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Class Struggle
and
the Problem in Eritrea

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Class Struggle
and
the Problem in Eritrea



Ethiopian Revolution Information Center,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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*Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam, Chairman of the
and the Council of Ministers, and Commander-in-Chief
of the Revolutionary Army*

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Comrade Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam, Chairman of the PMAC and the Council of Ministers, and Commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Army

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The so-called All Ethiopia Socialist Movement, MEISON which used to claim to be the vanguard of the struggle of the toiling masses of Ethiopia later met the same fate as the E.P.R.P. When MEISON realized that it was not possible for it to assume state

PREFACE

"Men make their own history, but do not make it just as they please."

This scientific observation made by Karl Marx over one hundred and twenty years ago has proved true in the course of the Ethiopian revolution. It shows us that individuals, groups and organizations, however much they are armed and however powerful they seem, cannot arrest the struggle of the broad masses. Once they face an organized and armed force of the masses, their counter-revolutionary attempts can never succeed but always ends in futility and defeat.

When the broad masses of Ethiopia rose up *en masse* against the age-old system of exploitation and oppression and when the old ruling class realized that it can no longer effectively maintain its rule, a cleaver and power-hungry petty-bourgeois element appeared on the scene as the supposed vanguard of the mass movement. This element gave itself the name of "The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party", the E.P.R.P. Masquarading as a Marxist-Leninist organization and as supporter of the struggle of the oppressed masses, E.P.R.P. spread its counter-revolutionary politics. For a time, it was able to mislead and confuse quite a number of people, especially young people. Nevertheless, this counter-revolutionary line was exposed and ultimately defeated through the relentless effort made by genuine progressives and the broad Ethiopian masses. Such elements might still exist. But all those who do not believe in the power of the working masses, who are the real makers of history and those who advance only their partisan and sectarian interests will ultimately be crushed.

The so-called All Ethiopia Socialist Movement, MEISON which used to claim to be the vanguard of the struggle of the toiling masses of Ethiopia later met the same fate as the E.P.R.P. When MEISON realized that it was not possible for it to assume state

power via a short cut, it deserted the camp of the revolution at a moment when the Ethiopian revolution was in a most dangerous and critical situation. It is to be recalled that when MEISON joined the camp of the revolution, the Ethiopian revolution was at a very young stage. But when it deserted the camp of the revolution, it was no longer easy to mobilize the masses to follow opportunist political lines because the Ethiopian revolution had reached a relatively mature stage and the oppressed masses were becoming politically conscious and organized.

Despite its deceptive slogans, MEISON, like the E.P.R.P. always advanced its sectarian and opportunist political line and fought for its group interest alone. The fact of its pleading of reconciliation with the camp of the revolution today after the Ethiopian revolution has crushed its enemies, is one more evidence of its ever opportunistic politics.

The counter-revolutionary activities of feudalists, petty-bourgeois and bourgeois elements in northern Ethiopia, especially in the Administrative Region of Eritrea, are no different from the counter-revolutionary activities of E.P.R.P. and MEISON. The difference, if any, is that the problem in Eritrea has been around for a considerable period of time. The fact that the separatist movements in Eritrea do not stand for the interests of the oppressed has been exposed through their attitude towards and their activities against the Ethiopian revolution.

In the Administrative Region of Eritrea, there are a number of so-called liberation fronts under different guises. Although each tries to deceive people by appearing to assume a shape different from the others, it is crystal clear that they are all one and the same in content. All of them stand for the advancement of the interest of imperialism.

In order to subvert the Ethiopian revolution, imperialism provided an unlimited support to saboteurs, hired assassins and similar counter-revolutionary elements. When its plan failed to materialize, it encouraged the reactionary ruling clique of

Somalia to launch an invasion of eastern and southern Ethiopia. Yet, Ethiopia's broad masses did not panic. Raising the slogan, "Revolutionary motherland or death", they succeeded in defending the territorial integrity of their revolutionary motherland and saved their revolution from reversal.

The ultimate defeat, of imperialism is certain. But until this happens, its counter-revolutionary activities will continue. When it is defeated on one front, it appears on another. For example, it met a crushing defeat in south-east Asia not too long ago. Since then, its major attention is on the general area in which Ethiopia is located and where major revolutionary changes are taking place. The Ethiopian revolution and national liberation movements in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America have become its main targets. Yet, progressive forces are scoring victories everywhere.

Whatever the counter-revolutionary pressure of imperialism and whatever the price that has to be paid, the working masses of Ethiopia also stand with full determination to defend and advance their revolution. Despite the attempt of separatist elements to dismember the administrative region of Eritrea from Ethiopia and hence subvert the revolution, the broad Ethiopian masses have risen up with determination to attain victory on this front too. Especially since Comrade Chairman Mengistu Haile-Mariam made his historic speech of June 7, 1978 concerning this problem, the broad masses of Ethiopia have been undertaking a thorough investigation of the nature of the problem in order to be able to take appropriate measures and find correct solutions.

Accordingly, a historic seminar in which members of the Provisional Military Administrative Council, the PMAC, workers, peasants, men-in-uniform, leaders of discussion forums, political cadres, representatives of mass organizations and ambassadors participated, was held in Addis Ababa in June 1978. This major seminar was meant to analyze the problem from a class stand point and lay out the facts of the case.

