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It is not easy for me to write in this way about former close comrades. But I should regard any hesitation in this respect as a crime, for otherwise a party of revolutionaries which does not punish prominent blacklegs would PERISH.

... The more prominent, the MORE DANGEROUS they are, and the less deserving of "forgiveness."

.... The more "PROMINENT" the strike-breakers are, the more imperative it is to punish them by immediate expulsion.

That is the only way for the workers' party to recuperate, rid itself of a dozen or so spineless intellectuals, rally the ranks of the revolutionaries, and advance to meet great and momentous difficulties hand in hand WITH THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS.

Lenin: Col. Works 26
Prog. Publishers Moscow

PREFACE

" The very thought of peacefully subordinating the capitalists to the will of the majority of the exploited, of the peaceful, reformist transition to Socialism is not only extreme philistine stupidity, but also downright deception of the workers, the embellishment of capitalist wage slavery, concealment of the truth."

Lenin, SW, vol. X Int. Publishers,
N.Y., 1943 page 164.

The sharpening of contradictions in the society would have their reflection in the party. The magnitude and intensify of these contradictions determine the intensity of the struggle in the party. Revolutionaries who uphold the interest of the party first and foremost and abide by its rules and regulations try to solve the contradictions within the party. Revisionists or dogmatists who do not abide by the will of the majority in the party resort to factionalism or liquidationism.

EPRP, the party of the Ethiopian Proletariat has already experienced this major struggle within the party. Eversince the Derg launched its so-called "Programme of the National Democratic Revolution," its call for a "United Front of progressives" and proclaimed "unrestricted democratic rights to the broad masses" in April 1976, (just to massacre a group of demonstrators the very next day!) a hidden revisionist and capitulationist line peddled by two elements within the Central Committee has come out in the open. When the Derg declared war on our party five months later, these revisionists came out with an idea of an all out capitulation.

In any party engaged in a bitter class war against the ruling class two tendencies, right or "left", usually appear especially when the ruling class resorts to either political or military offensives. This stems from the ideas of different trends to what the response of the party should be under such circumstances. When the Derg declared its "Political Programme" and called for a "United Front" in a clear objective of political deception to buy time and try to divide the revolutionary camp, the hidden revisionists came out to seize the time to fulfill their ambitions. Thus; they argued that the party must form a united front with the Derg, abandon its armed struggle it started in the countryside, the dissolution of the EPRA and so on. Totally immersed in their own ambitions and totally forgetful of the crystally clear aims of the Derg, they tried to pull the whole party into unconditional and peaceful submission to the bourgeoisie in power. Their line was totally defeated as the whole of the Central Committee dismissed their revisionist capitulation. The Central Committee, realizing the information about what the intentions of the Derg were in taking such moves and realizing the class nature of the Derg did not entertain the slightest illusion that the Derg was "sincere". Therefore a single blow to expose their intentions was necessary. The party actually reiterating its position on the necessity of united front just put certain pre-conditions to start talks. The pre-conditions were all democratic demands whose acceptance or rejection would immediately expose the intentions of the Derg. In exposing the true nature and intentions of the Derg publicly, the party also exposed the capitulation of the revisionists in the party.

After having been beaten in the political struggle, the Derg resorted to armed violence in September 1976. Again, the revisionists came out in yet

another revisionist line. They advocated unconditional surrender and capitulation through the guise of "continuing the struggle peacefully" after the bourgeoisie had put the bayonet on the political agenda. They were again defeated. Instead, the party prepared itself to repulse the reactionary war with revolutionary war. This time they did not submit to the party's line. They started their factionalist and disruptive activities. Finally, they fully joined the Derg in its continued terrorist campaign. However, typical of any petty-bourgeois politician they started a deceptive campaign by issuing their names and calling others to follow them. They distribute papers having revolutionary titles and claim that they are only against the line of the party, against 'the dictatorial leadership of the party, against the 'armed struggle in the cities' as if they are not for unity with the Derg and against armed struggle in general.

Marxism-Leninism has no set of rules for what kind of armed actions and armed struggle should be conducted in all countries. These questions are determined solely by the concrete condition at a given time and place. The experience of the parties of the countries that successfully conducted the New Democratic Revolutions amply testifies to this. As a Marxist-Leninist party, the EPRP applies different tactics of struggle as the concrete condition in Ethiopia demands. The concrete condition in Ethiopia necessitates the armed struggle to be the principal form of struggle. At this strategic defensive tactical offensive stage of the armed struggle the conquest of state power cannot be an immediate issue. Therefore intensifying the armed struggle on all fronts is the order of the day. The armed struggle in the countryside strikes to form first revolutionary base areas and then to expand them. The armed struggle in the cities and towns plays a supplementary role and are aimed at repulsing the reactionary violence with revolutionary violence.

The experience of the party shows that the armed struggle in the cities has greatly contributed to the development of EPRA and to the intensification of the armed struggle in the countryside.

This special issue of ABYOT is designed to clarify certain policies of the party and its situation, which is widely and deliberately distorted by reactionaries and revisionist of all hues.

ON SOME POINTS OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE WAGED
BY THE PEOPLE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF EPRP

THE question of revolutionary violence and armed struggle in general and within the Ethiopian context in particular, has been the victim of so many distortions. Quite a number of fake problems have been presented and false questions forwarded as if they were crucial ones. Dichotomies have been conjured up and some have even ventured to give haughty admonitions on the "grave consequences" of what they call with disdain "terrorism". Even the loss in human lives has been mentioned as one argument to buttress some "expert" comments on the armed struggle in Ethiopia. However, since the purpose of fake problems and superficial questions is to hide the real ones, it is imperative that the question of revolutionary violence and armed struggle be posed in the correct manner, within a Marxist-Leninist perspective.

I

As Lenin stated, opportunism can appear under many guises and does also, and these days quite often, distort Marxism for its purpose. Hence, the need to sift through the various self-baptised "Marxist" criticisms of the practice of revolutionary violence in Ethiopia. Hence, the need to make a general treatment of the question from the Marxist-Leninist angle and deal with the question CONCRETELY taking the Ethiopian situation into consideration.

