

No. 2

SELECTED ARTICLES FROM VANGUARD

Official Monthly Organ of the
Eritrean People's Liberation Front



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Cover photo: EPLA fighters splashing through salt pans to attack the enemy's naval base in Massawa.

For any suggestions or criticisms concerning *Vanguard* or for more information on the Eritrean revolution, please write to:

AESNA
P.O. Box 1247
New York, N.Y. 10027

or

EPLF office
Via Firenze 15/3
Rome, Italy



Publisher's Note:

These penetrating articles on the Eritrean revolution are selections from *Vanguard*, the official monthly organ of the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front. The Association of Eritrean Students in North America (AESNA) has translated them from the original Tigrigna.

Vanguard is published in the liberated areas of Eritrea. However, due to technical reasons the publication of the English version of *Vanguard* has been discontinued since September 1977. In order to fill the gap and continuing its efforts to publicize the Eritrean revolution AESNA is publishing this issue of selected articles of *Vanguard*. AESNA is responsible for any errors, and omissions that may occur in translation.

AESNA
June 1978

Some Lessons from the Experience of the Eritrean Revolution

Every revolutionary movement, through the struggle it wages and the experience it passes through, contributes some general and specific lessons of experience that have universal truth and usefulness and that enrich the revolutionary practice and theory of the struggling people of the world. It is true, especially when compared to big countries, our country, Eritrea, is small both in terms of area and population. Nevertheless, there are some fundamental revolutionary lessons of international significance, especially at this historical juncture, that are not determined by the smallness of the area of our country and its population but that stem from the concrete historical development of our society and the path traversed by our revolutionary struggle. Although it is not possible to draw up here the list of all of them, it is possible to enumerate some of the principal revolutionary lessons that the long and bitter experience of our struggling people has contributed or the revolutionary lessons whose validity it has confirmed.

FIRST—Genuine independence and liberation of the colonized and oppressed peoples can be achieved only through armed struggle. In history, no ruling class has ever relinquished its rule and given up its interests of its own accord and peacefully. All reactionary ruling classes, in order to insure their rule and safeguard their class interest, will never cease to struggle until their final and total defeat. This is all the more true in the era of declining imperialism. In their endeavour to maintain their rule over the masses and crush their struggles, imperialists and their neocolonial puppets are perpetrating appalling atrocities and crimes everywhere. Learning from their bitter experience that they can stand up to and defeat counter-revolutionary violence only through organized revolutionary violence, the colonized and oppressed peoples have been waging and continue to wage courageous and determined armed struggle. The correctness of the revolutionary axiom that “political power grows out of the barrel of the gun” has become clearer today than every before.

History attests to the fact that the heroic Eritrean people have struggled against foreign invasion and social oppression for centuries on end. The

relentless struggles that the Eritrean people waged against the Turks, Egyptians and Italians were in the main unorganized and uncoordinated. Since 1941 however, with the formation of several political parties, the age-old anti-colonial struggle of the Eritrean people began to assume an organized form. This opened a new chapter in the history of the political struggle of the gallant Eritrean people. Yet, owing to the absence of a political party with a correct political line and leadership representing the masses, the Eritrean people were unable to thwart the machinations that were being designed to put them under colonial slavery by colonial Britain, world imperialism and feudal Ethiopia and win their independence.

The Eritrean people continued their struggle against the unjust federation that was contrary to their interest and aspirations and that was conceived and concocted to satisfy the economic and strategic interests of U.S. imperialism and the expansionist greed of feudal Ethiopia. Since it set foot in Eritrea, the toppled feudal government of Haile Selassie on its part, trampling under foot all the democratic and national rights of the Eritrean people and violating the federal resolution, established a fascist order in Eritrea. Through peaceful demonstrations, strikes, petitions to the U.N., etc., the Eritrean people stepped up their resistance. Everywhere patriotic Eritreans were hunted down and incarcerated; torture became the daily lot of Eritrean youth who demanded that the rights of the Eritrean people be respected. The national economy was disrupted, resulting in the deterioration of the living standard of the masses of the people. Widespread unemployment forced thousands of Eritrean workers and intellectuals to emigrate to neighbouring countries in search of employment. Denied of all their democratic, national and human rights, the masses of the Eritrean people were subjected to ruthless imperialist exploitation, feudal oppression and fascist repression.

In response to the worsening economic, political and social conditions and demanding their national independence, the Eritrean people, led by the workers and other patriotic forces, staged huge demonstrations in Asmara and other major cities in March 1958. The Ethiopian fascist troops opened fire on the unarmed civilian people. In Asmara alone, they killed and wounded about 538 workers and other patriotic demonstrators. This ruthless massacre and previous experiences taught the Eritrean people a bitter lesson: the impossibility of achieving their independence and liberation through peaceful means. They came to realize the futility of trying to resist an armed force empty-handed. Eritrean patriots learned from bitter experience that the counter-revolutionary violence of the colonial oppressor can be successfully resisted only by the revolutionary violence of the masses. Today, after traversing 16 long and arduous years with turns and twists, the just national liberation war of the Eritrean people has developed immensely and is on the verge of winning total victory.

SECOND—Correct political line and leadership and the adoption of a correct method of revolutionary struggle are indispensable for a just struggle to attain complete victory. In any revolutionary movement, the question of political line is the principal one. It decides everything. The first ten years of nonrevolutionary experience of the Eritrean struggle confirm the scientific truth that to struggle without a correct political line is futile and is just like groping in the dark. The reactionary line, opportunist leadership and liquidationist policy of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) with all its gutter politics have caused immense harm to our revolutionary movement and have been the major obstacle to our national liberation struggle. This is an indisputable fact which is attested to by the past and present realities in the Eritrean revolution.

A national liberation struggle which is guided by a correct political line appraises, by undertaking scientific class analysis, the balance and correlation of social forces. It identifies its enemies and its friends. It maps out correct strategy and tactics, and draws up a program that will enable it to attain its objectives. It strives to arouse all the social forces that are allies and supporters of the revolution, to win over, as well as raise the political consciousness of, the wavering social forces and elements and to isolate and smash the opposition forces and elements. But if we look at and examine the Eritrean revolution in retrospect, the reverse is true. Through exploiting the secondary contradictions in the society and liquidating patriotic fighters, the opportunists in the ELF made unabated efforts to foment strife and create rifts among the masses of our people who are the backbone of the revolution. All this was due to lack of correct political line and leadership.

The adoption of correct principles and methods of organizational work is essential for success. It is inevitable for the process of revolutionary struggle to develop from the concrete historical development and socio-economic conditions of the society. It is imperative to rectify mistakes and improve methods of struggle based on one's own revolutionary experience and the rich revolutionary experience of the people of the world. But to learn from other peoples' revolutionary experience does not mean to directly and indiscriminately copy it or to use it to mask and hide one's reactionary actions.

For example, in 1965, the ELF leadership, under the pretext of "learning from the Algerian experience," divided the small liberation army into five feudal divisions on the basis of tribalism, regionalism and other backward sectarian politics. First, as the historical development of and the prevailing concrete condition in the Eritrean society are not identical to those in Algeria, it would be a serious mistake to try to apply the "Algerian experience" as it is to the Eritrean setting. Secondly, the National Front for the Liberation of Algeria (FLN), which waged armed struggle against French colonialism for eight years, did not divide its army on tribal, regional and other sectarian bases. Thus, the claim that it was based on the

"Algerian experience" is a fraud. It was a sheer deception concocted to cover up and embellish the reactionary politics and opportunist leadership of the Eritrean Liberation Front. Thirdly, that such a reactionary method of dividing the army, as was done by the "Jebha" (i.e. ELF-ed.) chieftains, is harmful was clearly demonstrated in the Eritrean field in practice. To date, its negative impact still lingers on. Learning from other peoples' experiences, therefore, does not mean adopting them in their entirety uncritically. It means integrating them with the concrete socio-economic conditions of a given society. This calls for the critical appraisal of their negative and positive aspects with a view of adopting them selectively.

