddling of the self-serving claims of being "the mother organization," "an organization that does not split," "a revolutionary democratic organization," etc., cannot possibly cover up their internal weaknesses or their maladies and contradictions that have already gone out of hand and exploded in the open.

It is to be remembered that when the EPLF, having won brilliant victories and liberated extensive areas in the countryside, proceeded to the stage of liberating the cities, the other force was belittling and slandering the victories of the EPLF. It has gone even to the extent of shamelessly claiming our victories to swindle not only the Eritrean refugees languishing in neighboring countries but also the masses of our people at home who daily witness and participate in the efforts, sacrifices and victories of our heroic comrades. It is true that we had not raised this issue because we were, in the interest of our national cause, reluctant to be drawn into trifling arguments.

But, it does not mean that we were unaware of it. Today, however, we shall explain why the said force conducts such slanders against the EPLF because definite circumstances of time, history and place require that this issue be clarified especially to our refugee population abroad.

Since the propaganda waged to slander the victories of the EPLF and malign its revolutionary dignity means primarily to slander and smear the heroism, sacrifices and determination of the fighters who are honorably giving their lives in the fulfilment of their sacred national duty in the battlefield, it is not in the interest of our national cause. Secondly, the baseless propaganda that they are waging against our organization expresses their hidden intrigues and irrational hatred. It is a vicious conspiracy principally designed to deepen the contradictions among the fighters in the Eritrean field by distorting reality and to hide the facts from the masses of our people and our friends who stand on our side and support our just national liberation struggle. Thirdly, the said force has opted to engage in this kind of dirty talks because, due to its weak internal structure, it has been unable to learn from its past experience and free itself from its old and corrupt ailments, resolve its sharpening internal contradictions, eliminate its decadent relations and accomplish organizational and military operations comparable to those of the EPLF. Fourthly, this force is trying to cover up its shortcomings through lies because there are no relations or similarities between its declared policies and boastful claims on the one hand, and its practical work, on the other. Social practice alone is the criterion that separates the real revolutionary from the false one. And a lie remains a lie, or words cannot substitute for deeds. In any case, it is imperative that we reiterate our views on and express our opposition to the state of mutual killings and the split that prevails within the "mother organization" so as to straighten the facts and clarify the truth for those who might have been deceived or misled by the mendacious campaign.

The cheap and slanderous propaganda that was recently unleashed against our organization, and continues to make the rounds in certain circles, initially focused on the erroneous analysis and prophecy that the EPLF were engaged in a suicidal military operation beyond its capability (referring to the Battle of Keren) that it would not win, etc. When the EPLF scored a brilliant victory and the slanderous lies were exposed, they made a complete turnabout and shamelessly claimed that the victory was achieved thanks to them, that they played the decisive role in the battles leading to the liberation of the cities (Keren and Dekemhare), etc. This propaganda was also soon exposed and they began to peddle another similarly cheap one. This time, they are claiming that "the Dergue has concluded an agreement with the EPLF and is handing it the cities without combat." The main aim of this vicious and baseless propaganda is to obstruct and wreck the agreement

that was recently reached in order to create a spirit of cooperation and coordination between the two organizations. In any case, this intrigue cannot detract from the significance, greatness and value of our victory; it only exposes the intriguers in the eyes of our people. The masses of our people have witnessed through their own direct participation the devotion and resolve with which our heroic EPLA fought for the liberation of the cities of Keren and Dekemhare. It is also the people of Keren and Dekemhare who carried away or buried those of our comrades who were wounded or martyred for the sake of their people while heroically fulfilling their patriotic duty.

The truth being so, the swindlers cannot speak loudly in front of the masses of our people who, with their own eyes, have seen the EPLA annihilate thousands of enemy troops in their strong fortifications and camps. By the way, how do they explain the millions of dollars worth of enemy weapons, tanks, armored cars, vehicles, heavy artillery, etc., that were either destroyed or captured? What would the masses of our people in Keren and Dekemhare, who collaborated with the resolute EPLF fighters in the gathering of the enemy weapons that were scattered all over, think of their leis? How can they cover up the complete victory that our heroic EPLA has won over the occupation forces of the enemy? It is thus clear that this mendacious propaganda mainly aims as usual to slander and denigrate the EPLF. Whoever tries to hide his weaknesses or shortcomings by peddling these baseless lies against the EPLF, whoever thinks that the victories being won with the blood of our heroic comrades are the results of an "agreement with the Dergue," irrespective of whether he is an Eritrean or a foreigner, is either crazy, naive or a cheap counter-revolutionary pursuing long-term goals.