Revolutionary violence is, for sure, a question of strategic importance which divides revolution-

aries from reformists. However, it is crucial to realise that this strategic line cannot be reduced to a mere question of form or tactics at any given period. When we say that revolutionary violence is a strategic line dividing reformists from revolutionaries it means that the difference is one of basic content and not of a form of struggle adopted at a given moment. The reformist entertains peaceful illusions concerning the takeover of power and dreams of peacefully transforming the state apparatus while the revolutionary believes that violence is necessary for taking power and that violence must be used to smash the reactionary state apparatus. Within the framework of this strategic difference, violent or non-violent methods of struggle could be used by both at given periods of time.

This confusion of form with content and strategy with tactics, a confusion that was prominent in the 60s, led to a fetishist approach to the question of violence and the automatic equation of taking up the gun with having a revolutionary line resulted in very many tragic focoist adventures in very many places. Quite a lot of parties and groups, having forgotten that a really revolutionary party must develop the capability of "walking on both legs" (legal/illegal, peaceful/violent, overt/covert or clandestine) and hopping from one to the other depending on the concrete situation, labelled all legal and peaceful forms of struggle as "opportunist". These people, whom Lenin aptly called "inexperienced revolutionaries", overlooked the basic points concerning revolutionary violence and missed the essential strategic point by failing to analyse the essence of the given political action in relation to its class nature and its relevance to the revolutionary struggle in the country.

Equating violence with revolutionary line in a simplistic and mechanical manner leads to taking armed struggle as the ONLY form of struggle for ALL times. This reduces the question of revolutionary violence and peoples' war to mere focoist adventures and leads to a position of taking the vanguard organisation as a force independent from the class whose interests it purports to defend. This erroneous approach to the question misses the crucial fact that a party which has opted for armed struggle strategically can (and in many cases must) use peaceful methods of struggle under suitable conditions., just as a party that has a reformist strategy can use violent means tactically to further its parliamentary and reformist objectives.

Violence assumes its revolutionary character only when it comes as a strategic line utilised by an organised movement of the oppressed under the leadership of the proletarian party which aims to seize state power at the national level. Violence used for reformist purposes, for reactionary aims (like the case of the feudal EDU which has rejected armed struggle and uses violence to stage a coup d'etat), for anti-people terrorist objectives (like the case of the miniscule ultra-narrow nationalist group in Tigray which uses violence on the people to "rally" them!). The oppressed masses organised and mobilised for peoples' war, the war carried out by the masses under the leadership of the proletarian party, the party commanding the gun (the Peoples' Army) - only in such cases can we talk of revolutionary violence. The fact that quite a number of groups use some methods of guerrilla warfare and flavour their rhetorics with Marxist phrases should not cloud the character of revolutionary violence.

Revolutionary violence is the violence of the masses. It is a violence employed by the oppressed masses under the leadership of the proletarian party for clear-cut political objectives of taking over state power, smashing the state apparatus and establishing a popular democratic and then a socialist state. Thus, the armed revolutionary struggle is an expression of the class struggle raging in the given country. It is violence used for political objectives and hence is opposed to the anarchistic position which finds "joy in the passion of destruction". It is violence that has nothing to do with the petty-bourgeois conception of artificially arousing the masses through violent psychological coups carried across exploding bombs or technically proficient raids against the enemy.

A Marxist-Leninist party does not embark on the path of armed struggle lightly or just because its members are all convinced of the need to use revolutionary violence to realise the party's objectives. Neither can the issue be reduced to mere technical preparations and organisation. The question is very much political. To embark on armed struggle, the party must make sure that the vast majority of the oppressed, especially the working class and the poor peasants, are convinced of the futility of all peaceful and non-violent actions and are ready for armed struggle. This conviction cannot be imposed on the masses nor can it be imprinted upon them by heroic armed actions of a focoist group. It is a conviction that they must arrive at through their own struggle which the party must lead politically. If the masses are not galvanised into action by the so many outrages committed by the ruling class, then the futile and single combat of a handful of people cannot stop them from continuing "to twiddle their thumbs" and watch the combat which they can't yet see as theirs.

For, just as it is unpardonable to shun violence when revolutionary war is the 'order of the day', it is also criminal to pit the party's forces into a premature battle with the regime while the vast majority of the people choose to be mere spectators. It is not enough if the masses sympathise with the guerrillas. It is their war, it can only be carried to victory with their active participation. Thus, the revolutionary war must be an expression of the class struggle of the masses, it must be an extension of the revolutionary actions of the proletariat

A party that has adopted the Marxist-Leninist view point on violence, that has mobilised the vast oppressed masses, that has grasped the fact that revolutionary violence is the violence of the masses, a party which combines armed struggle with intense political struggle, which builds and strengthens a Peoples' Army, which uses various forms of revolutionary struggle all over the country in accordance with the military line evolved by the political line of the party; such a party can lead the masses to victory in the protracted war of the people against the ruling class and all forms of imperialism.

II

The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party is a party of the proletariat which, guided by Marxism Leninism, has proved through bitter struggle its vanguard role in the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed Ethiopian masses. The EPRP, since its formation, has strived to apply Marxism-Leninism creatively to the concrete Ethiopian

situation taking into consideration the regional and international situation. In this it has achieved considerable success and advanced the revolutionary struggle of the masses to higher

levels. In the last four years, the situation in Ethiopia has been changing constantly and even dramatically. In order to be able to lead the revolution, the knowledge of revolutionaries must change in accordance with the change in the situation, as Mao had emphasised. For its part, the EPRP has examined every change in the situation and adopted the necessary method of struggle in order to advance the revolutionary struggle to victory. The armed struggle being waged by the people under the leadership of the EPRP and the intensified mass political actions are indicators of the party's correct political line and its victory over both left and right deviations of all sorts.

The EPRP, at the time of its formation, asserted in a clear-cut manner that the party must mobilise the proletariat, the poor peasants and progressive sectors of the petty-bourgeoisie, organise them, carry out legal/illegal, peaceful or violent methods of struggle (depending on the concrete situation) within the framework of a strategic line to take over power by force through a protracted peoples' war. Based on the party's programme for the New Dem. Revolution stage of the revolution, the party set as one of its main tasks the building up of a Peoples' Revolutionary Army. This was in 1972.