Some of the papers presented at the seminar and the historic speech of Comrade Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam appear below. We hope that this document will make very clear to all progressive and democratic forces the nature of the Ethiopian revolution in general and the problem in the Administrative Region of Eritrea in particular. It is further more hoped that people can appreciate the effort being made to liberate the broad masses in Eritrea and make them full participants in the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia. The day of total Victory over all enemies of the broad masses and the revolution is not far.

life of tremendous luxury at the expense of the overwhelming majority of the population.

As is well known, nothing remains static. Things assume new shapes, dimensions, attain maturity, become old and finally die out. They are then replaced by new things and new phenomenon. A social order has no other fate than this. It is in this light that we consider the demise of the feudo-bourgeois system that had

Nationwide Radio and Television Address Made by Comrade Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam, Chairman of the Provisional Military Administrative Council and the Council of Ministers, and Commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Army on the situation in the administrative region of Eritrea

(June 7, 1978)

*Workers,
Peasants,
Fellow-patriots,
The Revolutionary Army,
All Ethiopian men and women who have rallied
under the moto "Revolutionary motherland or death"!*

It is to be recalled that under the now defunct feudo-bourgeois system, the toiling masses were debased and humiliated, progress was impeded and workers and peasants, pillars of the society, suffered from hunger, poverty, ignorance and disease. In general, it can be said that it was a system which denied the majority their rights and made them live a life of abject misery. Yet on the other hand, it was a system where members of the ruling classes led a

life of tremendous luxury at the expense of the overwhelming majority of the population.

As is well known, nothing remains static. Things assume new shapes, dimensions, attain maturity, become old and finally die out. They are then replaced by new things and new phenomenon. A social order has no other fate than this. It is in this light that we consider the demise of the feudo-bourgeois system that had prevailed for so long in Ethiopia.

The age-old feudal system was transformed into the feudo-bourgeois system by imperialism. The transformation intensified and streamlined the exploitation of the broad masses. But even this system which was under the protection of imperialism could not hide the basic contradiction between the oppressor and oppressed classes. Thus, despite the semblance of durability, the feudo-bourgeois system itself ceased its growth when the contradictions between the oppressor and the oppressed, the exploiter and the exploited reached a certain critical stage. The confrontation mounted jointly by all the oppressed segments of society resulted in a massive revolutionary upheaval.

The entire society was shaken at its foundation by an intense class struggle. Since all classes, from one corner of the country to the other became actively involved, the alignment of various sectors of the society rapidly began to take a new shape. On one side, workers, peasants, the progressive intelligentsia and the men-in-uniform stood together. On the other side, the nobility, landlords and other reactionaries formed a common front. Once the struggle took this shape, the ruling classes found themselves no longer able to control or contain the popular movement. The broad masses began to score one victory after another.

By rapidly raising their political consciousness and by organizing and arming themselves, the Ethiopian people bravely fought for freedom, equality and justice. In the process, they have achieved many historic victories.

The nationalization of all rural land, factories, insurance companies, banks and urban land and extra houses is one major achievement. The organization of the broad masses in urban and rural areas from *kebele* to national level and particularly the establishment of the All-Ethiopia Trade Union and recently the All-Ethiopia Peasant Association are all sweet victories of the revolution achieved through hard struggle. But, even if these victories have been scored so far, there is still more struggle to be waged.

Although the struggle of the broad masses has not yet achieved the leadership of a working class party which is the sole guarantee for final victory, our revolution is a national democratic revolution which is heading towards socialism. To put it on this course, many genuine progressives have paid tremendous sacrifices. In order to hasten the formation of the working class party, genuine progressives have formed the Union of Marxist-Leninist Organizations of Ethiopia and are intensifying their struggle.

The challenges we will be confronting, the struggle we will be waging and the sacrifices we will be paying are tremendous before we establish a People's Democratic Ethiopia and before this land of many nationalities becomes the home of freedom and equality for all. Therefore, there is no alternative for us except to become better organized and armed, and face our class enemies head on.

From the experience of the last four years, we have learnt that when the broad masses of Ethiopia move one step forward, internal and external reactionaries under the leadership of imperialists stand on their path and try to push them two steps backward. In the past, they have conspired and have openly launched attacks. In the future too, they will continue to do so by changing their tactics.

The main objective of our revolution is to provide real freedom, equality and justice to the oppressed masses of Ethiopia who, during 3,000 years of phony independence, have been subjected to exploitation and violation of their human dignity. The purpose

is to establish a People's Democratic Ethiopia in which the broad masses will be able to lead and administer themselves, will have full control over their common wealth, will become fully self-reliant and will be able to make contributions to the peace, prosperity and development of the world community.