The birth of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in 1970, after ten years of unrevolutionary experience, was a historical inevitability. The coming together of the democratic and patriotic forces of the Eritrean revolution and the setting up of a new progressive organization enabled them to struggle independent of the fascistic and liquidationist line of the General Command of the ELF and guaranteed the continuity and the inevitable victory of the Eritrean revolution. Today, after overcoming all the hurdles placed in its way by Ethiopian colonialism, imperialism and reaction with great heroism, determination and sacrifices, the EPLF has reached a stage where it has overall strategic superiority over all the enemies of the Eritrean people. Guided by its revolutionary line and correct leadership, the EPLF, right from its inception, has been striving and continues to strive to secure the conscious participation of the masses in all aspects of the revolutionary struggle. By adopting a national democratic program that safeguards the unity of the people and fighters and by carrying out political and military activities that crush the Ethiopian colonial troops and that strike terror at internal reaction, it has been able to win victory after victory. All the victories that have been won are the outcome of the correct political line, leadership and principles of our organization.

THIRD—The colonized and oppressed peoples can win their liberation only by following the strategy of protracted people's war. Colonial and class oppression is perpetuated through the use of force which is the organized counter-revolutionary violence of the reactionary ruling classes. It is impossible for the colonized or oppressed peoples to crush the organized force of their oppressors in a short span of time. At the time the armed struggle is launched while the colonized and oppressed masses are not yet well organized and well equipped, their oppressors maintain an organized reactionary army which is armed with modern weapons. Moreover, because the masses have been victims of the malicious policy of "divide and rule" of the oppressors for ages, their class consciousness is low and they lack cohesion.

Thus, to correct these shortcomings, time is required. In order to gradually transform their weaknesses into strength and the enemy's strength into weakness, the oppressed masses must conduct a protracted people's war.

The organized force of the politically conscious masses of people eventually crushes and throws into the junkyard of history the enemy which at the beginning was seemingly strong and invincible.

When the armed struggle of the Eritrean people was launched in 1961, the reactionary leaders of the ELF did not have any intention of conducting a protracted people's war. Their aim was to draw the attention of the U.N. and thereby find a solution to the Eritrean question by shooting a few rounds. As they pinned their hope on the U.N. and as they did not have any confidence in the masses, they did not make any effort to organize and politicize the masses of the people. Let alone to mobilize and politicize them, the ELF leaders, in pursuit of their selfish class interest, divided, oppressed and plundered the very people who, opposing the barbaric oppression of Ethiopia, hailed and gave protection to the armed struggle. After waging long and bitter struggle within the ELF, the EPLF was formed to correct these despicable acts of the ELF leadership, thus guaranteeing the continuation of the revolution. Ever since its formation, the EPLF, following the strategy of "liberating the land step by step," has been waging a protracted people's war. At the time the EPLF set out to implement this correct strategy by waging guerrilla warfare against the enemy and arousing the masses, the Ethiopian occupation troops and the reactionary force of the General Command of the ELF moved fast to nip the EPLF in the bud. At its infancy, therefore, the EPLF, sandwiched in by these two reactionary forces, had to pass through a very difficult stage. Establishing a base area in the strategic part of northern Eritrea and crushing with great courage and determination the colonial forces and the forces of reaction that were striving to liquidate it, the EPLF was able to continue and expand the struggle. By dealing crushing blows and driving out the enemy, the EPLF was able to liberate large areas. It was also able to strike deep roots among the broad masses.

Implementing the correct slogan of "destroying the enemy with his own guns and bullets," the EPLF was able to arm the influx of people who joined the revolution with fiery patriotic fervor. Through mobilizing, organizing and arming the masses, a large section of the Eritrean people have been made active and conscious participants in the national liberation struggle. The principle of self-reliance is, first and foremost, a question of revolutionary liberation forces of Eritrea and the counter-revolutionary forces of expansionist Ethiopia in its favor, the EPLF has been able to have the upper hand strategically, militarily and politically over all its enemies. Today, the Ethiopian occupation troops have been driven out from the entire countryside and most of the towns and confined to a few towns and isolated camps. All this has been the result of the courageous and resolute implementation of our organization's correct strategy of protracted people's war by the Eritrean People's Liberation Army (EPLA).

FOURTH—The revolutionary principle of self-reliance is the basis for the independent development and the guarantor of complete victory of the struggle. The principal of self-reliance is, first and foremost, a question of political line. Do you chiefly rely on external or internal sources? Do you base your struggle on the aroused energy and resources of the masses of the people or on the external help and support that you expect from the outside? If a revolutionary movement does not rely on the masses of the people, it will not make any efforts to arouse and release the tremendous creative ability and energy of the masses and put it at the service of the struggle. It will not establish contact with the masses. Consequently, it will isolate itself from the masses. Because it places its expectations and destiny in the hands of external forces such a movement will always be a victim of their interests and be subject to their pressures. In the final analysis, it will cease to be a revolutionary movement and fail to attain its objective, becoming a tool of others.

The EPLF strictly adheres to the correct principle of self-reliance in all aspects of the revolutionary struggle. Realizing that in order to struggle on the basis of this revolutionary principle one needs to be economically self-reliant, the EPLA while holding the gun in one hand, holds the plough and the hammer with the other. By constructing the wonderful Liberation Road, the EPLF has laid down a communications and transportation network that connects all the extensive liberated areas. By running the nationalized commercial farms, bringing new lands under cultivation, and carrying out agrarian reform, the EPLF is working hard at increasing production. In order to lay down the industrial foundation for a new Eritrea, the EPLF is establishing and developing cottage and small-scale industries. In the liberated towns, electricity, water supplies, transportation, etc. are being established and developed.

To meet the ever increasing demand of the army and the people for arms, the EPLF primarily relies on the determination and the spirit of self-sacrifice of its fighters. The arms captured from the enemy in every battle and when destroying enemy camps have been the principal source of its arms supply. Today, most of the fighters and the entire people's militia are armed with weapons captured from the enemy. The success achieved in this respect hardly needs to be emphasized. It is precisely because our just national struggle is self-reliant that it can advance free of all external pressure and eventually its complete victory can be guaranteed.

FIFTH—Revolution is the work of the masses of people and cannot be brought about through *coup d'etat* or the fascist dictatorship of individuals. Nor is it the outcome of conspiracy. Throughout history, the masses have been the makers of history. Without the active participation of the masses of the people no great achievement or revolutionary transformation of society can be brought about. As revolution is a social movement which is the work and possession of the masses of the people who struggle for justice

and liberation, the question of arousing and involving them becomes of utmost strategic importance for its success.

Aware that unorganized the masses lack strength and that organization is the main instrument of peoples struggle, the EPLF has been striving to organize, politicize and arm the masses. It has set up mass organizations of workers, peasants, women, youth, students, etc. in all parts of Eritrea. The mass organizations which are operating openly in the liberated areas and clandestinely in the enemy controlled towns are discharging their revolutionary national duties. The organized and politicized masses, already armed, have established people's militia and are playing a significant revolutionary role in defending and consolidating the liberated areas, in assisting the regular people's liberation army, in increasing production and in setting up people's power. Today, with the active participation of the entire population—the old and young, women and men—the EPLF-led just and revolutionary national liberation war has become a truly people's revolutionary struggle.