At the time, Ethiopia was under the rule of the barbarian anti-democratic rule of the autocrat Haile Selassie. Under the feudal autocracy's Ethiopia there was no possibility of carrying out a legal struggle, in fact any political activity was punishable by law. EPRP, which worked in total clandestinity, strived to broaden and strengthen its organisational structure, to do political work in the various mass organisations and to popularise revolutionary slogans and to spread Marxism-Leninism. At the same time, the party trained its cadres militarily with a view of making the necessary preparations for the armed struggle in

the countryside.

Realizing the fact that the strategic form of armed struggle to be launched in Ethiopia is the one in the countryside, the Party made its preparation for the creation of a peoples army right after its very inception. It trained its cadres militarily and in organizational work.

When the historic 1974 February revolution raged against the feudal autocracy, the EPRP had successfully planted its militarily trained and armed cadres in the selected region. The EPRA was born. Analysing the concrete situation then, the EPRP did not embark on the path of armed struggle but continued to intensify its political and organisational work. Its militants played crucial roles in the February revolutionary movement, and even though the party was not strong enough to assume the leadership of the Revolution, its clandestine papers, especially its organ DEMOCRACIA, emerged as the most popular and revolutionary paper in the whole country.

The party contributed significantly to broaden and intensify the mass struggle, it played a big role in developing the political consciousness of the masses and thus laid a good ground for the intensification of the struggle against all usurpers.

"A genuinely and seriously revolutionary party", it is true, should line "political flexibility with ideological steadfastness and tactical flexibility with strategic rigor". The EPRP, in this period, was not caught in any opportunist mire of the left or right variety. It assessed the prospects of the mass movement, analysed the class nature of Endalkatchew government (which was volubly promising reforms in a ploy to buy time), and then of the Michael Imru government and maintained its clandestine work. Its clandestine political work was "peaceful" and the party refrained from embarking on the path of armed struggle. The mass movement was continuing and the popular masses were still capable (and convinced of it) of gaining victories in the battle against the ruling class. The popular demand for the formation of

a provisional peoples government composed of all the revolutionary and democratic forces rallied conscious and mobilised forces. The EPRP was firmly in the forefront of this struggle and even though the lives of several militants were lost during this period, the party did not precipitate itself into launching armed action (in the cities and the rural area). If it had done so, its action would have hardly been considered by the masses as an extension of their revolutionary action and, thus, the party would have been easily isolated. This is indisputable, for a guerilla movement can succeed only if it comes as the expression or extension of the revolutionary movement of the masses and only if they give it their all out support (not verbal or financial but by being the actors) convinced of its necessity. To precipitate the armed struggle is as damaging as to launch it after the mass revolutionary movement has subsided or suffered such a defeat that the guerilla movement stands alone.

The takeover of power by the fascist junta was contrary to the wish or interest of the masses. From the outset, the EPRP, based on the class analysis it made of the Derg's regime and the most probable course it would take called on the masses to intensify the struggle even further. The party was not hoodwinked by the sweet talk of the Derg and its demagogic claim to hand over power to the people. The real nature of the junta was expressed by its curtailment of all democratic rights (right after it took power) and its repressive acts against democrats and revolutionaries all over the country. The slogan "Ethiopia Tikdem", the repression against the mass organisations, its chauvinist approach to the Eritrean question, and the national question in general its sly manoeuvres to dilute the mass movement through demagogy, its unwillingness to put to question the control of imperialists over the country were all clear indications of the Derg's real nature. Added to these came the executions, the constant attempt to dilute the reforms it was forced to declare, the barrage of lies through the mass media, witchhunt of the EPRP, massacres of Zematch students and peasants etc... The repression

and the demagogy remained its unchanged features until the present.

Faced with the new situation, a political organisation had the following options:

1. Follow a collaborationist line and join the Derg. This was what the Meisone bandas of Haile Fida did under the rather thin cover of "critical support" which in fact was all out support and no criticism.

Or

2. embark on immediate armed struggle, Or
3. prepare armed struggle while organising the masses and intensifying the struggle, to alunch the armed struggle when the oppressed masses exhaust all possibilities/illusions of peaceful political struggle.

The EPRP opted for the third path in accordance with its consistent application of Marxism Leninism in a creative way. As Lenin said: "...in politics, in which sometimes extremely complicated-national and international-relationships between classes and parties have to be dealt with...it would be absurd to concoct a recipe, or general rule...that would serve in all cases. One must have the brains to analyse the situation in each separate case." The Ethiopian situation if anything was far from being stagnant-in fact it was changing while affecting a change (and at the same time being affected by the change) in the regional and international situation. The EPRP's concrete analysis of the changing political situation was manifested in its correct political line which resulted in the party being embraced by the popular masses.

EPRP maintained its clandestinity but in 1975 (August) the time was propitious for the declaration of the party. And the EPRP was declared and its revolutionary minimum programme for the stage of the New Democratic Revolution was clandestinely distributed throughout the country. Judging the situation, the

EPRP utilise semi-legal and overt forms of struggle while developing its clandestine organisational work and increasingly laying down the ground for the development of the armed struggle in the rural and urban areas. The main form of struggle till 1976 was the clandestine and overt peaceful (notwithstanding the regime's violence) political struggle. Mass demonstrations by workers, students, teachers, etc were staged. The mass organisations of workers, teachers, students, women, etc openly struggled for democratic rights and the formation of a provisional peoples government. Zematch students in their thousands mobilised the peasants for the anti-feudal struggle and paid huge sacrifices in the struggle against the feudal lords and the junta. Peasant associations challenged the junta's reactionary attempt to bureaucratically control them. In short, the EPRP stood firmly on the side of the masses deepening the revolutionary struggle and spearheading the revolutionary movement for democracy and socialism. The EPRP exposed the real nature of the junta, exposed its demagogy, educated the masses to rely on themselves and to struggle further, explained the limitations the reforms declared by the junta (under popular pressure) and showed the way to the masses so that they can safeguard their gains and continue the struggle.