Why did the broad masses of Ethiopia open their eyes? Why did they raise their heads? Why did they escape from our control and are now moving forward on the road to freedom? Those who say these, wish to see the revolution crushed and an Ethiopia which is poor and humiliated and which is under their total domination. These elements have carried out conspiracies against our revolution and against our unity at every opportune moment and place. Our enemies, particularly the so-called Ethiopian Democratic Union (E.D.U.), remnant of the aristocracy, and its offspring, the so-called Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party (E.P.R.P.) have been carrying out a major military and political sabotage including extensive assassinations. When these approaches could not succeed, it is well known that these same forces encouraged the Siad Barre government and the separatist groups in Eritrea to open war on Ethiopia from the east, south and north. But the broad masses of Ethiopia rose up as one force and carried out a heroic resistance against the attempt to dismember the country and undermine the revolution. The invading forces of Somalia were taught an unforgettable lesson and were driven away. In this connection, the contribution made towards our victory by the socialist countries and progressive and peace-loving forces who stood on our side will occupy a major and permanent chapter in the history of our revolution.

To compensate for the victory they have been denied in the east and south and to undermine our unity and the revolution, imperialism and reactionary Arab ruling classes are now attacking us in the north by making use of separatist elements in Eritrea. In order to save the historic unity of Ethiopia and defend the revolution from subversion, our revolutionary liberation army is currently

confronting these treacherous separatist groups, agents of imperialism and the reactionary neighbouring Arab governments by paying all the necessary sacrifices.

As history clearly shows, Ethiopian patriots have paid tremendous sacrifices while protecting the historic unity of their country from invasions that were directed from the Red Sea over many centuries. The present generation of Ethiopians also fully understands that unless the problem in Eritrea which is bleeding Ethiopia is resolved, both the revolution and the historic unity of Ethiopia cannot be guaranteed.

To understand correctly the genesis of the problem in Eritrea and especially to be able to assess the current situation in the context of the revolution, it is necessary to take a look at history. The record is far different from what imperialists, reactionary Arab governments and their puppets, the separatist groups, say and write. I will briefly state what honest chroniclers and historians of the past and present all agree is the exact history of the people of Eritrea.

History incontestably proves that during the 2000 year Axumite era before and after the birth of Christ, the northern part of Ethiopia used to be known as "the Bahir Midir" (maritime land) and administered by a "Bahir Negash" (governor of the maritime land) was the cradle and core of Ethiopian civilization and culture. The name "Eritrea" was given to the region in 1889 by the Italians when they seized and colonized this part of Ethiopia for which they had been vying for a long time. After dividing nationalities and regions from the rest of Ethiopia, the Italians created this artificial entity under the designation Eritrea. Previous to this, there was no region separate from Ethiopia called Eritrea. Such a place is not known in history.

Since the northern part of Ethiopia has from the ancient times been the centre of the country's culture and civilization and has served as its trading outlet, continuing generations of Ethiopians

have carried out an interrupted struggle to prevent the region from becoming a launching pad for outside powers who have attempted to colonize Ethiopia from time to time. The present generation is now facing its turn. We find ourselves in a face to face confrontation with imperialists and reactionary Arab ruling classes who, with the cooperation of the traitors, are trying to violate the integrity of our country by using this same region as a launching ground.

The wars of aggression launched by Omar Abdul-Aziz in 640 during the rule of the Ummaya and in the 16th and 17th centuries by the Ottoman Turks who sought to put the Red Sea under their control were successfully repulsed and Ethiopia's independence and unity were maintained. But the Ottoman Turks temporarily persisted and were able to occupy the Dahlak Island and Massawa.

When the power of the Ottoman Turks in the general area declined, Egypt tried to fill the vacuum. After seizing the port of Massawa in 1868, it made an attempt to encroach on the hinterland and engaged Ethiopian patriots from Eritrea and other parts of the country at the battles of Keren (1872), Gundet (1875), Gurah (1876) and Massawa (1885). The sacrifices made during these battles will never be forgotten by history.

During the 19th century when European colonizers were poised for the scramble for Africa and after the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, colonial powers directed their attention especially towards Ethiopia more than ever. With the support and cooperation of the British, the Italians occupied Massawa in 1864. In 1885, they turned the port of Assab into a military base and from there began to make preparations to push inland. In an attempt to frustrate this plan, major battles were fought at Massawa in 1885, at Dogali in 1887, at Senafe in 1895 and Adowa in 1896. Even if the plan of the Italian invaders to expand into the interior of the country was thus temporarily checked by the sacrifice paid by the sons and daughters of Ethiopia, the colonialists were able

to carve out the coastal region of Ethiopia and make it a colony which they named Eritrea.

Unlike the Ottoman Turks and the Egyptians, the Italians were not satisfied with controlling only the sea outlets of Ethiopia. Since their objective was to dominate the whole of Ethiopia, it can be recalled that they invaded the interior of the country in 1936 by using Eritrea as a spring-board. In defence of the unity and independence of their country, the broad masses of Ethiopia put up a heroic and courageous resistance against the forces of fascist Italy which were armed to the teeth with modern weapons. We recall with pride the heroic deeds of Lorenzo Taezaz, Zerai Deres, Abraham Deboch, Moges Asgedom and other patriots from Eritrea who fought and sacrificed themselves for their country's freedom, unity and honour.