SIXTH—For a national liberation struggle to achieve complete victory it has to wage class struggle. The Eritrean people are not struggling and making enormous sacrifices to drive out foreign rulers in order to replace them with Eritrean rulers; nor is it to replace foreign oppression and exploitation with Eritrean oppression and exploitation. The objective of the Eritrean people who chose to die fighting for independence rather than live under slavery, is to be masters of their own destiny and arrange their life the way they want it. They are struggling in order to build, with their own blood and sweat, a new and just system free of exploitation of man by man.

The Eritrean national democratic revolution which is led by EPLF's correct and revolutionary line, embraces all patriotic and democratic social classes, groups and individuals. Needless to say, the various social forces in this national and democratic organization have different class interests and outlooks. They struggle together within the framework of the national democratic program. Thus, the Eritrean national democratic front is based on unity and struggle. On the one hand, there is firm unity against the primary enemies—Ethiopian colonialism, imperialism, zionism and their lackeys—and on the other hand there are relentless internal struggles against reactionaries, opportunists and erroneous tendencies. Thus, the history of the EPLF is not only the history of a resolute and heroic struggle against Ethiopian colonialism, its imperialist masters and their puppets, but also the history of a bitter and determined struggle against internal reactionaries, opportunists and counter-revolutionary liquidationists. It is by waging successful struggles on both fronts and thereby advancing the Eritrean revolution to its present stage, that the EPLF has proven itself in practice to be the vanguard of the Eritrean revolution.

SEVENTH—A national liberation struggle is an inseparable part of the international revolutionary movement. The Eritrean people's national liberation struggle is part and parcel of the international movement of the colonized and oppressed peoples for independence, liberation, democracy, justice, prosperity and progress. It is not an isolated struggle. The overwhelming majority of the world's people stand by its side. They are fighting for the same objective and against the same enemies. The victory of the Eritrean revolution will crush the forces of colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism in the Horn of Africa. It is precisely for this reason that the victory of the Eritrean revolution is a victory of all genuine revolutionary, progressive and peace-loving peoples of the world. Similarly, the victory of any oppressed people is a victory for the Eritrean people.

EIGHTH—The foundation for the upcoming society should be laid while waging the armed struggle. There is the dialectical link between the destruction and construction process. The need for the total dismantling of the decadent colonial system of oppression and exploitation by the organized force of the masses goes without saying. The EPLF-led Eritrean people's revolutionary struggle is destroying, root and branch, the exploitative and oppressive fascist system from the entire country. Our task is not, however, limited to the task of destruction only. The EPLF does not say "what we destroy today we will build after independence." On the one hand, the EPLF is uprooting the obsolete colonial system and, on the other hand, it is building a new system that safeguards the interests and that meets the needs of our people.

Our revolutionary organization is making painstaking efforts to improve the living conditions and develop the economic livelihood of the masses, and to demonstrate to them concretely that their interests lie in the revolution. In the economic field, the nuclei of modern industry, agriculture, transportation and communications, public services, etc. are being laid. In many rural areas much progress has been made in land reform and efforts are being made to promote cooperative farming and people's stores. In the political field, people's administration that enables the masses to run their daily lives, solve their problems and consolidate their power has been set up. On the cultural front, a new culture that gives priority to and promotes the development of just relations and social cooperation on the basis of communal life is being developed.

It is thus clear that the armed struggle that we are waging in order to free our country from the yoke of colonialism, imperialism and zionism and all the revolutionary struggles that we are undertaking concurrently in order to build a new society are closely interrelated; they are not mutually exclusive.

NINTH—International solidarity and support is an important factor for the victory of a just people's struggle for national liberation. The assistance and support rendered by friendly countries, organizations and movements

is extremely helpful. By complementing one's own efforts and sacrifices, it can help to alleviate problems and hasten victory. The heroic Eritrean people who are self-reliantly waging their revolutionary struggle very much appreciate the moral and material support that they have been receiving from friendly countries, organizations, movements and all peace-loving peoples. The Eritrean people call on all progressive, revolutionary and peace-loving forces the world over to step up their support at the present time.

TENTH—After protracted and bitter struggle, the victory of the masses is inevitable. The force that will ultimately emerge victorious is the conscious masses who are struggling with resolve for their independence and liberation, and not the reactionary army, which is the tool of colonial invasion and oppression. What matters is the political consciousness and resolve of the masses and not the size of the reactionary army or the quality of its weapons. The experience of the Eritrean revolution confirms that, guided by a correct and revolutionary line and strengthening their unity, it is the masses of the people fighting with resolve and determination for their independence and liberation that will eventually triumph over any enemy regardless of its size and the sophistication of its weaponry. That our victory is certain has become clearer now more than ever before.

RESOLUTE REVOLUTIONARY FIRMNESS ON THE SOUTHERN FRONT

Today in our military fight with the Ethiopian aggressor army which possesses a huge number of troops as well as weapons and is with all its might launching repeated attacks to open the two roads that join up with the Ethiopian border, our southern front has become a bulwark of resolute revolutionary firmness of our organization. It has become the center of the most numerous military engagements and acts of heroism. Since the fascist Dergue suffered repeated defeats in the northern, central and southern parts of our country and important and big cities were liberated by the Eritrean People's Liberation Army, the enemy has directed its full strength to the southern front. The enemy has done so hoping to break through EPLA defence lines which hold strategic positions and have tightly encircled the city of Asmara and effectively sealed off enemy movement. What should be mentioned here is that, even though the enemy with much preparation and deploying all its weapons and man power tried to engage our people's army on this front, in the face of our resolutely firm southern front it was unable to do anything.

In relation to this, the question of what the strategic importance of the southern front is both to us and to the enemy arises. As we all know, the Ethiopian fascist regime in order to implement its plan to forcibly and violently maintain its dictatorship in Eritrea had with all its capability conducted several military operations during the first months of this year. Of all the military operations it has undertaken however, the most intense and of great strategic importance is the one it is conducting on the southern front—particularly the military activities it has been carrying out since the liberation of the city of Dekemhare.

On this front the enemy has been conducting continuous offensives for more than two months now. The human and material losses inflicted on the Ethiopian aggressor army and the lowering of its morale on this front in particular have been immense. However the fascist dergue unable to learn from its mistakes continues to concentrate and stiffen its futile repeated attempts on this front. With the aim of guaranteeing its colonial presence in

Eritrea the enemy's objective obviously is to bring this important strategic life line under its control in order to save its aggressor army in Eritrea now isolated from its base in Ethiopia which could serve it as a backbone.

If the aggressor army which the fascist dergue has deployed to invade Eritrea is to accomplish the task that has been assigned to it, it will have to cross the border and safely pass through our liberated areas connecting Eritrea and Ethiopia. Furthermore, there is no other ground access for its huge amounts of food and armament supplies except through the roads that link Eritrea with Ethiopia. The aggressor Ethiopian army finds itself strangled by our organized, conscious and armed masses and the heroic EPLA; therefore, it becomes a question of life and death for it to recapture this land. That is why the fascist Dergue, in order to realize its dream of staying in Eritrea, is at this particular time undertaking repeated military operations on the southern front using all its military, human and material capabilities and the military support and advice given to it by those forces that are conspiring against the Eritrean revolution.