With the marriage of the Meisone thugs with the junta and with the gradual concentration of power in the hands of the Mengistu' clique (allied to the Meisone scums), the repression against the EPRP and the mass organisations was more and more intensified. The EPRP, whom the masses embraced as their vanguard, evidently became the target of the regime's fascist wrath. During the crucial period September 1976, the EPRP carried out a multi-faced struggle and paid significant sacrifices. Throughout this period, notwithstanding the demagogy, the regime maintained the repression and intensified it. Throughout this period, the EPRP, notwithstanding the repression to which it was subjected, maintained the political struggle and did not resort to armed struggle all though it was preparing to launch one.

The reason for this position of the party needs to be clarified. The EPRP believed and still believes that the path to victory over the reactionary ruling class is through the persecution of a revolutionary war of the people, and to this end it has formed and continuously developed the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Army. However, the EPRP firmly believes that the revolution is the work of the masses and that revolutionary violence is the violence of the masses. Thus, the party in no way aims at replacing the masses as it upholds firmly the principle that the exploited need to become involved fully in all aspects of the struggle. Breaking the proper relationship that should exist between the party (vanguard) and the proletariat and oppressed masses leads to the creation of a deep chasm between the masses and the party. The mass movement and the armed struggle will be bifurcated and may even end up in different camps. Thus, the EPRP, taking into account all the forces, classes and mass of people active in the country and correctly gauging the situation adopted its tactical line.

There are some people who refuse to analyse the concrete situation and who deny that any change has taken place, while all the time mystically referring to this classics or that one in a mechanical manner. These people, whom Mao called "die-hards whose knowledge has stopped at the old stage while the struggle of opposites has already pushed the objective process forward", negated all the post-February reality and stuck to their old formula. One of this was their call for launching the armed struggle long before the party did and long before the masses had exhausted all the other possibilities and made their firm choice for this violent way. Armed struggle does not become the principal form of struggle just because the party feels it should be. The people must accept and prove through their readiness to actively participate that armed struggle or the use of revolutionary violence is the order of the day. Up to September 1976, the EPRP did not find such a conviction being the dominant one.

For a long protracted and bitter war, for a war without quarters against a barbarian junta, the EPRP was ready and it could only start when the vast oppressed masses were ready for this bitter struggle, (By the way, the masses who consciously threw themselves into the armed struggle are paying huge sacrifices and persisting in the struggle while certain petty-bourgeois defeatists who were yesterday crying "armed struggle now!" and other fiery slogans are now smacking their lips pessimistically and frightened out of their wits by the fierceness of the fascist repression. As if they expected "gentle treatment" from rabid fascists!)

The EPRP intensified the mass political struggle as the building of mass political bases is a necessary prelude to the building of bases and rear areas for the armed struggle. There is no magic formula which determines the exact period for the launching of the armed struggle. However, what is clear is that the oppressed masses must have exhausted all hopes in the possibility of peaceful struggle (i.e. they must be convinced through their struggle that armed struggle must be the principal form of struggle) and the party must have made the necessary political and military preparations to launch the armed struggle. The EPRP continued to prepare the latter while intensifying the political struggle of the masses against the fascist junta.

In all cases, the EPRP has shown its unflinching commitment to base its actions on the concrete analysis of the prevailing situation. To all questions, the party has responded in a revolutionary way avoiding rightist and leftist errors. When the junta espoused the fascistic "Ethiopia Tikdem" the party raised the slogan of the "oppressed masses first under the leadership of the proletarian party". When the junta espoused "Ethiopian socialism" the party countered with scientific socialism. When the junta nationalised land, the party hailed this victory of the pong-

standing mass struggle but explained that the nationalisation under a fascist junta or a reactionary ruling class cannot be equated with a "socialist measure". The Party called on the peasants to organise themselves independently, free from any bureaucratic control, to arm themselves, to disarm the feudal lords, to administer their locality, etc. When the junta cried it respects 'the right to self-determination but that Ethiopia's unity is absolute and indivisible', the EPRP countered with an intense agitation on the right of nations to self-determination and exposed the regime's chauvinist policy. Under pressure from the mass movement, the junta undertook certain reforms but it twisted these reforms, diluted them and tried to use them to prolong its rule. EPRP, on the other hand, analysed the situation concretely and advanced new slogans to expose the junta's demagogy and to raise the level of the mass struggle. The question of democracy (unrestricted democratic rights to the oppressed masses, right of nations to self-determination, the autonomous existence of mass organisations, etc) and state power (the PPG as opposed to the military junta) were thus the most important questions which the junta's demagogy or reforms could not cast aside. The fact that the EPRP, through the political struggle, exposed the junta for what it is an anti-democratic anti-people clique-made the party the target of the junta's repression. But more importantly, it showed to the masses concretely and vividly that the junta, notwithstanding its demagogy, is an anti-people terrorist regime that can only be overthrown by force.

In a revolutionary period the situation changes rapidly and the knowledge of revolutionaries must change rapidly in accordance with the change in the situation. Repeating antiquated slogans and entertaining obsolete analysis will not do. In the concrete situation of Ethiopia and in light of the question of armed struggle, it is important to deal with the question of the peasantry and the changes which have occurred concerning them. For long, the popular demand for "land to the tiller" reverberated throughout feudal Ethiopia galvanising the vast majority

of peasants and the revolutionary forces. Hence, this question was a cardinal one around which a revolutionary party could mobilise the vast number of poor peasants. However, since the proclamation of the land nationalisation certain features of the question have changed especially vis à vis the areas in which the poor peasants have now land. In the areas where the proclamation had been applied to an extent, the contradiction between the regime and the peasants has taken a different character. The contradictions arise from the fact that the reform has not been applied in a revolutionary manner, the distribution of land has led to differentiation amidst the peasants, the regime has repressed the peasants who moved against the feudal lords, peasant associations have been repressed and the leaders liquidated, absence of seeds, credits, high price of basic necessities like salt, cloth, etc, the forceful uprooting of peasants to be press ganged into the army and to be sent war zones (Eritrea, etc), the chauvnistic approach to the national question, etc.... It is these questions which divide the peasants from the regime. It is the question of democracy and state power which has loomed as the main issue. This, as a consequence, indicates the necessity of intense political work and a correct appraisal of the class alignment in the rural areas.