Those spreading this poison know full well that such worn-out tactics cannot obstruct the EPLF in its correctly and clearly charted path of struggle to liberate the whole of Eritrea. Beware those who denigrate the sacrifices and determination of our heroic comrades, for our masses and history are the principal witnesses of these victories.

Expose the Dergue's Colonialist Lies

Ever since coming to power, the Dergue has been striving to disguise itself in the eyes of the Ethiopian and the world's peoples. While it is in reality against progress, democracy, peace and socialism, it tries to pose as the champion of progress, democracy, peace and socialism. In any case, far

from being the peculiar character of the Dergue, this is a common feature of all fascists. Whoever knows this general truth then cannot be surprised by the Dergue's inconsistent and contradictory nature.

The Dergue, as a regime, has a clear fascist ideology. Its principal and ultimate objective is the building and consolidation, through the invasion of neighboring peoples, of a great and powerful Ethiopia under the personal dictatorship of the notorious fascist Mengistu Haile Mariam. Just as the fascist Benito Mussolini, pursuing similar objectives, had raised the ancient emblem of the bundle of wood and axe symbolizing the authority, power of conquest and greatness of the Romans, so Mengistu Haile Mariam has today made the tale of "3000 years of Ethiopian history," fabricated by Ethiopia's feudal rulers, the watchword for his expansionist aggression.

Duce Mengistu and his fascist clique know full well that one of the principal causes for the downfall of their predecessor, Haile Selassie's feudal regime, was its war of aggression and extermination against the Eritrean people's just struggle for national liberation. They also know fully well that they usurped state power by riding high on the spontaneous revolt of the oppressed Ethiopian masses and the mutinous rumblings of the Ethiopian aggressor army badly mauled and demoralized by the powerful blows of the Eritrean revolution and taking advantage of the absence of a vanguard party capable of organizing and leading the Ethiopian people's mass struggles to victory. However, what the Dergue has not yet learnt or does not want to learn is the fact that it only accelerates its downfall so long as it is either unable or unwilling to find a correct and scientific practical solution to the problems long afflicting Ethiopia.

To prolong its rule, the Dergue strives to arouse and mobilize the unconscious and unorganized Ethiopian masses for its war of aggression by issuing contradictory declarations and chauvinist slogans, such as "Ethiopia First," "Revolutionary motherland or death," "Ethiopian socialism," etc. History bears witness that Il Duce Mussolini, the arch enemy of socialism and progress, had put industries under the control of his fascist dictatorship and was preaching socialism when he was forcibly conscripting the Italian masses into his "Milizia Volontare Sicurezza Nazionale" (Militia Volunteers for National Security) and embarked them upon an unjust war of aggression. Similarly, the fascist Dergue strives to consolidate its power by putting factories and excess urban houses under its control (not under the control of workers!) and misrepresenting socialism as the nationalization of property (irrespective of whose interests the nationalization serves). It tried to mobilize the masses into the so-called "peasant volunteers" for its war of aggression. When the "peasant volunteers" campaign was smashed to shreds, the Dergue set out to establish a new army under the name of the "people's militia." In the process, it has been mur-

dering and jailing thousands of Ethiopian democrats, workers and students simply because they expressed opposition; it has converted all Ethiopian towns harboring anti-fascist movements into big concentration camps. Nevertheless, it has not been able to win over the Eritrean revolution and the Ethiopian democrats fighting it; and it shall not win.

The fascist Dergue has been busy issuing contradictory statements concerning the Eritrean revolution. For instance, at the time of its initial seizure of power, it shamelessly denied the existence of the Eritrean people's national liberation struggle that has long been fighting against Ethiopian colonial occupation. However, when it realized the futility of such a denial and its false statements aroused the opposition of its war-weary troops, it claimed that "there were a handful of bandits in Eritera," "we shall have them under their knees soon," etc. These lies could not take it far either; when our heroic Eritrean People's Liberation Army (E.P.L.A.) went on scoring unprecedented military and political victories, it claimed that "the Eritrean secessionists were progressive when they began their resistance because they were against Haile Selassie," etc. It devised a new tactic which in essence was no different from the former. This tactic was designed to isolate the Eritrean revolution from its friends and present the Dergue as ready to solve the Eritrean question through peaceful means.