When Italy was defeated in 1941 and was forced to evacuate from East Africa, it was expected that the people of Eritrea who have been languishing under colonialism would be reunited with their motherland. But putting aside the wishes of the people and because of imperialist pressure, Eritrea was put under British military administration until 1952. The conspiracy of the traitors who fabricated history can not erase the history of the struggle of the Eritrean people and the sacrifices they made to unite with their motherland during the British military administration.

The British administration had sought to perpetuate its rule in Eritrea. But it was forced to evacuate after 10 years as a result of the bitter popular struggle waged under the motto "Ethiopia or death". Even if the British were made to terminate their administration, they did not go away without leaving behind a time-bomb in the region. The British were not satisfied with the injustices they had perpetuated on Ethiopia in complicity with the Ottoman Turks, the Egyptians and the Italians. During their administration, they followed the policy of pitting Christians against Muslims, highlanders against lowlanders and one nationality against another. It is clear to everybody that the sources of the present problem in Eritrea are

the animosities and contradictions created and aggravated by the British.

During their imperialist rule over Eritrea, in addition to the oppression and exploitation which they themselves perpetrated, the British cooperated with Italian settlers to tighten their hold over lands they had confiscated during the Italian fascist rule and even allowed them to expand these holdings. Unemployment and widespread economic chaos together with the general imperialist oppression gave momentum to the anti-imperialist struggle of the patriotic forces in the region. That is why a united patriotic front was formed in 1941, and the spirit of struggle for the honour of Ethiopia which the patriots of the region displayed with determination and dedication from the earliest times was rekindled.

Even so, the forces that have been attempting to undermine the unity of Ethiopia over the centuries never ceased from hatching new conspiracies. Thus, under the tutelage of British imperialism, the remnants and agents of Italian fascism and Egypt, the pro-Italian party, the "Liberal Progressive Party" and the "Rabita El-Islamia" were formed. Their aims were perfectly clear. The intention of the pro-Italian party was to reinstate fascist Italian rule over the people of Eritrea. The so-called Liberal Progressive Party on its part intended to facilitate the prolongation of the British imperialist administration over Eritrea. The aim of the third movement, the so-called Rabita El-Islamia, was to divide the region along religious and geographical lines and then bring the moslem inhabitants of the western lowlands under the control of Egypt which was then co-administering the Sudan with the British. The majority of the groups organized in the form of parties were all tools of imperialists and other outside forces and to attain their objectives, they were engaged in exploiting religious and nationality differences in the region. But as the Unionist Party became stronger and as it increased its membership from time to time, a large number of people from the region, engaged in various professions, began to join it. And finally, when the Liberal Progressive Party merged

with it, the Unionist Party undoubtedly became a movement that embraced the majority of the population.

Even if the majority of the people in Eritrea who formed a front under the umbrella of the Unionist Party and demanded reunion under the motto "*Ethiopia or death*", the British imperialists whose plan to establish their hegemony over Ethiopia after the Italians were driven out was frustrated, began to disseminate the false propaganda that Ethiopia was not capable of administering Eritrea. When it seemed that this approach would not succeed, they made every effort to incorporate the western Eritrean lowlands into the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan which they were jointly administering with Egypt. They said that they would return only the rest of Eritrea to Ethiopia. The British did not stop here. By employing money, force and other types of coercion, they tried to influence and confuse the local political parties. They refused to renounce their desire to continue their administration over Eritrea in front of the United Nations. As a result, when a four-power commission consisting of the British, the Soviet Union, the United States and France could not reach a common agreement on the future of Eritrea, a special commission was dispatched to the area to assess the wishes of the population. Accordingly, this study commission made up of representatives of the above mentioned countries came to Eritrea to undertake discussions with the various parties and individuals. After making a thorough assessment of the various political groups, the commission concluded that the Unionist Party which rallied its supporters under the motto "*Ethiopia or death*", represented the genuine wishes of the majority of the people in Eritrea. This fact was recorded in the study commission's report, which through the four-powers, was submitted, to the United Nations General Assembly.

Even if the U.N. General Assembly; 1) Understood the wishes of the various political, religious and mass organizations and of nationalities, 2) and had assessed the degree of political development in Eritrea, 3) and had examined the security situation in East

Africa, and had understood the close inter-relationship and contact between nationalities in Eritrea and the other parts of Ethiopia before the advent of colonialism, it still recommended federation instead of unity for which the majority of the people in Eritrea have struggled so much.

It cannot be argued that the decision to force federation on a people with no historical, economic and cultural differences from the rest of the people of Ethiopia was an outcome of the conspiracy of imperialists. When their desire to prolong their stay in Eritrea was frustrated, they came up with the idea of federation which they thought would facilitate neocolonial domination. Through the federal constitution which they themselves drafted, the imperialists attempted to protect and enhance the interests of the European settlers while at the same time undermining the unity of Ethiopia. Even so, the people of Eritrea who, for centuries have been sacrificing themselves for the integrity of Ethiopia, knew very well the nature of imperialist oppression and conspiracy. Therefore, they rejected the federation imposed on them without their consent and opted for full integration with Ethiopia. The people of Eritrea and the rest of Ethiopia view the federal relationship as one instance among the various attempts by imperialists to undermine the historical unity of oppressed peoples.