The length of our southern front from east to west is about 40 km. (25 miles —Ed.). Some parts of this front are only 3 km. (2 miles —Ed.) from Asmara and only 2 km. (1 ¼ miles) from the Asmara International Airport. This strategic positioning of our southern front weakens the enemy's movements and defence capabilities. This in particular makes Asmara an isolated "island" confirming its definite fall into our hands which in turn terrifies, terrorizes and disturbs the enemy. It can therefore be said that our southern front will decide the end of the Dergue's colonial presence in Eritrea. This truth is more clear to the fascist Dergue than to anybody else.

On the part of our revolutionary organization, our impregnable southern front is on the one hand like a hard rock on which all the colonialist and reactionary machinations will be shattered into pieces. On the other hand, it is also here on the southern front that the fate of all the external and internal forces opposing the Eritrean national liberation struggle will be decided.

The truth that is clearly being attested to on this front is that the Eritrean masses in their entirety have risen up against the fascist Ethiopian junta. They are fighting side by side with the heroic EPLF fighters with whatever material means they have at their disposal and with all their capability ready to make any sacrifice. With the participation and sacrifice of the masses the ongoing people's liberation war is vigorously and rapidly advancing forward.

Since the southern front has a historical association with the bitter past experience of our revolutionary organization, today the big question regarding what is happening on the southern front becomes many sided and important. It is in the south, from Alla to Denkel, that our organization was born and grew up. What one can understand from this historical



Dekemhare: masses enthusiastically celebrating EPLA's victories.

background is that great depth of the revolutionary storm among our people in the south who are, without slackening, waging a protracted people's liberation war and heroically foiling all the machinations of the enemy.

Led by the EPLF vanguard of the Eritrean revolution, the protracted people's war being waged by the EPLA, the EPLF's people's militia and our organized masses is on the one hand a national liberation struggle directed against imperialism, fascist colonialism and the forces that are allied with them. It is at the same time a class struggle waged by the Eritrean toiling masses against all internal forces of reaction and opportunism. ed extensive losses on the enemy's side. However, this has not completely put

Without exaggeration the war being waged by our revolutionary organization on the southern front, at this time in particular, indicates the highest development of the Eritrean people's struggle. Our organization is struggling through hard work and sacrifice, undertaking the tasks of organizing the masses, developing the people's war, building the new Eritrea, bringing fundamental changes in the prevailing socio-economic relations and spreading progressive concepts at a time when the situation is internally and internationally very sensitive. It is deeply proud of this.

In this war the courageous EPLF fighters have demonstrated in front of the masses their superiority in military capability and revolutionary firmness over the aggressor army with its huge weaponry and large number of troops. The EPLF fighter is displaying not only revolutionary firmness but

also miraculous courage rarely witnessed in international wars by capturing tanks from the enemy in battle centers with his assault rifles. Since the tank is the most powerful weapon used by a ground army it is difficult to counter it except with tanks or field artillery. Nonetheless, the EPLF fighter, possessing RPGs and other light guns and not sophisticated modern heavy weapons has shown in practice that he can capture enemy tanks—be they Western made or Eastern made from battle centers. Thus, the EPLF fighter has reaffirmed one general truth to the world, that is, in any battlefield it is man, not the quantity and type of weapons that is decisive.

The enemy began its two pronged attacks in the south by deploying thousands of troops in Addi Awesha on August 4. Escorted by air power and tanks the aggressor army set out with thousands of troops from Asmara and Mai Habar. However in the battles from August 4-13, it was defeated and retreated to its camps leaving behind thousands dead, wounded and captured as well as different kinds of heavy and light weapons. Later on in an attempt to encircle the EPLA from the west the enemy changed its military tactic. On September 17, 15,000 troops again escorted by powerful air power, tanks and field artillery, set out on the Mendefera road. In the battles that raged from September 17-19, the enemy retreated again to its garrisons, leaving behind hundreds dead, wounded and captured as well as many destroyed and undamaged tanks. We would like to mention in passing that the heroic EPLF fighter as usual captured two tanks—an M-60 and a T-64—from the enemy, from the huge aggressor army.

The fascist junta has suffered enormous manpower and material losses in all its attempts to break through our southern front lines. The morale of the fascist army has also been completely sapped. Following this tremendous loss of his fascist army, Atnafu Abate, the fascist dergue's vice chairman, had to be rushed to Asmara at the end of September 1977 to bolster the sapping morale of his troops and in particular his "red army" which was terribly mauled and devastated.

The fate of the hired foreign advisors of the Dergue who have come from different corners in a vain attempt to put out the flaming torch of the Eritrean revolution was no different from that of the fascist Dergue's "red army." They also fled abandoning their tanks. No doubt, this war has caused extensive losses on the enemy's side. However this has not completely put an end to the plans and dreams of the fascist Dergue on account of which the lives of thousands of ill-informed innocent Ethiopians are unjustifiably being lost and the resources of the Ethiopian people are being wasted in this unjust and futile war of aggression. Although Atnafu Abate was given a full account of all the losses suffered by his army he insisted on coming to Asmara to see these losses with his own eyes. Suffice it to be said, however, he ordered the deployment of all the experienced troops of his regular army whom he was particularly confident of to launch an offensive hitherto un-

precedented in the war of aggression against the Eritrean revolution. On the morning of September 30, 1977 he dispatched three brigades of his regular army including more than 15,000 soldiers of the "red army" supported by massive air power, many tanks and field artillery to launch an attack on our southern front. What was the outcome of the eleven hour long battle that ensued?



Soviet supplied tanks put out of action by the heroic EPLA fighters.

The huge aggressor army that set out after extensively studied plans and special preparations was as usual completely smashed. With thousands of its soldiers killed, wounded and captured and leaving behind large quantities of weapons scattered all over the place, the aggressor army made a wild retreat. Atnafu and his "expert" foreign advisors watched with their field binoculars from the surroundings of the Asmara International Airport while the heroic EPLF fighters cut down and pursued the demoralized aggressor army. On seeing this Atnafu and his advisors had to run to the center of the city. The day was concluded with the total annihilation of the combination of the regular troops and the "red army" on whom the fascist junta has counted so much. In this battle the heroic Eritrean People's Liberation Army (EPLA) and the EPLF's people's militia clearly demonstrated to the humiliated aggressor army and others of its kind that there is no force that can stand against a people fighting for their liberation and total victory, no matter how strong that force may be. Had Atnafu Abate been honest minded this is the truth he would have conveyed to his

fascist master, Menghistu, whose hands are dripping with the blood of innocent people.

The EPLF fighter believes that his struggle is not only fighting the enemy in the battlefield but also engaging in production as well as in political activities. In particular on the southern front there are thousands of revolutionary EPLF fighters who by maintaining their revolutionary initiative and high morale, on the one hand, fight the enemy and, on the other, without being detracted by the enemy's bombs and gunfire day and night work harmoniously with the masses in harvesting field crops and other production activities.



**A gun in one hand the EPLA fighter produces with the other—
threshing grain in the outskirts of Asmara.**

Vanguard paid a visit to this front and witnessed the ongoing activities. One of the amazing and outstanding accomplishments that attracted *Vanguard's* admiration was the road traversing steep mountains and deep gorges and rolling through wheat and barley fields to the fortified defence lines of the EPLF fighters built with the full participation of the masses—the young and the old, men, women and children. These roads play an important and big role in the ongoing war by facilitating quick transportation between the southern front line and the EPLA's rear bases.