The Dergue, on the one hand, presented, with monotonous regularity and sickening hypocrisy, the so-called "nine point policy" of May 16, 1976, meant to solve the Eritrean question and satisfy the wishes and demands of the Eritrean people. On the other hand, it unleashed a barbarous campaign of indiscriminate massacres against the Eritrean civilian population; it brutally shot, strangled and bayoneted children, women and old men, burnt down villages and crop fields, etc. The Dergue's barbarity was not confined to this. Resorting to fascistic slogans and chauvinist demagogy, such as "defense of the motherland," "invasion by reactionary neighbors," etc., it schemed to invade Eritrea with the human wave of a huge "people's militia." It severed its military agreements with the imperialist U.S. in a calculated move to receive the crumbs from certain states seeking to secure their strategic interests in our surrounding region and appear progressive under their dependency. It closed down the consulates and expelled the foreign representatives from Asmara so that its planned and ongoing policy of mass murder and famine in Eritrea would remain hidden from the world. When the Dergue took this step, its aim was to conceal its brutal and inhuman atrocities against the Eritrean people and not, as it claimed, because of its contradictions with the states whose consulates and representatives it expelled from Asmara. If its claims were true, there would have been no reason why it should not have also expelled them from Addis Ababa!

In responding to a question from a Beirut newspaper (*Al Hurea*, July 25, 1977), the notorious fascist Mengistu Haile Mariam stated that he intends to solve the Eritrean question militarily and not peacefully. This clearly exposes the demagogy and fraud behind the Dergue's proposals of the so-called "peaceful solution." When asked as to why the Eritrean question could be solved only through military force, Mengistu replied that this was so because "the Dergue is progressive" and the patriotic Eritrean fighters are "reactionary." Of course, it does not surprise us at all that Mengistu claims to be progressive in words, as he cannot be progressive in deeds. After all, he and his ilk, the fascists, never say that they are "fascists or reactionaries." When, in our epoch, especially in this last quarter of the 20th century, it has become fashionable to appear progressive and to compare oneself with the great revolutionaries, we find nothing new in the Dergue's comparisons of the problems facing it and Mengistu's dictatorship with the imperialist aggressions and conspiracies against the Soviet Union in the 1920's, Soviet power and the Bolshevik Party; we only find it very preposterous. All this further manifests its fascism.

DECLARATION

The Masses of Our People,

Today, the EPLF has achieved great victories in the cities of Keren, Dekemhare, Segeneiti and Digsu. The fascist Dergue's colonial machinations are being irrevocably shattered. Failing to learn from its past mistakes, however, the Dergue is mustering a considerable number of troops and making frantic preparations to launch a new military offensive in the hope of smashing the Eritrean revolution. The fascist Dergue's huge military parade and the bullying and threatening harangues that accompanied it in Addis Ababa two months ago are not to be forgotten.

The morale of the Ethiopian army of aggression has been sapped by our heroic Eritrean People's Liberation Army's (E.P.L.A.) triumphant liberation of these cities. Nevertheless, the Dergue is striving to mobilize its demoralized troops in a last ditch attempt to impose its fascist colonial policy. Deploying an enormous number of troops, the Dergue has, five days

ago, launched a counter-offensive from two fronts—on the Asmara—addis Abbaba and Mai Habar—Dekemhare roads—to recapture Dekemhare, Segeneiti and Digma, all of which lie along the same route.

Over 8000 aggressor troops, escorted by tanks, armored vehicles, heavy artillery and fighter planes, that set out to reopen the Asmara-Dekemhare road have been effectively blocked by our EPLA and forced to retreat. Our forces have inflicted enormous losses of men and materiel on the enemy forces that set out from Mai Habar captured a large number of troops and weapons, and pushed them back to their camp. On the second front, fierce battles are still raging in Adi Hawesha between Asmara and Dekemhare. The enemy's aggressor forces, that had penetrated up to 20 km. southward toward Dekemhare and were smashed by our heroic EPLA, suffered enormous losses in men and materiel and were forced to retreat 10 km. Violent battles are still raging in Adi Hawesha and Kurba Imbeito, just two Km. from The Asmara International Airport. Our forces have wiped out many enemy soldiers, destroyed several tanks and a lot of weapons and captured large quantities of arms as well as hundreds of soldiers. The fighting is still raging fiercely.