However, no sooner integration was achieved, elements that had formed common interests with the colonial rulers and who had made themselves agents of the reactionary forces of the neighbouring Arab countries, started a separatist movement in opposition to the historic unity of our country. In its attempt to ensure the protection of the rights and privileges of the exploiters, the movement initially and mainly exploited religious differences. But it reached its present stage by periodically changing the form of its strategy. The ultimate objective of the treacherous separatist falsifiers of history and the expansionist Arab governments is to disrupt the historic unity of Ethiopia and then reverse the revolution for which the broad masses of Ethiopia are struggling in order to achieve justice, equality, peace and socialism.

The broad masses of Ethiopia!

When we examine the situation in the light of our unity and revolution, what is the stand of those who are frantically attempting to dismember Eritrea from Ethiopia?

Prior to the outbreak of the revolution, there was a time when even many progressives supported the separatist movements because they did not have the exact knowledge of the nature of the question of Eritrean secessionism and because they hoped that the movements would weaken the feudo-bourgeois regime. Going beyond this, it was even felt that this separatist activity was an integral part of the struggle of the entire broad masses of Ethiopia. This did not turn out to be true. On the contrary, those who were claiming that they were struggling on behalf of the masses opposed our revolution which heralded the dawn of a new era of liberation for the masses. In fact, the various separatist groups who were feuding among themselves in the past promptly buried their differences and formed a united front against our revolution. They came up with all their might in order to nip the revolution at its bud. They now believed, more than ever, that their hope of separating the northern part of Ethiopia which the Italian colonialists carved out and named "Eritrea" would soon be realized. In the process, it became increasingly clear that they felt threatened by the revolution and were prepared to oppose it to the end.

There is no attempt that the separatists have not made and no slogans they have not raised in order to deceive progressives and elicit support. Earlier, they made great effort to have others believe that the Eritrean question is a national question. They also tried to distort history by claiming that the people of Eritrea have their own separate and unique history or that their historical connection is only with the Arabs. At another time, they came up with the contention that the Eritrean question is a colonial question and hence the struggle in Eritrea is for independence from the colonial rule of Ethiopia. Let us look, one by one, at these reasons which the separatists invoke at their convenience.

What is the content of their slogan, "Eritrea is a nation" ?

A people constitutes a nation when it has a unity based on common history, common territory, common language, common psychological make-up and culture and is a stable community formed on the basis of an advanced economic life. If one of these conditions is missing, we cannot say there is a nation. We look at Eritrea from this perspective and say that Eritrea is not a nation. Contrary to the claim of the separatists, the mere fact that there are no less than eight nationalities in the administrative region of Eritrea proves that Eritrea is not a nation.

How true is the assertion that the people of Eritrea have no cultural and linguistic links with the people of the rest of Ethiopia and are therefore a different people? As is well known, out of the Tigray speaking nationality which is the dominant nationality in Eritrea, over half of its members live in Tigray, Wollo and Gondar regions. The Afar nationality which inhabits the Red Sea coastal area of Eritrea is also found in Tigray, Wollo, Harargue and Shoa regions. The Billen nationality which is found in Eritrea is the same nationality as the Agew people who are found in Wollo, Gojjam and Tigray regions.

The distribution of other nationalities can likewise be examined. Even if all these nationalities are divided by geographic boundaries drawn by colonialists, as I mentioned above, none has a distinct and unique history, language and culture which entitle it to nationhood.

What the laws of social development and the concrete reality show us is that Ethiopia comprizes of peoples at different stages of development. There are those who have not yet developed the feudal mode of production and who lead a nomadic life. There are those who earlier lived under the feudal social system and later under the feudo-bourgeois system when capitalist mode of production was superimposed on the feudal mode of production.

In general, Ethiopia is a country made up of many nationalities whose varying political, cultural and economic lives reflect their respective stages of development. So, when this is the clear fact, what is the motive behind the attempt to divide peoples united in so many ways? Is this showing concern for the interest of the oppressed or merely advancing the plan made initially by neo-colonialists?

Where is the difference between the history of the people of Eritrea and those of the rest of Ethiopia?

As I remarked earlier, is it possible to forget that the peoples of Ethiopia have for centuries jointly fought against their enemies in the northern part of Ethiopia and have sacrificed their lives in the struggle? How can it be forgotten that Ethiopian heroes like Alula led peasant armies which repulsed invaders trying to violate the unity of our country and humiliated the Turks, the Egyptians, the British and the Italians at Kudo-Felasi, Quatit and Dogali? Was it not the patriot Alula himself who said: "As I see it, the national frontier of Ethiopia is the Red Sea itself"? Was it not Zerai Deres who was publicly hanged in Rome for defending the honour of his motherland? Who can stain this world reknown history of struggle carried out with great patriotism? Who is it that seeks to present Ethiopia which has been protected with the blood and bone of her sons and daughters as a country without history?

Genuine progressives strongly oppose and resist any and all attempts being made to revert from a progressive to a backward social order, divide and expose the broad masses struggling for democracy and socialism to imperialist attack. That is why today the broad masses of Ethiopia and genuine progressives are relentlessly struggling against the separatist groups in Eritrea.