It is indeed gratifying to see the war for national liberation reaching its highest stage. We observed members of the people's militia with their guns on their backs working in their crop fields and maintaining peace and order in the towns and villages in coordination with their production tasks; hun-

dreds of girls who voluntarily came from the surrounding villages and towns taking turns in preparing food and fetching water for the fighters who are mercilessly dealing devastating blows to the enemy; all able men and the young caring for the courageous comrades wounded in battle, constructing roads and participating in production; mothers participating in production and managing family life at home. No problems whatsoever exist in the relations between the fighters and the masses.

All this is glaring testimony that the struggle in Eritrea is truly a people's war. Under the leadership of EPLF the Eritrean people's armed struggle has today developed into a full fledged people's war in which the Eritrean people and in particular the Eritrean toiling masses are fully participating in bringing about the changes that are taking place. In the countryside, the masses, organized, politicized and armed by the EPLF's Department of People's Administration, are participating in the ongoing war and in building tomorrow's Eritrea fully aware of their role. The masses are laying the foundation of their people's power by setting up people's assemblies in the villages, districts and provinces.

In the city of Dekemhare the process of organizing and politicizing the masses is proceeding on a higher level and with intense speed. The masses of Dekemhare organized into workers, women, youth and students associations are being given political and ideological education. The purpose of this political and ideological education is to help the masses develop their ability to wage the most refined struggle. The masses are following and learning this education with keen interest.

This being in the field of organizing and politicizing, in other fields the residents of Dekemhare are properly managing their daily affairs, cleaning their public parks, avenues and streets. In an organized and orderly manner workers are actively engaged in running utility services such as water supply, electricity and other production tasks. The members of the people's militia whom the EPLF vanguard of the Eritrean revolution has organized, politicized and armed are defending the city of Dekemhare and its surroundings while at the same time performing their normal day to day affairs and production activities. By maintaining peace and order they have enabled the city of Dekemhare to conduct its normal daily activities in an orderly manner. A visit to Dekemhare provides one the opportunity to observe the intimate revolutionary ties between the fighters and the masses and the revolutionary atmosphere that prevails.

The warm revolutionary relationships are demonstrated by the activities being performed by the masses. In the city of Dekemhare mothers, young girls and boys are seen warmly receiving and providing food and other assistance to fighters coming back from or returning to the war fronts. This is done in order to enable the fighters to concentrate on their defence tasks rather than on other secondary things. Moreover, the masses have establish-

ed solid relationships with the EPLF cadres who are assigned to perform organizational, administrative and other duties. They are helping facilitate the tasks of the cadres by providing the necessary daily provisions. In Dekemhare EPLF fighters and the masses live together in harmony. No differences exist between the fighters and the masses. The prevailing revolutionary atmosphere and the revolutionary relations have come to completely dominate the backward relations and the feudal divisions that had existed in our society to such an extent that these backward and feudal relations are hardly observable today. All the masses have risen up for the same goal, aspirations and future destiny and to achieve victory which no force can halt.

On our way to the heated battle front we met a large number of girls who were returning to their homes accompanied by our comrades. Stepping out of the car we were travelling in, we made the following short interview with them.

Vanguard: Where is this long line of women from?

One of the girls: Having fulfilled our duties by preparing food for and cooperating to the best of our capabilities with our comrades, the fighters of the EPLF, for eleven days we are returning home from the battle front. During these past eleven days we prepared food and transported bullets and other necessary items to the fighters while they fully concentrated on their attack on the enemy. We are all from Dekemhare and its surroundings.

Vanguard: Are the tasks you have been accomplishing done in an organized or in a spontaneous manner?

One of the girls: Although the decisive factors are our feelings and convictions our activities are done in an organized way. In this campaign we, the unarmed women in the cities and the countryside, fulfill our national duties through our respective organizations. We work in the battle zones in turns for the duration of time mentioned earlier.

Vanguard: From what we see it is only women who are participating in this task. Why is this so?

One of the girls: It is true that in the ongoing national liberation struggle most of the armed fighters are men. This, however, doesn't mean that there are no armed women fighters, but compared to that of armed men their number is not proportional. Therefore, while those of us unarmed women in the cities and the countryside fulfill our national duties in this front by coordinating our tasks in production and domestic activities, those men who like us are not yet armed also are strengthening this front by performing their duties in different fields in different ways.

Vanguard: How did you manage to accomplish your tasks while battles raged?

One of the girls: It is true, as we have witnessed, there is not even a day's calm on the front line. The enemy continually fires at our trenches with various mortars, rockets and howitzers. Just like our fighters who defying his bombs and rockets annihilate the enemy, we fulfill our duties as required. There are no problems we encounter in fulfilling our responsibilities. On the contrary, we feel tremendous joy and content at the high level of morale and fighting spirit of our fighters that we see when we take the food that we prepare to their trenches.

Vanguard: For how long do you think your task will continue?

One of the girls: This task will continue as long as the battles go on. Even if the enemy is defeated on this front, the activities that the masses are carrying out will not be discontinued until the enemy is totally defeated on all fronts and battle fields and is driven out of Eritrea.

Vanguard: When do you think we shall finally triumph over the enemy?

One of the girls: I can't specify our final victory to be today or tomorrow but there is one truth that I and the entire Eritrean people know. That is, since we have high fighting spirit and are resolutely prepared to struggle and since we are struggling, it is certain that we will achieve our final victory . . . this may well be in the near future.

After conducting this interview which was made with self-confidence and revolutionary spirit we continued our journey towards one of the villages on the frontline. When we reached the village we met with a comrade who was leading a meeting of over 300 women under moonlight. We learned from the comrade that the assembled women were to substitute for those whom we met on their way back to their villages. In order for the women, who were from different villages and towns, to know one another well, the comrade organized them into various working groups and assigned them to different locations.

The revolutionary storm that is being witnessed among our people today affirms the immense will to fight and revolutionary spirit of sacrifice of the Eritrean masses in the 16 year old armed struggle they have been waging. Because of their tremendous and firm will to struggle they are advancing rapidly on their road of protracted people's war. There is no doubt they will smash all the fascist colonialist, imperialist and internal reactionary forces. On the other hand all those who look down on the Eritrean masses, undermine their capability, deliberately gloss over without giving any consideration to the justness of their 16 year old national liberation struggle and feverishly work at defaming this struggle in order to sabotage it will regret very much the crimes they are committing against the Eritrean people.

Vanguard conducted the following interview in one of the frontline fortifications on the southern front with some of those comrades who are

engaging the enemy face to face.

Vanguard: On this front you have crushed the huge aggressor army with its immense modern weaponry and completely curtailed its movement. What is the main factor enabling the EPLF fighter to be victorious over the aggressor army with thousands of soldiers equipped with large quantities of modern weapons?