The EPRP hailed the land nationalisation as a victory of the masses. However, it did not go into euphoric opportunism to laud the junta as 'progressive' and to ally with it. In fact, it intensified the political work amidst the peasantry showing them that the junta cannot apply fully and in a revolutionary manner this reform. The meaning of Land without political freedom, land without political power in the hands of a worker-peasant government was clarified to the peasants by the party and through their own experiences of conflicts with the junta. Thus the peasants more and more came to realise the necessity of strengthening their alliance with the workers under the leadership of the proletarian party and carrying out a

revolutionary war to control the state power.

The fact that land distribution, even if in a perverted manner, has been carried out in various parts of Ethiopia (ex. Southern Ethiopia) makes the Ethiopian situation different from those countries where the proletarian party launched armed struggle in the countryside and mobilised the peasantry in the struggle for land.

To sum up then:

The EPRP, though convinced of the necessity of resorting to revolutionary violence to crush the fascist regime, did not launch the armed struggle because it had to intensify the political struggle and wait till the masses through their struggle became convinced of the necessity to resort to armed struggle as the principal form of struggle. During this period, the EPRP utilised overt and covert, legal, semi-legal and illegal methods of peaceful political struggle. Though it paid significant sacrifices (many comrades and sympathisers lost their lives due to the junta's repression) in carrying out the peaceful political struggle, its line was correct and revolutionary and succeeded to mobilise the oppressed masses around the party for the protracted peoples' war against the fascist junta.

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War is a continuation of politics and it is the political line of the party which decides the final objectives of the revolutionary war. As such, the political line of the EPRP determines the objectives of the revolutionary war being carried out by the masses in the country.

The EPRP did not launch the armed struggle while there was still a possibility of peaceful political

struggle. In fact, the EPRP did not launch the armed struggle till 1976 September (with the exception of legitimate armed actions of a defensive nature by the EPRA guerrillas in Tigrai). Before this time, the junta had carried out a vast campaign of slander and repression against the party. Numerous militants were executed and arrested. Members of the youth league were killed by the junta in the rural areas. The mass organisations (CELU, ETA, EWCC, student unions, etc) were banned and their leaders arrested and several were tortured. Majors Getachew Shibeshi and Ali Mussa carried out a bloody repression campaign against the EPRP and its sympathisers in Wolliso, Asbe Teferri, Jimma, Awassa, etc long before the EPRP fired a single shot against the junta thugs. The regime x (then under the control of the Mengistu-Haile Fida clique) drew up a long list of militants to be exterminated and distributed this to the assassin squad formed of Nebelbal soldiers long before September 1976. In fact, the EPRP had not fired a single shot while the regime was machinegunning peaceful demonstrators not only earlier but as late as September 21-22, 1976.

Why did the fascists declare war on our party? Why and to what objective did our party resorted to the intensification of armed struggle in the cities and towns? War is a continuation of politics. The fascists declared war on our party because they fully realized after the May Day demonstrations in 1976, that they had been defeated in the political battle by our party and that all their attempts to win the support of the masses had disappeared in the dust bin. They also realised that unless they destroy our party their stay in power was impossible. Thus, they declared war on our party on Sept. 13, 1976. In short, the regime has put the bayonet on the political agenda. And what should the response of the revolutionary party of the proletariat be under such a situation. The reactionary violence launched by the fascist

regime had to be repulsed by a revolutionary violence of the masses led by their vanguard party. To continue its political and organizational work among the urban masses, to intensify the revolutionary struggle, to push the regime into more and more contradictions, and lead the mass political struggle, the party launched armed struggle in the cities and towns only within the context of the overall strategic defensive and tactical offensive at the present stage of the genral armed struggle. It was only to be able to continue the political and organizational work among the masses and to throw the regime into further contradictions that the armed struggle was launched. Events have actually proved that the party's analysis was absolutely correct.

The EPRP officially launched the armed struggle in the cities and towns in late september 1976, when it became clear to the oppressed masses that the fascist junta had abandoned all pretensions of peaceful political struggle and was preparing to launch a massive repression to crush the EPRP and to physically liquidate the militants of the various mass organisations of the oppressed masses. It was at a time when it has become clear to all that continuing peaceful methods of struggle is a sure path towards the slaughter house. At that time, when the masses said enough and called for "repulsing the fascist violence with revolutionary violence", the EPRP launched the armed struggle in the cities and towns as supplimentary to the protracted armed struggle waged by the EPRA in the countryside.

Reactionary violence, which was always there but had increased its intensity, was countered by revolutionary violence. Thus, armed struggle became the principal form of the struggle being waged by the Ethiopian people under the leadership of the EPRP.

Armed struggle waged by the EPRP is determined by the political line of the party which has as the

ultimate objective of the taking of state power, the smashing of the reactionary state apparatus and the establishment of a popular democratic republic. Ours is a peoples' war, a just war against a fascist junta, feudalism, imperialism and soviet social-imperialism. It is a war of the vast majority of the people for peoples' democracy and socialism. It is a war carried out all over the country and combining various methods of revolutionary violence. It is in this framework that the armed struggle, being waged under the leadership of the EPRP, should be viewed. However, the particularities of the Ethiopian situation (such as the breakout of the February revolution and the political changes that followed, the land question, the deceptive nature of the junta, the Social imperialist intervention, the lack of international aid to the revolution, the absence of a neighbouring strong rear base) should be considered as they bear heavily on the question of the development of the revolutionary war (ex. the question of forming base areas. etc.)