Today, the socialist countries and progressive forces condemn the separatist movement because they know that the movement has no progressive content and is merely an anti-people and counter-revolutionary movement under imperialist supervision and control. An anti-imperialist and anti-reaction meeting which was recen-

tly held in Addis Ababa and in which the Palestinian People's Organization (P. L. O.), the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front (Z. P. F.), the African National Congress (A. N. C.), the Western Sahara Liberation Front (POLISARIO), democratic movements and progressive organizations in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America and socialist countries participated, gave an unflinching support to the Ethiopian revolution but condemned the movement of the separatists. Who are those who oppose this genuine struggle of the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia which enjoys the full support of the progressive and revolutionary forces of the world? Are they not only the imperialists and their puppets? Is there any doubt about the reactionary stand of these separatists who are trading with the blood of the Ethiopian people on the imperialist market in order to fortify imperialist bases? Contrary to the propaganda of the separatists, the people of Eritrea are not oppressed *en masse* and the people of the rest of Ethiopia are not oppressors *en masse*. This cannot be. Such class analysis cannot originate from progressive quarters but reactionary ones.

Without going into any detailed class analysis to show the reactionary and counter-revolutionary class perspective of the separatists, it is only sufficient to indicate that among the foremost reactionaries who, being hand in gloves with the ruling members of the now defunct feudo-bourgeois regime, were mercilessly exploiting the broad masses of Ethiopia, there were also extremely wealthy people born in Eritrea. It is also possible to present a list of those whom the revolution caught red handed and brought them to revolutionary justice and of those who are still under custody and are awaiting their trials.

The other argument which the separatists raise to confuse the issue is: "Ethiopia is the colonizer and Eritrea is the colony". How can one part of revolutionary Ethiopia colonize another part? Has the meaning of colonialism changed?

As we understand from the history of the stages of the development of societies, during the imperialist era, the bourgeoisie of

the colonial countries exported its surplus capital to the backward countries for unbridled exploitation and huge profits. The simple truth in the case of Ethiopia is that it is not that capital was exported from the rest of Ethiopia into Eritrea but exactly the reverse. It is to be remembered that in their attempt to bring the whole of Ethiopia under their control and to use the administrative region of Eritrea as a stepping stone for this design, the Italians accumulated a substantial quantity of capital in the region. When Italian colonialism came to end, the bourgeoisie of the administrative region of Eritrea found a good opportunity to invest their capital in the other parts of Ethiopia as well. In the process they came to control, to a large measure, the growing capitalist sector of the Ethiopian economy. Thus, when this is the truth, the accusation by the separatists that Ethiopia is a colonial power is only their own fabrication and has no basis whatsoever. Perhaps they want to go back in history and want to compare Ethiopia to ancient Rome. But this too is wrong for during the imperialist era it is not possible to view the phenomenon of colonialism apart from the movement of capital.

The broad masses of Ethiopia !

Why is it that the petty-bourgeois separatists are so frantically running around under the pretext of liberating "Eritrea"? What is the source of their narrow nationalism?

Their "nationalism" arises from the desire of the reactionary petty-bourgeoisie which claims to stand for Eritrea to appropriate the capital left over by the Italian colonialists whose hatred for the broad masses of Ethiopia verged on racism. The petty-bourgeoisie only wants to take the place of the Italians as exploiter. Before the eruption of the Ethiopian revolution, some genuine progressives used to ask why the struggle of the rest of the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia could not be coordinated with the struggle in Eritrea if the whole thing is meant for the liberation of the oppressed. The answer of the chauvinist petty-bourgeois elements who inherited the capital left over by the Italian colonialists was full of hatred and

contempt for the workers and the whole oppressed peoples of Ethiopia. Simply stated, their answer was: "The rest are backward; who is going to wait for them?" This is exactly the same attitude the Italian colonialists used to have towards the people of Eritrea. That is why it is said that when the Italian colonialists left Eritrea, they left behind their likes or disciples.

However much the separatists try to mislead world public opinion, the Ethiopian revolution has, more than ever, succeeded in exposing their reactionary stand. About a year ago, the so called E. P. L. F. came out with what it claimed to be a "new" programme in which it once again tried to hide its reactionary position but which it never put to practice. This programme which the E. P. L. F. claimed it would translate into practice but which the Provisional Military Government cannot, was copied, from beginning to end, from the programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia. What was the condition of the Ethiopia's peasants when the E.P.L.F. made this claim? They had organized themselves in to 25,000 peasant associations with a membership of 7,000,000; they had won their right to manage their own affairs and they were attempting to make the transition from individual to collective farming. They were intensifying their struggle against their class enemies by raising their political consciousness and by being better organized and armed. And this year, they have formed the All Ethiopia Peasant Association (AEPA), a development which will hold an important chapter in the history of our revolution.

The leaders of the separatists, for a long time, used to claim that they were progressives. But as our revolution continued to expose their true pictures and as the world's progressive forces began to reject them, they confessed that they are not Marxists and started to openly ask the favour of reactionaries. Thus, they conclusively proved that they have unhesitatingly joined the imperialist camp.