Airlifting fresh troop reinforcements into Asmara from all over Ethiopia and mustering all its forces in Asmara, the Ethiopian fascist regime is preparing to launch another counter-offensive to attain its dream of recapturing our liberated areas around Asmara and reopening the Asmara - Addis Ababa road. It is also making preparations to open a new front north of Asmara. Our EPLA units north of Asmara are closely following up the situation and awaiting fully prepared to smash the enemy's cheap and futile attempts.

To face up to the new military situation, accomplish the pressing tasks of the moment and ease the problems of our people in the liberated areas, we request our friends and allies who support our people's just cause to render us their unreserved assistance.

We are fully convinced that our ultimate victory and the final demise of the Dergue's fascist regime are certain.

Victory to the Masses!
10/8/1977

This declaration was issued while fierce fighting was still raging and the enemy rushing fresh reinforcements to the battlefield.

Eleventh Anniversary of the Namibian People's Armed Struggle

August 26, 1977 is the 11th anniversary of the armed struggle of the Namibian People. Namibia, also known by the colonial name of South West Africa, has an area of 318,216 sq. miles. To the east, it borders with Botswana, to the west with the Atlantic ocean, to the north with Angola and Zimbabwe and to the south with Azania (South Africa). The population of Namibia, slightly over one million, consists of different ethnic groups, including the Ovambos, Nama, Damara, Tswana etc. At present, Namibia is under the colonial rule of the racist regime of the white minority settlers of South Africa.

In the early 1880's German, Portuguese and British missionaries were sent to Namibia by their respective governments. Their mission was to pave the way for the colonization of Namibia in the name of christianity. As we all know very well, this was a common practice which the European powers that scrambled for colonies employed throughout Africa, without exception. By the 1870's, Germany was fast growing into an industrialized capitalist country. Its ruling classes, having had full control over their domestic market, began to produce more than the demands of their home market and had accumulated a lot of capital. Under their rule, Germany was one of the imperialist powers that scrambled for Africa in order to secure a colony to dump its surplus goods, invest its capital, exploit cheap human labor and raw materials indispensable to its rapidly flourishing industries.

In order to avoid colonial wars of attrition and rivalry, Bismark (the German chancellor) in collaboration with the French Louis Ferry summoned in 1884 an inter-European conference in Berlin. The purpose of the Berlin Conference was to partition the whole of Africa between the fourteen European nations which took part in the conference. In the name of philanthropy, the Berlin conference assigned Germany the task of "converting the Namibian people to the benefits of christianity and civilization." Thus in 1885 German troops of occupation poured into Namibia and hoisted the German flag there for the first time.

Using modern and superior weaponry, the German forces of occupation defeated the native African people who were defending their freedom and human dignity in their own land. The German troops soon set out to systematically massacre the aged and the young Africans without exception, loot their cattle and burn their crops and villages in an attempt to eliminate the African population as a whole. The African population in Namibia, on its part, waged a series of fierce armed battles in which priceless blood was shed in resistance to the inhuman and atrocious acts of the Germans. Especially, the years between 1904 and 1907 were marked by fierce battles between the German forces of occupation and the Namibian people. The enemy, however, using his superior weapons and sharpening the contradictions between the different tribes, and exploiting the reactionary and backward spirit of rivalry among their chieftains—all of which were not principal contradictions—was able to weaken the Namibian people's resistance. The German colonizers then began to execute their wicked plans of liquidating the native African population of Namibia. Two-fifths of the Namibian population were totally wiped out by the atrocious and bloody acts of the fascist German troops of occupation. The survivors, deprived of their fertile lands, have been reduced to slaves of European colonizers and crammed into labor reserve camps in the desert and semi-desert parts of the country.

Although Germany, vanquished in the First World War (1914-1918) was forced to cede its African colonies, the Namibian people were not freed from absolute oppression. On the contrary, the German troops of occupation were replaced by British troops who were not so different from the former. Later on, Britain handed Namibia over to the South Africa trusteeship administration on the basis of the intrigues engineered by the now-defunct League of Nations (substituted by UNO in 1945). This trusteeship was nullified and condemned by the UN as far back as 1946; in spite of this, however, the racist regime of South Africa is ruling Namibia by force.