One of the fighters: It is true that the war we are waging on this front is enormous and difficult. Every time, the enemy sets out with thousands of troops supported by heavy air power, many tanks and field artillery. In addition to this the enemy has foreign military experts who operate and direct its various sophisticated modern weapons—the tanks, warplanes and heavy artillery in the battle fields. The enemy's main objective on this war front is of course to recapture this liberated land of ours bordering with Ethiopia and then link up its isolated and besieged troops in Eritrea with its bases inside Ethiopia. Although the enemy has time and again attempted to attack this front with all its might and main all its trials have dismally failed. The enemy is suffering an enormous loss. This is because the fascist Dergue doesn't want to recognize that the struggle we are waging is just and revolutionary and at the same time doesn't want to admit that the war it is waging is unjust, fascist, expansionist and reactionary. This being so, in the final analysis the fate of the enemy is nothing but defeat. The main factors enabling the EPLF fighter to score victories are the following:

1. The fighter who struggles for the liberation of his people convinced of the justness of his country's cause is not afraid of death. No matter what force comes against him he fights firmly on his principles. On the contrary the mercenary soldier of the fascist aggressor army fights for money and hence can't hold on.
2. The fighter struggling in his own land for his people against an aggressor army has high morale. On the contrary, the morale of the mercenary soldier fighting on foreign soil is low.
3. Since the EPLF fighter has been schooled in revolutionary ideology he has revolutionary consciousness and has no shred of doubt about the just nature of the war he is waging. On the other hand, the mercenary soldier doesn't know and doesn't believe in the war in which he is fighting.
4. The EPLF fighter is a determined patriot with combat experience of 16 years of armed struggle that cannot be easily underestimated.
5. The dedicated and trusted revolutionary cadres and leaders of EPLF participate in the battle field shoulder to shoulder with their comrade fighters. For this reason, every EPLF fighter has full confidence in himself and his comrades. All fighters perform their duty together in harmony. Proceeding from this concrete truth there is no

doubt that the EPLF fighter, as he has demonstrated in the past, will be victorious.

6. Since the EPLF fighter knows that he is waging a people's liberation war supported by and with the participation of the entire Eritrean masses and has an impregnable revolutionary base behind his lines he displays miraculous heroism in every battle.



EPLA fighters discussing about their next move against the Ethiopian aggressor troops.

Vanguard: In the battles against the enemy, you comrades on this front have captured different types of tanks from the enemy with your light arms. How was it possible for this to happen?

One of the fighters: Although the fascist Dergue tries to present its army differently from what it actually is, the comrade who just explained the factors for the victories of the EPLF fighter was correct when he said "the soldier of the Ethiopian fascist army is a mercenary." As we know the largeness of an army by itself does not bring a qualitative change. When the enemy under heavy air cover supported by artillery and many tanks moves forward to attack our positions we on our part wait at our positions until its forces are within reach so that we can engage it. This is a proven military tactic that enables one to inflict the heaviest casualties and damages on an aggressor army. As soon as the aggressor army is within reach our courageous revolutionary army starts a simultaneous counterattack from all corners. In such a situation as the brave EPLF fighter leaves his trenches moving forward to crush the enemy the morale of the reactionary army falls. Terrified, the

enemy forces then flee and disintegrate leaving behind their dead, wounded and various weapons. By this time the tanks which were leading in the attack by the aggressor army are encircled by our revolutionary army and their operators on their part flee to save their lives leaving them behind. Thus the tanks are captured intact and unscratched. Using this tactic the tanks captured by the heroic Eritrean People's Liberation Army are not few.

Vanguard: The fascist Ethiopian regime boasts about its army and in particular about that which it calls "red army." Since you know it better than others what is the quality of this army?

One of the fighters: It is true that the reactionary Dergue and its fascistic "socialism" is dirt thrown at and has no connection whatsoever with scientific socialism—the socialism with the highest human ideals and principles—and the socialist revolution. Therefore it doesn't surprise us when the fascist Dergue, in order to attain its fascistic and expansionist goals, sounds different slogans of the socialist revolution and by claiming it is on the socialist road forces the Ethiopian masses into the reactionary war it is waging against the just liberation struggle of the Eritrean people. Although the fascist Ethiopian regime disguises itself under various colors and shades we and our masses have exposed its ugly face in the eyes of the world through the flames of our revolutionary war. Thus to us the junta's nature is very clear and that its weak "red army" cannot be revolutionary is obvious. This fascistic "red army" has quantity but not quality and the education given to it is of the backward type. It is recruited from all over the streets and market places by force against its will and is herded in hundreds of thousands like animals. Its military capability is also low along with its loose internal relationships devoid of any common bond.

Vanguard: It is clear to us and the whole world that some outside forces are intervening against our revolution, that some governments, directly intervening on the side of the fascist Dergue, have joined hands with fascism and are fighting us. What effect do you think this intervention by outside forces will have on the nature and outcome of our just struggle?

One of the fighters: It is true that in this war there are outside forces directly involved against us. Besides it is no secret, neither to us nor to the whole world, that all the sophisticated modern weaponry which was supplied to the enemy is manned in battles against us by foreign "military experts" who supposedly came to give "military advice" to the Dergue. However, we have demonstrated in practice that this foreign intervention and these mercenary military experts serving the Dergue were not able in the past nor will they be able in the future to change the nature or outcome of our people's liberation war.

In the past also Ethiopian colonialism relied on the outside forces in its attempts to crush the Eritrean revolution. But it did not succeed. We all know the fate that awaited the puppet Haile Selassie who tried so hard to liquidate the Eritrean revolution with the massive military aid he received from U.S. imperialism and the military advice and experience he received from Zionist Israel. Now also, despite the fact that the real enemies of the Eritrean revolution as usual have sided with the fascist Dergue, nothing has changed. As in the past many victories continue to be scored and our war is advancing. What we would like to tell those who have chosen to side with the enemy is that since you are not able to understand the justness, history and revolutionary depth of our people's war for liberation, and the strength of our revolutionary leadership you will definitely lose and be defeated. It is of no use to regret when it is too late. No matter how strong the alliance of our enemies becomes, because we are convinced of the certainty of our victory it will not detract us from our struggle.

At the end of this interview, with great pride and self-confidence we bid farewell to our comrades on the impregnable firm southern front who, unperturbed by the fire of enemy tanks, war planes and artillery, are day and night without sleep opposing enemy movement, who despite all the cold never remove their fingers from the triggers of their guns and are fully confident of the certainty of our victory.



Full readiness for protracted struggle.

The Residents of the Resettlement Camp in Sahel Wage Active Struggle

At the beginning of 1975, the Dergue, guided by the fascistic policy of “drying up the sea in order to kill the fish,” committed atrocious crimes against the Eritrean masses in an attempt to liquidate the Eritrean revolution. Within a short span of time, the troops of the fascist Dergue killed thousands of people by dropping bombs, burning crops and poisoning wells, forced hundreds out of their homes to refuge in valleys and forests and on top of that it has made them flee to the neighbouring countries.

This barbaric crime of Ethiopian colonialism is not new in the history of our people. It is to be remembered that Haile Selassie’s government burned and bombed many Eritrean villages and towns in 1967 and 1970. Those who managed to escape from the butchery of the Ethiopian troops at that time had no choice other than to flee to neighbouring countries. In 1975, however, there was a different situation in the Eritrean field. This was the presence of the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF)—at that time, Eritrean People’s Liberation Forces—the organization that was born in struggle in 1970, later grew and consolidated in struggle and fights in the interest of the masses.

When the EPLF saw thousands of people escape from the bombs, bullets, fire and poison of Ethiopian colonialism, some taking shelter in valleys and forests and some fleeing to neighbouring countries, it put forward the call “Let’s shoulder our revolutionary responsibility of resettling our people” to all the fighters. Realizing that the aim of the Dergue’s mass massacres is to implement the policy of all Ethiopian expansionists,—“We are interested in Eritrea’s land, not its people” and that when the masses are forced out of their country it is a great loss to the revolution, the EPLF in order to save the Eritrean people from becoming refugees decided to resettle the displaced in the liberated areas.