Eight months ago, the group which calls itself E.L.F.-P.L.F. issued a statement in Beirut appealing to Arab reactionaries for help. The statement said that since the fate, history and struggle of the people of Eritrea are intimately tied to theirs, the

Arab reactionaries are obliged to help them. The group openly showed to which camp it belongs.

Similarly, at the meeting of the Arab League held in Morocco, the individual who claims to be the leader of this organization said, "Eritrea is part of the Arab world. She safeguards the southern flank of the Arab countries. At the present the people of Eritrea which is Arab is engaged in an armed struggle for Arab cause". It can be recalled that this same individual who claims to be the spokesman for the people of Eritrea has, for a long time, been spreading the lie that the war which the separatists conduct is only intended to resist the campaign against the religion of Islam and its followers.

Even if the separatists attempt to create antagonism among the people by exploiting religious differences, the Provisional Military Government, as early as 1975, issued a proclamation establishing equality among all religions. The Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia unequivocally affirms this principle. And this is now being translated into reality.

Despite the picture which the separatists try to present in order to get an interrupted support from reactionary Arab governments, Ethiopian followers of the religion of Islam are not found only in the administrative region of Eritrea. In fact, the majority of Ethiopian moslems live in the rest of the country. It is self-defeating to try to trade in the name of the moslem sector of the population in Eritrea. The Ethiopian revolution is determined to establish full and absolute equality among religions and the process of doing so has been advancing during the last four years. That is why the followers of Islam in the other regions of Ethiopia are presently engaged in the struggle, to build a people's republic of Ethiopia alongside with their class allies. Eritrean moslems do not have any different goal.

The broad masses of Ethiopia !

Despite the changing character of the problem in Eritrea, an unreserved attempt has been made to resolve the problem peacefully

since the beginning of the Ethiopian revolution. All the efforts were made with the assumption that if the separatists were truly anti-feudal and anti-imperialist and if they were prepared to advance the cause and struggle of the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia and the world, it would be possible to rally together. With this spirit, the Provisional Military Government did not stop seeking a peaceful resolution of the problem ever since the eruption of the Ethiopian revolution.

Beginning in July 1975, all the security forces in the region were made to confine themselves to their barracks and an attempt was made to open a wide door for peaceful discussions with the elders of the region as intermediaries. But the separatists took these gestures as signs of weakness. Taking advantage of the situation, they began to increase their forces around Asmara and in February 1976 opened an offensive on Asmara with all their might. The offensive was repulsed at a tremendous sacrifice and their plan was foiled. But still, we continued with our peace efforts.

One of the major points mentioned in the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia, proclaimed in 1976, is the right to self-determination of all the nationalities in Ethiopia. As a solution to the problem of nationalities, the programme offers regional autonomy. And to translate this into practice the Provisional Military Government issued a Nine-point Policy Declaration in April 1976.

The main objectives of this revolutionary call to the broad masses and progressives in the administrative region of Eritrea were to allow those people who, with a misguided aim, are in the woods, deserts and foreign lands to return to normal life and to rehabilitate those who were forced to abandon their jobs, schools and property because of the problem. In addition, the policy declaration was also intended to pave the way for implementing the principle of regional autonomy. By continuing its search for peace, the Provisional Military Government sent a high level peace mission to the region

in March 1976 and this mission stayed in Asmara for one year trying to make contacts with the groups. In addition, a special commission which would implement the Nine-point Policy Declaration was established in June 1976. This mission has tried its best to carry out its tasks and is still doing so.

Our peace efforts were not made domestically alone. In order to explain to the neighbouring countries, the origin and the exact nature of the problem and the good intentions with which the Provisional Military Government is attempting to resolve this problem inherited from the previous regime, high level government delegations have been dispatched from time to time. These delegations were first sent to the Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Egypt. Later, similar delegations went to Libya, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. While a few agreed that the problem is a purely internal Ethiopian affair and showed willingness to co-operate with our peace efforts, those who have enmity towards our unity and revolution claimed that "Eritrea is Arab" and clearly showed their determination not to co-operate. The reactionary stand of these governments is responsible for the worsening of the problem. It can be recalled that several calls were made especially to the President of the Sudan to help us restore peace in Eritrea.

The peace efforts still did not stop here. We have also made attempts through the good offices of some socialist countries. As I have spelled out in detail, there was virtually no time when the Provisional Military Government refrained from pursuing the search for peace. Yet, what was the response of the separatists to all these? What is the extent of damage they have brought on the exploited masses in Eritrean region who always longed for peace? In connection with this problem how much was the sacrifice made by the broad masses of Ethiopia and to what extent did the problem obstruct the rapid progress of our revolution? All these must be known in detail.

When the Ethiopian revolution erupted without the expectation of the separatists and when it especially took a decidedly anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-bureaucratic capitalist character, the separatists were thrown into a state of utter confusion. They themselves have attested to this truth. Thus, when the revolutionary fire spread throughout the country and their reactionary position was exposed, the separatists began to claim that the peace policy was a fraud meant only to hoodwink them. They adopted a policy of spreading of lies. They have prevented the people of the Eritrean region from fully participating in the revolution and enjoying its fruits with the rest of the people of Ethiopia. The leaders of the separatists do not want to see the people of the region free themselves from imperialist and feudal oppression by raising their political consciousness and by organizing and arming themselves. What the separatist leaders did was to fully collaborate with the reactionary Somali aggressors and internal reactionary elements for the common purpose of subverting the revolution and the unity of the country. Apart from welcoming and absorbing exploiters who were frightened by the revolution and run into their arms, the separatist groups also served as a strong bulwark for E.D.U, E.P.R.P. and imperialism in a concerted attempt to undermine the revolution.