There are many similarities between the experiences of the Namibian and Eritrean peoples' struggles. The Eritrean revolution had passed through many difficulties and obstructions; similarly the people's struggle for independence in Namibia has, since 1958, been baffled by the lack of a principled unity among the African people. Petty-bourgeois nationalists and traditional tribal chiefs have often founded their organizations on factional and tribal bases, and these organizations have been detrimental to the cause of the struggle for liberation in Namibia. In addition, the lack of a clearly defined national programme among these political organizations and their conception of the key to their victory as lying in the U.N.'s appeals and resolutions have hampered the development of the Namibian people's national liberation struggle. Since the genesis of both the Namibian and

Eritrean questions is similar (Namibia was put under the racist rule of South Africa by the League of Nations while Eritrea was reduced into an Ethiopian colony through the U.N. federal resolution), the bitter experience of the Namibian struggle is not new to the Eritrean revolution. Finally, when the oppressed Namibian people realized that their hopes and trust in the U.N. were in vain, the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), founded in 1959, launched the armed struggle on August 26, 1966.

On the occasion of the Eleventh Anniversary of their armed struggle, the EPLF vanguard reiterates its total support to the Namibian people in their just struggle against fascism, colonialism and racial discrimination and extends them its best wishes for success and victory. In the end, we have absolute confidence that the Namibian and Eritrean peoples shall win complete victory in their common struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, fascism and racial discrimination.

NEWS AND VIEWS

NORMAL LIFE RESUMES IN KEREN

When the Ethiopian colonial army that had occupied it for 25 years was completely annihilated by the heroic and resolute Eritrean People's Liberation Army (EPLA) on July 8, 1977, the city of Keren fell to Eritrean hands for the first time in its history. After four days, the people celebrated with great joy and delight the Day of Liberation that was made possible with their full collaboration and participation. About 35,000 people attended the celebrations held in the stadium. The history of the Eritrean people's armed struggle and the development of the EPLF as well as its national Democratic Programme were briefly presented. The warm spirit of joy and happiness that filled the celebrations indicates the extent to which the Eritrean people have suffered under fascist Ethiopian colonialism and the magnitude of their aspirations for liberation. Besides, the people of the city of Keren joyously participated in the brilliant three-day celebrations during which the EPLF's Branch of Culture presented revolutionary cultural shows and patriotic songs.

As soon as the Battle of Keren was over, the few people who had taken refuge in the nearby hills returned to their homes. The overwhelming majority of its residents had remained in their homes during the fighting. The fighters and the people, closely working together, buried the enemy corpses scattered all over, removed all litter and cleaned the city. With the ruined or malfunctioning items repaired, hospitals and water supply resumed their services. The EPLF is endeavoring with all might and main to solve the short-term and long-term problems of the people. It has discussed these problems in zonal meetings with the people and issued the necessary directives and guidelines for their proper solution. Accordingly, all businesses—markets, retail shops, restaurants, etc.—have opened and begun operating their normal activities.

Although it is impossible to fully convey here the positive changes in the people's attitudes and sentiments that the liberation of Keren has brought about, we would like to mention two examples of what we were able to observe. The first example: Formerly, our people used to run away and hide at the sight of tanks, armored cars and guns. Today, however, they—old and young alike—all come out and crowd around the tanks and armored cars with great joy and excitement as our fighters parade them on the streets. The tanks and armored cars that were the instruments of oppression, death, and murder as well as the sources of fear and terror in the hands of the Ethiopian colonial army have today become the instruments of liberation, life and salvation as well as the sources of peace and tranquility in the hands of our EPLA. The people who were fleeing an hiding from the Ethiopian army of occupation are today observed running after the fighters and discussing and laughing with them.

The second example: a 76-year-old man who had climbed up the Forto (the formidable fortress in the heart of the city) stated:

"I was born and raised in Keren all my life. Until today, however, I have never ventured to come close by let alone climb up here. It was strictly forbidden for anyone to walk anywhere near this fortress. This big fortress that you see—how you were able to seize it is really a miracle—was originally built by the Turks and was later occupied by the Egyptians, so our fathers used to tell us since when we were children. In my own life span, I have seen this fortress first under the Italians and, after the war between the Italians and the British, the British occupied it. You know, it took the British two and a half months of fierce fighting to capture Keren in 1941. From 1952 until your recent seizure, it was a fortress of the Ethiopian occupation army. Thanks to you, our children who have liberated it, we can today step our feet on this fortress, which is our own land, and touch, see and feel its soil. Just as in Keren, we wish to see your victories in Asmara and the other remaining cities. We are always with you in the struggle."