Under the leadership of the EPRP, the mass revolutionary political struggle has proceeded to armed struggle as the mass revolutionary political organisations form their own armed contingents. To build the EPRA into a powerful Peoples' Army, to liberate the countryside in the revolutionary sense (i.e. establishment of organs of revolutionary political power, etc), to strengthen the worker-peasant alliance under the leadership of the working class, to stage local guerilla war and armed uprisings in all possible areas and to raise this to a higher level of an all-out peoples' war carried out by the masses and their Revolutionary Army culminating in the takeover of power- such is the task which faces our party. To realise this the party has established the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Army and given it all-out attention to build it into a powerful Peoples' Army. The EPRA,

whose units are active in many parts of the country, is rapidly developing into an army of the oppressed people-primarily of the workers and peasants. Under the concrete conditions in which our revolution finds itself in, the building of the EPRA into a powerful force needs the settlement of a series of serious problems. The establishment of a stable and organised base area, the improvement of the armaments of the growing army, the strengthening of the army's class nature, etc are all crucial questions not solved by quotations from the classics but by creative and persistent struggle.

Thus, the EPRP has put all-out emphasis to build the EPRA. Relying on the masses and the necessity of self-reliance being grasped, the party has continued to strengthen the EPRA. As the "peoples' armed forces cannot exist or grow strong without the revolutionaries or the peoples' strong political force, whose core is the worker-peasant class organised and led by the working class" (GIAP), the EPRP emphasizes in the continuation of the intense political work to strengthen and develop the mass political bases. At the same time, since maintaining the class nature of the EPRA is crucial (in view of the fact that Ethiopia is a country of predominately peasant population), the EPRP continues to strengthen the party's leadership over the EPRA (ex. the party committee in the EPRA, the political education of the fighters, the all-going rectification movement carried out in the EPRA by the party last year, etc) and the increase in the number of workers (especially as cadres) in the armed force. The strengthening of the "working element in the army is one of the most important measures to strengthen the revolutionary nature of the army." (Lenin) It is not enough that the party strengthens its leadership through party committees, it is necessary that workers be present in the army as cadres, fighters, etc. (This is a crucial point having effects on the nature of the army even after victory.) This in turn implies, in the Ethiopian context, the continued and intensified

political and organisational work amidst the proletariat concentrated in the urban areas.

"Our revolutionary war depends on the entire people's strength and on regular forces comprised of workers and peasants fighting the enemy...and using all means to coordinate attacks in rural and urban areas". (GIAP). The EPRP continues to coordinate attacks on the enemy both in the rural and urban areas. While building up the Revolutionary Army and setting up secure bases (for which task the strengthening of the mass revolutionary political movement is important), it has continued to intensify the multi-faced struggle in the urban areas.

The struggle waged in the urban areas is a struggle waged to advance the revolutionary war to victory. It is part and parcel of the overall revolutionary war undertaken by the people under the leadership of the EPRP. The why of the urban struggle should in no way be clouded or seen in a distorted manner. Quite a few people have created a false dichotomy between the urban and rural struggle as if the two were mutually exclusive. Others rush to equate the urban struggle either with "terrorism" (a fashionable word these days) or the abandonment of the rural struggle. These views reflect an erroneous view of revolutionary war waged under the leadership of a proletarian party.

The urban struggle being carried out under the leadership of the EPRP is a revolutionary struggle of the broad masses carried out within the framework of the overall strategy of revolutionary war. Thus, it can in no way be equated with "terrorism" of this or that variety. It is not also a struggle being carried out by an elite group but is a struggle in which the masses are participating actively. Thus, it cannot be equated with the urban guerrilla actions of certain movements which had appeared in some Latin American countries. The EPRP- led urban

struggle is an expression of the mass revolutionary movement which has moved from political struggle to armed struggle, an expression of the mass revolutionary organisation which have become organisations carrying out armed struggle.

To create a dichotomy between the urban and the rural is an error just as taking one as the ONLY one and abandoning the other would cause disaster to the revolutionary movement. Within the framework of a revolutionary war led by the proletarian party, which is building a strong peoples' army and carrying out an intensifying armed struggle, the struggle in the urban areas plays a crucial part and will continue to be significant throughout the struggle.

The urban areas in Ethiopia are the places where the working class is concentrated. Not only that; the students, teachers and progressive intellectuals are concentrated there. During the February Revolution, the proletariat and the progressive sectors in the urban areas played the major role. The proletariat, the leading class, and the students, teachers, etc have all a high degree of political consciousness and have manifested a staunch combative spirit. Since the junta's takeover, the proletariat and urban mass have been in the forefront of the advanced political struggle and through terror and demagoguery, the fascist junta has not been able to dupe them and to abort their revolutionary movement. Hence, despite the fact that "urban areas are the regime's economic, political and cultural centres", the junta has not succeeded to secure a safe and rear base in these areas. Though it has its repressive facilities concentrated in some of the cities, it has serious political and significant military weakness. The vast majority of the urban populace with the proletariat in the lead stand against the junta and support the EPRP. The political work amidst the junta's armed forces is developing so much so that

the junta has considered its own police force as "totally unreliable" and its troops "of dubious loyalty" and relies more on selected and specially formed and indoctrinated units and squads to carry out its repressive acts.

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For the victory of the revolutionary war, struggle in the cities is indispensable. As Giap wrote:

"To advance the revolutionary war toward victory, we must build revolutionary bases in the urban areas and create conditions for attacking the enemy directly in the cities in every suitable way, thereby, depriving him of a safe rear base. We must also insure close coordination between the urban revolutionary forces and the rural revolutionary forces in order to attack the enemy directly in his lair, insure that the revolutionary war annihilates more and more extensively his military and political forces, extend the people's control from lower to higher echelons and from small to large areas, and to advance toward winning final victory."
(emphasis added)

The EPRP launched the armed struggle in the cities as part of the overall strategy to carry out the revolutionary war of the people to final victory. To frustrate the regime's scheme of turning the urban areas into safe rear bases, to respond to reactionary violence with revolutionary violence and thereby to protect and strengthen the revolutionary mass organisations, to hit the enemy directly in his lair and to aggravate its political and military difficulties, to strengthen the mass political work and hence to build up the Peoples' Army, etc the urban struggle has been and is crucial.