When the EPLF vanguard resolved to shoulder this heavy responsibility, it was relying on its principle of self-reliance and the courage and spirit of self-sacrifice of its fighters. At the time it advanced the call to the fighters, the EPLF stated: “The settling of our people amidst us is a new chapter in



A family dwelling in one of the resettlement camps.

our revolutionary journey. The presence of so many infants, children, women and aged among us means bearing many new revolutionary responsibilities. We must start saving now so that the provisions we have can reach us all. As of today, we should save from our daily food. All of us fighters must tighten our belts so as to fulfill our responsibilities... We should realize that the obligation is something we accept with revolutionary courage, pride and jubilation. After all, isn’t all the sacrifice for this?... It is to discharge this responsibility.”

One result of this bold revolutionary decision of EPLF was the establishment of a resettlement camp in liberated Sahel province. The EPLF provided temporary help to those who were able to return to their homes or relatives in other villages when the situation cleared up and settled those who had nothing to return to or had decided to flee to neighbouring countries in the camp. One of the elders who was displaced in 1975, remembering the enemy’s atrocious crimes which uprooted him from his village and the time he spent in the refugee camp, explained: “When we escaped from the enemy holocaust we never thought we would stay even for two weeks. However, the EPLF brought us here, first by camel and then on the roads by automobiles. Here they have been attending to us for two years, providing us with food, clothing and medical treatment better than that of the fighters. We are very pleased with the EPLF.”

Since the setting up of the camp, 2,000 families who stayed there at one

time or another have returned to their homes. At present, there are over 1,000 residents in the camp, half of whom are children, 95% of the rest are women. In addition to those who were resettled there in 1975, there are also people who fled from enemy crimes since, some who returned from the refugee camps in the Sudan as well as families of martyrs and fighters in the camp. From among the children about 200 who are 6 years or above in age attend the Revolution School and 115 of the rest who are between 4 and 6 years old are attending school in the camp.

The EPLF is struggling to organize and politicize the displaced in the camp. Political education is being given three times a week on a regular basis. Furthermore, on their own initiative, the residents conduct political discussion sessions every night in their respective zones, the zones of Independence, Liberation, Unity and Equality. As 98% of the residents of the camp were illiterate, literacy education is given three days a week. As a result of the struggle being waged to eradicate ignorance, many of the residents can now read and write. Those who have reached the stage where they can read *Vanguard* are not few. Due to the struggle waged to organize the people through political education and by providing literacy education, a women's organization has been set up in the camp and it already has vigorously started its activities.

The EPLF vanguard established the resettlement camp realizing that the masses can best be organized and play a more active role in their revolution when they don't become refugees in other countries. The correctness of this view can be ascertained from the revolutionary tasks being fulfilled by the residents of the camp, conscious of their national obligation, supporting their vanguard organization and hastening the victory of our popular struggle with all the ability and strength they have.

The residents of the camp fight to implement EPLF's principle of self-reliance. In order to make our organization self-reliant in "*shirro*" (spicy sauce made from ground chick peas —ed) and pepper the women residents of the camp have cleaned and roasted pepper and chickpeas and have prepared them for milling. They have also assigned some of their members to work in our organization's mill. On a farm in the camp which they cultivate collectively and where they plant tomatoes, green peppers and okra, they are harvesting bumper crops. Moreover, in order to save the money that would go for importing clothes at high prices from abroad, the women residents of the camp make their own clothes. One of the examples illustrating their enthusiasm to serve their revolution and develop their skills is that 150 of the women are ready to learn how to sew with machines.

That is not all. In response to their initiative and clearly expressed interest—"We don't want to sit idle, give us work to serve our revolution"—they were allowed to work in the EPLF's central hospital and Revolution School where they stay for at least one month at a time with



The Revolution School is bringing up a young generation with a revolutionary outlook

their children and are accomplishing important tasks. In the central hospital, they prepare food and serve all wounded and sick inpatients. At the Revolution School, in addition to preparing food for all the students, in collaboration with the teachers aides, they also wash the clothes and look after the very young in the school. While these women serve in the hospital and the school, those that remain behind in the camp wash the clothes of the wounded and the sick and send them to the hospital. In addition, they prepare and send things like earthen pans and different basketry items which those in the hospital and school need in their daily work. The men, in their turn, contribute their services by digging wells and constructing houses be it in their camp or at the Revolution School.

The revolutionary tasks the displaced residents of the camp, in particular the women, are accomplishing are not to be underestimated. In the central hospital, they have improved the way food is prepared for the fighters and because it is served to suit each and every fighter it expedites the healing process. Furthermore, when the fighter sees these mothers who are part and parcel of the masses working with their children in their arms untirelessly day and night at his side to nurse and look after him, it lifts his spirit higher and further rekindles his courage, his spirit of self-sacrifice and his zeal to once again grapple with the enemy after getting well. On the other hand, the women have gained significant training and experience from their tasks at the hospital. They have acquired an important experience from their participation in social production, breaking out from the narrow circle of domestic labour, and relations, and in their discussions with the fighters they are learning from the experience and courage of the combatants.

Though the initial plan was established on a monthly rotation basis, many of the women stay at the central hospital and the Revolution School for three to four months. Because those who finished their shift refuse to return to their camp voluntarily and the next group is eager to come in and take their place, there are times when the rotation is done involuntarily.

The participation of the residents in political education and social production has shown fundamental changes in their thinking and their mutual relations. Each one of them, realizing that creating discord among the nationalities is an enemy scheme, is fighting to strengthen the unity of the nationalities and learn the languages and cultures of the other Eritrean nationalities. Very strong revolutionary relations have been established between families of the different nationalities. A woman resident who is from the Afar nationality explaining the present relations said: "Though we speak nine different languages, we are one people."

The residents of the camp have repudiated many of the backward feudal customs. Sorcery and belief in possession by spirits have been eradicated from among them. The chauvinistic attitude men had towards women and the low attitude women had of themselves is changing through struggle. The contradictions that arise among the people are resolved not by insults and altercations which sharpen them and end in soreness as was the case in the old society but through criticism and self-criticism.

The revolutionary changes that can be vividly seen in the thinking and activities of the resettled are the result of a long and arduous struggle. To bring together and organize people from different levels of socio-economic development, from town and country, was not an easy task. In addition, a few individuals submerged in a feudalistic outlook tried to divide the people and sabotage the political education program and the revolutionary activities carried out in the camp. However, as a result of the struggle of the residents themselves, these reactionaries were overwhelmed by the dictatorship of the masses.

It is nearly three years since the establishment of the camp in liberated Sahel. In these past years the balance of forces between the revolution and the enemy has fundamentally changed. At that time, the enemy was on the offensive and used to abuse the masses and force them to leave their homes. However, today the enemy is limited to defensive strategy and is concentrated in a few towns. As the entire Eritrean countryside as well as most of the cities and towns are now liberated, many of the displaced are voluntarily returning to their respective villages. The EPLF encourages those who decide to return to their villages and renders them assistance until they can stand on their own. Those who have already returned to their villages have settled down and are supporting the revolution and contributing to the struggle being waged to establish a people's dictatorship. Especially at this time, as a result of the important victories scored on the eastern front by the

EPLF totally liberating the region stretching from the center of the city of Massawa to the outskirts of Asmara, many of the displaced are packing up to return to their newly liberated homes. A member of a 16 family group who are preparing to go back to liberated Mai Habar after a two year stay in the camp, said: "For two years, my organization, the EPLF, took care of me. But now that Mai Habar is liberated, I am returning home to till my land, to sustain myself and support my organization. If I took my two sons along with me they would help me on my farm but I am leaving them behind because they are attending the Revolution School where they are being educated and politicized and because our organization is taking care of them better than I can."