EPLF Provides efficient transport Services for the masses

Today, the people of Keren, like all the people throughout the liberated areas, are resolutely working to rebuild a free life, develop production, and raise their revolutionary participation in the patriotic struggle. Vowing not only to defend Keren and its surrounding areas from any enemy encroachments but also to continue fighting with all their collective might alongside the EPLA to liberate the rest of the cities, they are building a new liberated life and society.

THE EPLF RESCUES 800 POLITICAL PRISONERS IN ASMARA

While the battles of Keren and Dekemhare were under way, studies were being made for the rescue of the sizable number of political prisoners languishing in a maximum-security prison in Asmara. The planned rescue operation was carried out after the victories of Keren and Dekemhare. At that time, Colonel Atnafu Abate, the Dergue's vice-chairman, had come to Asmara to closely assess the impact of the defeats of the Ethiopian colonial army in Keren and Dekemhare and to muster all available forces for a new all-out counter-offensive. Thus, the entire enemy garrison in Asmara was in a state of maximum alert. Under these circumstances, one of the EPLA units encircling Asmara entered the city on the night of July 15, 1977, to accomplish the task of rescuing the prisoners.

Once in the city, it put all the roads leading to the prison and the enemy camps under full control and launched its attack against the strongly defended maximum-security prison at exactly 24:00 hours. Although the enemy soldiers on guard put up some resistance, they were rapidly smashed and our fighters entered the prison and brought out over 800 political prisoners. Many of the prisoners were our urban guerrillas and other fighters mostly caught while performing revolutionary tasks in Asmara and the other major cities. There were also ELF fighters, patriotic workers, and other patriots incarcerated on the political charge of alleged involvement with cells (our underground urban mass organizations) among them.

The incarcerated fighters had already received long jail terms or death sentences. The fascist Ethiopian regime had decided to kill all jailed fighters to avenge its defeats in Keren and Dekemhare. It should be borne in mind here that, with all the fighting that took place during the attack and the retreat, all the fighters and prisoners returned safely without any harm or loss.

On the next morning, Atnafu Abate ordered that the jail's commanding colonel be immediately executed without trial and, overburdened with humiliation and defeat, returned to Addis Ababa right away.

PRESIDENT LUIS CABRAL OF GUINEA BISSAU AND CAPE VERDE EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF ERITREA AND WESTERN SOMALIA

While on a visit to the Democratic Republic of Somalia, President Luis Cabral of Guinea Bissau and the Cape Verde was asked about the struggles of the peoples of Eritrea and Western Somalia by a journalist of the Somali daily, "The October Star," on July 29, 1977, to which he replied:

"No force whatsoever can prevent the just struggles that the peoples of Eritrea and Western Somalia are waging for independence and liberation from achieving their objectives."

These commendable words of the leader of a revolutionary state affirm that the people of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, who, under the correct leadership of the great African revolutionary fighter, Comrade Amilcar Cabral, have fought with blood and sacrifices against Portuguese colonial aggression, understand full well the meaning of a people's just struggle for their independence and freedom. Both our people and our revolutionary organization, the EPLF, have from the outset had a clear and an unwavering stand on the national struggle of the people of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde. Likewise, our people and Front have never doubted from the very beginning that the free people of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde and their revolutionary leadership support our just struggle.

MEDIATION MEETING FOR SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA FAILS

The 7-nation Mediation Committee of the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) held a meeting in Libreville, Gabon, on August 9, 1977, in an effort to mediate between Somalia and Ethiopia and failed. The meeting was called on the basis of Ethiopian allegations of Somali invasion of its territory. The foreign ministers of Somalia and Ethiopia attended the meeting and clarified their respective government's positions. The Ethiopian delegation repeated the accusation that Somalia has committed a war of expansion against Ethiopia through its regular armed forces, tanks, planes and artillery.

The Somali delegation, on its part, stated that the Ethiopian allegation of a Somali aggression is a baseless lie, that the fighting now going on in Western Somalia (the Ogaden and Haud regions of the Ethiopian provinces of Harar and Bale) is not between the Somali and Ethiopian armies, as Ethiopia claims, but between the fighters of the Western Somalia Liberation Front (W.S.L.F.) and the Ethiopian occupation army and if the aim is to resolve the problem, the negotiations should be conducted not between Somalia and Ethiopia but between the WSLF and Ethiopia. Furthermore, Somalia affirmed its willingness to do what it can in support of any negotiations that might be held between the WSLF and Ethiopia.