The fascist junta is suffering from chronic instability and has practically no secure base in the urban areas. This has been clearly manifested

on more than one occasion. At the same time, it dreams of crushing the mass political movement in the urban areas so as to secure a rear base and to isolate the EPRA and to subsequently crush it. It knows that the urban areas, and especially the cities where the majority of the workers are concentrated (Addis Abeba included) are crucial. Hence, its frantic terror campaign in the urban areas.

On its part, the EPRP by launching the armed struggle in the cities:

1. leads the mass revolutionary violent action to counter the reactionary violence;
2. attacks the enemy in its lair and denies it a secure rear base;
3. defends its organisational structure and activity and that of the mass organisations;
4. heightens the mass revolutionary political work and the creation of mass political and armed bases which are indispensable for the building up of the EPRA;
5. contributes to the advancement of the victory of the revolutionary war by coordinating the urban revolutionary forces with the rural revolutionary forces.

(The past experience of our struggle has shown that the urban struggle played the most significant role in the building of the EPRA ranging from strengthening the worker element within the army to securing the necessary finance, politically advanced cadres and to dividing the enemy's forces and frustrating more than once its attempt to pit a concentrated force against the EPRA in the rural areas.)

The urban struggle is carried out not only by the members of the party but also, and primarily so, by the masses through their various mass organisations and committees. This is a crucial

point. The urban defence units of the party are made up of the members of the party who carry out party political work together with armed actions. At the same time, the mass organisations like the Ethiopian Proletarians' Revolutionary Union (Elaama), The Oppressed Soldiers' Organisations, etc have their own armed units. In addition, the masses organised in various committees at district level and organised in the Democratic Front led by the party carry out political work in conjunction with armed actions. Hence, this is a big contribution to the development of the peoples' war in which the oppressed masses must fight the enemy everywhere and using all means.

The armed actions in the urban areas have contributed to the strengthening of the political and organisational work of the party and the various mass organisations. The masses see in the actions of the party the defense of their interests. Through their own organised actions, they actively defend their interests. And thus, they have and continue to contribute to the strengthening of the EPRA and the advancement of the revolutionary war to victory.

The urban struggle has manifested many forms and developed tremendously. Liquidation of fascist thugs, criminal torturers and murderers of the people have been carried out. Banks have been expropriated. Agitational and propaganda work, under armed protection by the revolutionary armed units, have been carried out in the cities. Armed members of the popular organisations have protected their localities from fascist incursions and control. A skilful combination of armed and political propaganda and agitation has neutralised a significant number of fascists' vigilantes and troops.

Taking its revolutionary political and

military line as a guide, the EPRP has used various ways and means to intensify the armed struggle in the cities and rural areas. Taking the concrete and changing situation into consideration and the development of the EPRA in the countryside to the level of being invincible it has now changed tactics. It has phased down certain actions like conducting armed propaganda in form of defending a certain zone and conduct agitation, found unsuitable under new conditions. It has intensified other political and organizational works considered necessary to advance the revolutionary war, etc..... A careful examination of the struggle waged by the EPRP in the last year can show the practical application of this tactic.

Methods of struggle or form of armed actions can change and must change in the protracted war waged against the fascist junta and its social imperialist masters. What remains constant is the drive to intensify the revolutionary war, build a strong Peoples' Army, develop the mass political bases, develop the mass armed bases, coordinate the urban and rural revolutionary forces and carry the revolutionary war to victory. As the Vietnamese put it: "the more fiercely the war develops, the more important the armed struggle." To "wage a comprehensive war of all the people", to combine various forms of the mass struggle with that of the Peoples' Army, to coordinate the rural and urban struggle, to adopt different methods of fighting in accordance with the given situation, to preserve our forces and to annihilate the enemy, etc are all basic questions of the revolution to which the revolutionary struggle of the masses under the leadership of the EPRP is giving practical answers.

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THE PRINCIPLED UNITY OF THE EPRP IS UNSHAKEABLE!

"Opposition and struggle between ideas of different kinds constantly occur within the Party; this is a reflection within the Party of contradictions between classes and between the new and the old in society. If there were no contradictions in the party and no ideological struggle to resolve them, the Party's life would come to an end."

(Mao Tsetung-On Contradictions)

A revolutionary party, a Marxist-Leninist party, develops and strengthens itself through continuous struggle. The more the class struggle intensifies the more this finds reflection within the party. This is nothing strange or alarming unless one has been dreaming of having an eternal peace. The ideological struggle which rages within a party is a positive thing. In fact, a party in which there is no ideological struggle is actually a "dead party".

The EPRP, being a revolutionary proletarian party, has been in the forefront of the bitter and intense political and armed struggle being waged by our people against the fascist junta, feudalism, US imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism. The Ethiopian society has in the last four years been the scene of deep convulsions caused by the unremitting struggle of the masses. At the regional and international levels also, the alignment of forces has changed. All this has been reflected in the party.

These last few months, and especially since December, the fascist junta and its supporters, rumour mongers and enemies of the EPRP and the Ethiopian Revolution, have been all fanning the "news" about a purported "division" within the

EPRP. The "news" is being fanned so energetically at this period so as to cover up the junta's terror campaign by presenting the EPRP as an "extremist party being abandoned by its members", and to confuse the international revolutionary forces and to bloc organised campaigns denouncing the fascist terror against the EPRP.

What is the truth about this so-called "split"? Who are those who are said to have "splitted, and who, as even Le Monde newspaper wrote are collaborating with the DERG to intensify the terror campaign against the EPRP? For the benefit of those who may be confused by the rumour being circulated by the fascist thugs and their social imperialist masters, we shall briefly answer these questions.

Being a Marxist-Leninist party, the EPRP utilises the tool of criticism and self-criticism to rectify errors and to develop revolutionary qualities. Being a party which functions in accordance with the organisational principle of democratic-centralism, the EPRP continuously strives to enhance democracy within the party while upholding the principle that the minority (whose views and rights shall be protected) must submit to the majority. The EPRP has and does continue to encourage free discussions and ideological debates within the party and has not taken any major political position without first having a discussion of the question within the party and without having the decision of the majority of its members.