The resettlement camp is a reflection of the EPLF's correct political line. It shows that the EPLF struggles for the interest and well-being of the masses and that its correct line draws the masses from the different nationalities together to be organized and politicized for active participation in their revolution.



The EPLF takes good care of the children of the displaced, martyred fighters and nomads: kindergarten students of the Revolution School with their teacher.

INTERVIEW:

Vanguard Interviews Two Women Residents of the Camp for the Displaced, Currently Working at EPLF's Central Hospital

Vanguard: What made you decide to come and work at EPLF's central hospital? How did you find the task you are carrying out?

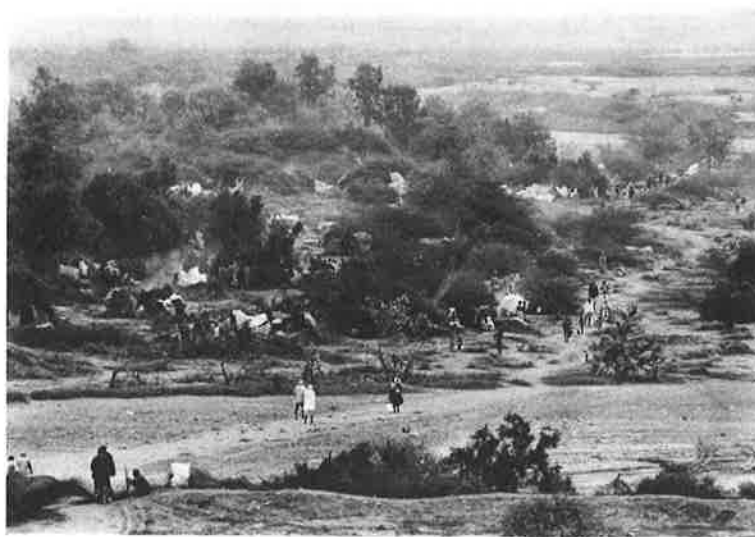
Answer: Realizing their obligation, our gallant fighters are leading a hard life in the valleys and mountains and are sacrificing themselves for their people. We too, aware of our obligation, decided to work anywhere we can serve our revolution instead of sitting idle in our homes eating and drinking what the EPLF provides us with. We feel very glad to feed and nurse the fighters who were wounded in battle while fulfilling their obligations. We work heart and soul eager to do more for our gallant comrades. When the fighters see us mothers organized and coming to work with our children, this raises their spirit. We feel glad because we learn a great deal when we discuss and chat with the fighters. Though we have already served for two months and this is the third month, we have absolutely no wish to return to our homes in the camp. We just don't feel at ease returning and leaving our gallant comrades behind.

Vanguard: When you say you don't want to return, aren't you denying your comrades who are longing to have the same chance as yours the opportunity to learn the lessons and gain the experience you have had?

Answer: It is true we say we don't want to return but our comrades are repeatedly reminding us to do so. However, it is our belief that those of us with one or two fullgrown should do the job instead of those of our comrades back in the camp who might undergo hardships because they have three to four infants. Besides, even there they never stopped working. They cull and roast grains, wash the clothes of the wounded and prepare other necessary things which they forward to us. Yet, because they are not fully content with what they are doing, we are to return back and they will be coming.

Vanguard: A women's organization has been established in the camp for the displaced. What is its aim?

Answer: The aim of the women's organization is to ensure women's active participation in the revolution by raising their political consciousness. Because the EPLF believes that women's equality can be assured through their participation in production, members of the women's association, especially the team leaders who perform exemplary acts, participate in all revolutionary activities. In addition, the team leaders, in close collaboration with a branch of the Department of Social Welfare, participate in administering the settlement camp.



A camp of the displaced outside the port city of Massawa.

Vanguard: In the camp the people are from different nationalities, different religious affiliations and speak different languages. How are their mutual relationships?

Answer: When we first came here we were not fully free from sectarian and religious biases of the old backward society. But, because we learned through the political education given to us by the EPLF that creating discord among the nationalities is a scheme reactionaries use to oppress the people and realizing that all nationalities are equal and have the right to develop their cultures and languages, we live, work, eat and drink together without nationality and religious differences. We try hard to speak each other's languages, even if it means mispronouncing the words. In the celebrations we observe every month or whenever we hear fresh victories of the revolution, we perform dances and songs from the different nationalities. Although we did not do some of them too well at first we are getting familiarized with them today. In short, among us there is strong mutual love and harmony and absolutely no strife.

Vanguard: Does this mean there are no individuals with religious or nationalist fanaticisms?

Answer: Such people exist in every society. The important question is how to persuade them and set them right. One or two individuals in our camp tried to create an impediment in our struggle by saying "Our wives are married by "Sheria" (a marriage according to the prescrip-

tions of the Koran-ed.) and matrimonial wedlock should not participate in education or work out of their homes." However, they corrected their mistakes when we explained to them: "We are going to participate. The ongoing struggle is not of a particular religious group, but of all of us. Today, we shouldn't say one is a sheria wife or married by the holy bible and retard our revolution but work to move our struggle forward."

Vanguard: Do you have children who attend the Revolution School? Are you happy that they do so?

Answer: Both of us have two children each who attend the Revolution School. We are very glad that our children are being trained, disciplined and cultivated so as not to grow up ignorant as we did; to differentiate enemy and friend; and to be the fruits of the country and successors of the heroes of the past. That we are bringing those of our children we had left behind with kith and kin to attend the Revolution School can best illustrate how content we are. Furthermore, because all of our children cannot go to the Revolution School as it is crowded, the rest of them are getting their schooling at our camp where the EPLF has opened a school.



Women residents of the resettlement camp in Sahel in literacy class.

Vanguard: Are there any changes in the outlook of the displaced in the camp?

Answer: There have been incredible changes. First of all, there is a tremen-

dous interest in participating in tasks that can advance our revolution. What is more, comradely relations and consideration prevails in the camp. For instance, when there is a shortage of additional houses or tents, there is a willingness for as many as three families from three different nationalities to live in one house conducting their domestic activities together and looking after all their children as their common children. This has been proven in practice. At first, we used to quarrel over trivialities, over pots and pans, even when we had utensils we used to grumble: "How come so and so was given such and such utensil when I wasn't?" But today we have reached a stage where we give to newcomers things we wouldn't otherwise spare. When we want utensils and other things, instead of pestering the Department of Social Welfare by requesting them for each and everyone of us directly, we follow a centralized process and request it through the team leaders. When we place such a request, we take into consideration those who have and those who have not so that some may not have more than others. Furthermore, we are developing a revolutionary culture, abandoning the backward feudal practices of the past. For instance, we give names such as Merih (Vanguard), Mahta (Spark), Sudahaila, Dogali, etc. to those of our children being born today so that it can reflect the kind of society we want to construct and in remembrance of the historic places where our vanguard organization scored impressive victories during the times of hardship in the past and is scoring them today.

Vanguard: With the liberation of Eritrean towns and cities and the confinement of the enemy to only a few places, many of the displaced have returned to their homes, and many more are packing up to do so. What is your view about this?

Answer: We are very glad about this. The EPLF plucked us from enemy bullets, resettled us here and has been helping us right from the outset. We are sure that those who return to their homes will not only sustain themselves but will also support, and are in fact supporting, their revolution.