The area now called Western Somalia, encompassing the large Ogaden and Haud regions, was directly invaded and annexed by Menelik, the King of Shoa, in the period of the European colonial scramble for Africa (the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries). It is clear that the Somali people at that time were divided among Italian, British, French and Ethiopian colonial rule and suffered under bitter colonial oppression and exploitation and one part continues to suffer still.

When Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and later, at the beginning of the Second World War, also occupied "British" Somaliland, the Somali people and land that were formerly under Italian, British and Ethiopian control were brought together under fascist Italian colonialism. And when Britain defeated Italy in 1941 in East Africa, the whole area fell under the British. After the Second World War, the ex-Italian Somaliland was put under Italian trusteeship. When in 1960 the Ex-British and Ex-Italian Somalilands gained their independence, they united and formed the Somali Democratic Republic.

Ever since its cession to Ethiopia by the British in 1948, Western Somalia has been suffering national oppression and subjugation under Ethiopian rule. Nevertheless, the people of Western Somalia have never ceased fighting for their right to self-determination and independence. They have waged courageous resistance and revolts for many years. Pushing their struggle to a higher stage, they established the W.S.L.F. in 1968. Thus, the

intense fighting now raging in Western Somalia is not something that a recent Somali aggression has ignited, as Ethiopia alleges, but a just liberation struggle that has been developing and gathering momentum since 1968.

Any colonized people or oppressed nationality has an inalienable right to self-determination. The oppressed people of Western Somalia have a right to self-determination and independence. It is their legitimate right to free themselves from the fascist and chauvinist Ethiopian rule and arrange their life as they wish. Reflecting this correct principle, the EPLF, as the vanguard of the Eritrean revolution, extends its unwavering support to the just struggle of the Western Somali people for self-determination. And it is certain that they shall win complete victory in the end:

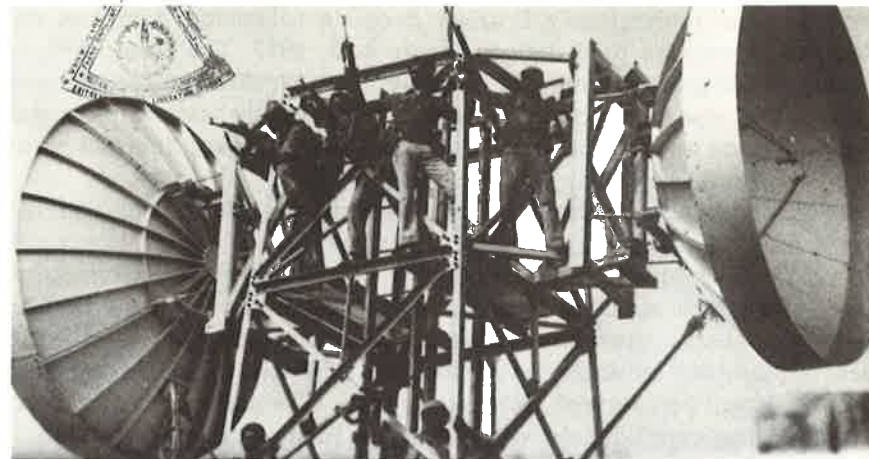
MILITARY COMMUNIQUE

The heroic Eritrean People's Liberation Army (EPLA) is winning great and brilliant victories by crushing the Ethiopian colonial forces of aggression in their urban camps and fortifications. It is to be recalled that the cities of Keren and Dekemhare were liberated last month by the resolute EPLA. This month, the neighboring towns of Segeneiti and Digsa have fallen into the hands of the heroic EPLA after bitter and ferocious battles.

Segeneiti is situated in the heart of our extensive liberated areas in the southern zone. It occupies a very strategic location on the Asmara-Addis Ababa road passing through Dekemhare. There is a formidable military fortress built by the Italians in Segeneiti. The Ethiopian colonial army of aggression that had occupied this fortress during the last 25 years had been committing enormous atrocities and crimes against the people of Segeneiti and the surrounding communities. Impelled by their tremendous hatred, the people opposed the occupation army with all their strength.

It had been a long time since Segeneiti, like all the other towns still under enemy control, was encircled by units of the EPLA. The offensive began on August 2, 1977, and, after a fierce battle, Segeneiti fell to our forces on the next morning, i.e., at 9:00 hours on August 3, 1977. The entire enemy garrison was totally wiped out in the fighting. All enemy property and weapons—supplies, arms, artillery, tanks, etc.—became the property of the revolution.