As a concrete expression of these firmly-held beliefs and methods of organisational work, the EPRP carried out a Rectification Movement more than a year or so ago. During this historic movement, carried under difficult conditions caused by the junta's repression, members of the party scrutinised and examined the political line

and actions of the party in all spheres. Taking democracy with centralism, freedom with discipline, criticism with unity, the members of the EPRP carried out the movement effectively thus leading to the correction of errors, the strengthening of positive qualities and methods of work, the solidifying of the unity of the party around the revolutionary political line and military line of the party.

As it is to be expected, the contradictions in the society were reflected within the party. Within the party, there was a struggle between those who stood for democracy and those who stood for dictatorship, between those who stood for revolution and those who stood for capitulation and collaboration. A handful of members defended a reactionary line of capitulation and dictatorship. Concretely, they:

- called on the EPRP to unite with the Derg;
- called for the cessation of the armed struggle and the disbanding of the EPRA;
- called for the curtailment of democracy within the party and the heightening of centralised control by the central committee;
- advocated absolute control of mass organisations and the abandonment of EPRP's position of respecting the autonomy of mass organisations;
- called for the condemnation of the Eritrean peoples' legitimate struggle which, according to them, has become "counter revolutionary".

The EPRP presented these views to the members of the party who discussed them and rejected them as reactionary views, as capitulationist and revisionist concoctions. Even though, these individuals had stood against the political line of the party on many issues, the EPRP did not expel them from the party but gave them the chance to study and correct their

views. Genuine ones, who saw the error of their lines, criticised themselves and continue to be firm militants of the party. A few others stuck to their reactionary positions.

While being within the party, these reactionaries secretly schemed to divide and destroy the EPRP. They violated the party's democratic centralism and rules of clandestinity by publicising their identity and putting out gutter leaflets prettified with revolutionary names ("Bolshevik" being one). They carried out a series of sabotage activities which caused the party damage during the junta's house to house searches. Abandoning all pretenses, they joined the fascist junta and started to act as spies and informers. They exposed telephone numbers, cars and the party's secret houses in the capital. As a result, we lost several comrades from several zones and one of our foremost long-standing member and determined fighter, comrade Girmatchew Lemma, was ambushed and killed by police who were waiting for him in his hideout using the information these scums gave them. Though these traitors continued to spread rumours about the party and tried to cover up the reasons for their treason, it has now become clear for all that they are no different from the Meisone thugs of Haile Fida. These reactionaries have now become the elements who try to fill in the void left by Meisone and are seen together with the Madebo assassin squads roaming the streets looking for EPRP members to kill.

Under these circumstances, faced with treason and open and concrete inimical acts, the EPRP has taken the necessary steps to protect its members and its organisational work.

A split is said to occur in a party when a sizable or significant number leave it. However, such is not the case with the EPRP. Through out, there have been members who have left the party for one reason or another. The present

scums number a maximum of 25 with a dozen or so sympathisers and are different only in the fact that they are zealous in their efforts to serve the fascist junta. The damage they can do a party with thousands of members and even more thousands of Youth League members and a vast population organised in a Democratic Front and other popular committees supporting the party, is minimal. And to talk of a split is to talk about something that has not really happened.

Why then is the "split-news" being fanned? The above given reasons are valid. Moreover, the fascists and their Soviet masters plan to confuse the populace, to create suspicion, to plant doubts, to confuse the revolutionary forces outside, to bloc concerted action by other organisations abroad to denounce the fascist junta's present campaign of mass-slaughter. Also, they want to make the world believe that the EPRP is "finished" and that the junta is "stable and gaining support"! Futile attempts, indeed! The frantic fascists are already busy fanning other wild rumours against the EPRP. And who knows, next time they may tell us that the EPRP has split into four parts, did this or that....!!! A party that has been accused of stopping rain and causing food shortage is not going to be surprised by other wild tales!

The EPRP believes firmly that ideological struggle within a party is healthy and that no one should be repressed for his or her views. Within the party, the maximum possible of democracy exists. At the same time, the EPRP has the inescapable duty to fight with all its forces all those who consider it as an enemy organisation and work actively to destroy it.

At present, the EPRP is facing one of the most ruthless campaigns of terror ever seen anywhere in the world. To defeat this and carry the revolutionary war to victory, the members of the

EPRP, of the EPRYL and of the various genuine mass organisations are standing side by side with the oppressed masses in a united, firm and determined manner. Daily, fascists, social imperialists and Cuban mercenaries are shedding the blood of thousands of fine revolutionaries all throughout the country. Daily, thousands of our militants and supporters are paying the necessary sacrifice and advancing the revolutionary war to its objectives. The people who have embraced the EPRP and the members of the EPRP knew from the outset that the school of civil war is a painful school. They knew that this bitter war, which necessarily will have very many instances of reactionary terror campaigns and mass slaughter, will melt the will of the faint-hearted and the pseudo-revolutionaries. More importantly, the people and the EPRP knew, know and are ever more certain that the oppressed masses led by the EPRP will triumph over the fascists, social imperialists, traitors and all other scums.

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EPRP IS OUR PARTY !

**EPRYL IS OUR
 REVOLUTIONARY
 ORGANIZATION !**

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POINTS OF THE EPRP PROGRAMME

- *To destroy the rule of feudalism and imperialism and to establish a Peoples' Democratic Republic of the broad masses.*
- *To establish a broad, democratic and progressive political system.*
- *To establish a planned democratic and national economy free from foreign domination and to improve the material and spiritual wellbeing of the masses.*
- *To declare and safeguard the unrestricted right of nations to self-determination and to settle the Eritrean question peacefully and democratically based on the aspirations of the Eritrean masses.*
- *To safeguard the interests and rights of the working people.*
- *To establish a national democratic culture and educational system and to run public health services catering to the masses.*
- *To build a Peoples' Army wholly devoted to defend and serve the broad masses and the country.*
- *To ensure equality between men and women politically, economically and socially.*
- *To pursue a foreign policy of peace and non-alignment and active solidarity with all the forces fighting for peace, democracy and socialism.*