Situated 12 km. from Segeneiti, Digsa was Ethiopia's main micro-wave communications center. Hence, it was heavily guarded by the enemy. Nevertheless, having liberated Segeneiti, the heroic EPLA marched straight southward and liberated Digsa by annihilating the sizable Ethiopian garrison there in a day's hard fighting. All the enemy property in the camp then became the property of the revolution.



Digsa: enemy microwave radar under the complete control of the EPLF.

The liberation of Segeneiti and Digsa, coupled with that of Dekemhare, has driven out the enemy from strategic bases. This consolidates our extensive liberated areas in the south. By placing excellent asphalted roads under the service of our revolution, it makes our transport and communications activities more efficient. It also enables us to run and develop our large agricultural lands in the south without any worries of enemy encroachments. Moreover, it completely isolates the encircled enemy garrison in Adi Kaih, the capital city of Akele Guzai Province, from all sources of reinforcement. All this means that today the entire southern region of Eritrea, encompassing virtually the entire provinces of Denkel, Akele Guzai and Serae, has been liberated.

A BIG ENEMY COUNTER-OFFENSIVE SMASHED!

On August 4, 1977, the fascist Ethiopian colonialists, mustering about 10,000 troops escorted by fighter planes, tanks, armored cars and heavy artillery, launched a two-pronged counter-offensive (one from Asmara and the other from Mai Habar) against our liberated areas in the south with the special mission of recapturing Dekemhare. The aggressor troops involved represented a combination of the regular Ethiopian army and the so-called "people's militia," the special tool of the fascist Dergue. After suffering from the telling blows of the resolute EPLA, the force that had set out from Mai Habar retreated to its camp on the second day (on August 5, 1977), leaving behind a large quantity of weapons and many dead. The force that had set out from Asmara was also blocked and dealt severe blows.

The enemy then rushed fresh reinforcements from Asmara. Ferocious battles raged between the Ethiopian counter-revolutionary army of aggres-

sion and the revolutionary Eritrean People's Liberation Army on the Asmara-Dekemhare road during August 4-13, 1977. The heroic EPLA, fighting with great revolutionary perseverance, blocked the enemy force that, led by tanks and armored cars and supported by heavy artillery and fighter planes, was trying hard to break through our defense lines and burnt it in the blazing fires of people's war.

In the formidable revolutionary resistance put up to defend our liberated areas, save our people's lives and safeguard the gains of the revolution, the EPLF People's Militia and the masses of our people played a truly great role. The People's Militia fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the EPLA, displaying great courage and heroism. Immersing themselves deep in the heat of battle and advancing deep into enemy positions to attack from close range, its members showed great resoluteness. The masses, on their part, played a great revolutionary role by carrying food, water and ammunition to the battlefield, helping and treating the wounded in their trenches, etc., in the face of the hail of bombs and bullets from enemy planes, tanks and automatic weapons. The resolute participation that the People's Militia and the popular masses showed in this battle is hitherto without parallel in the Eritrean revolution.

With its morale tremendously boosted and its power strengthened by the active support of the People's Militia and the great participation of the popular masses, the heroic EPLA seized the initiative and launched a devastating attack against the enemy positions on August 13, 1977. Engaging the aggressor troops in close hand to hand combat, it resolutely and heroically smashed their resistance and forced them to abandon their positions. With its front thus rapidly crumbling and its forces fleeing in disarray, the enemy retreated to Asmara leaving over 1200 dead behind. The number of its wounded was even larger.

The heroic EPLA thus achieved a great strategic victory. It captured hundreds of enemy soldiers, seized a large quantity of a variety of light and heavy arms, including four tanks. It practically demonstrated that it can, with the collaboration of our resolute People's Militia and heroic fighting masses, smash any enemy force, irrespective of its size and arms, with amazing resoluteness and efficiency even in the open plains around Asmara. This proves that it is the revolutionary will and determination of the people fighting for their freedom and life rather than the size of troops and quality of arms of the reactionary army of aggression that carries the day. Here, the great combativeness of our fighting people and their revolutionary army played a decisive role. Thus, this brilliant victory reiterates the great capability of our mass-based vanguard organization to crush and annihilate the enemy, to expand, consolidate and defend our liberated areas, and to safeguard and strengthen the gains of our revolution.

Victory to the Masses!



Away With All Pests!