Instead of being able to free themselves from feudal exploitation and become organized like their brothers and sisters in the other parts of Ethiopia, the peasants of Eritrea have been made to forcefully feed the separatist bandits. Things do not stop here. Children as young as 8 years old are taken away from their parents and at gun-point are fed to the volley of bullets of our revolutionary liberation army by being forced to become intoxicated with habituates like *hashish*.

They carry out the futile propaganda that the peace policy which is intended to pave the way for equality, peace and unity of struggle is fake. They imprison or shoot those who want to return to peaceful life. They destroy the relief and rehabilitation

centres established in the various provinces of the region. They rob the properties of those who have managed to escape from the woods and are being rehabilitated through government aid. They publicly massacre elderly Ethiopians, old men and women, who bravely defy their authority by saying that they are neither Arab nor the slaves of the separatists. One of their tricks is to frighten those who are fed up with the misery of prisons and decide to escape and return to peaceful life by telling them that what readily await them on their return are only imprisonment and death.

Eritrean progressives who want to intensify the class struggle and organize the masses are imprisoned, tortured or shot. For example, it is well known how the left-wing faction within the E.P.L.F. called "*the Menkae*" was mercilessly liquidated when it became known that its members had come to realize the genuineness of the Ethiopian revolution and that their own struggle cannot be isolated from the struggle of the oppressed masses of the whole of Ethiopia.

While doing all these, the separatists never carried out acts of sabotage against the means of production and distribution which used to be owned privately by local and foreign capitalists during the feudo-bourgeois regime. In fact, they used to protect these capitalists, a deed for which they have been duly receiving rewards. But after these factories, service agencies and big farms which used to be owned by a few exploiters especially by Italians and Arabs, all rural and urban lands and all extra houses became the property of the oppressed, the separatists destroyed over 17 factories putting 15,000 workers out of job. The problem which these workers came to face was not of their own doing but a consequence of the anti-working class conspiracy of the separatists. Therefore, the government has been paying and still continues to pay the salaries of these workers from the fruit of the toil of the labouring masses of the rest of Ethiopia.

The separatists have also made it almost impossible to transport to the central part of the country and abroad the goods produced

by the few industrial enterprizes which the revolutionary army has managed to keep running by paying a tremendous sacrifice. They have prevented industrial raw materials from abroad and central Ethiopia from reaching the administrative region of Eritrea. All in all, since economic activity in the region has come to a virtual standstill, the population relies almost exclusively on provisions that come from central Ethiopia by air. As a result, there is a problem of food shortage and people are starving to death.

The destruction caused by these residues of history is not limited to factories and distributive agencies. They have destroyed roads, bridges, railway lines, airports and telecommunication lines that join the provinces of the region with each other and the region with central Ethiopia. They have destroyed farm machinery intended to develop and expand farms taken away from domestic and foreign exploiters, expensive road building and construction machinery, transport vehicles belonging to individuals, mass organizations and the government schools, hospitas clinics, gas stations and stores for consumer goods. Today, there is draught and consequently famine in rural Eritrea. Reservoirs and water canals which could have helped to alleviate the problem have also been destroyed.

The separatists loot all what the people produce with great effort including clothing, goats, sheep, cattle and pack animals. As a result, a section of the population has been forced to abandon their homes and flee to neighbouring countries and to central and other parts of Ethiopia by defending themselves with every possible crude weapon as they escape. This is a time when even the availability of sufficient drinking water and electric light in most parts of Eritrea and in the towns is considered a source of joy and happiness. The sound of bullets, mortars and explosives have become routine music instead of the songs of birds, the sound of the drum, the *begen* and the *kirar* and the human voice.

As the result of the deeds of these messengers of destruction, more than 13,000 men-in-uniform and over 30,000 civilians—

children, old men and women included—have either died or been wounded. The number of those who have been forced to flee the country after being totally fed up with the killings and lootings by the bandits is estimated at 200,000. The total value of lives and property which the broad masses of Eritrea sustained as the result of the killings, brigandage and lootings of the traitors and enemies of the people, the extent of which has no parallel in Ethiopian history, cannot be given a monetary estimate now. We leave this task to the future and to history. Nevertheless, it has been established that the damage inflicted on government property and the expenditure made in the immediate struggle to withstand the aim of the separatists amounts to 2.5 billion birr (roughly U. S. 1.2 billion dollar). Is it not difficult to say whether these individuals who, on the one hand, destroy communication and telecommunication lines, bridges and factories—the lifelines of the working people—and at the same time claim to stand for the interest of the masses are human beings or beasts? The separatists stepped up their destructive activities after the Ethiopian revolution brought the major means of production and distribution under public ownership. They fought their own motherland in concert with the expansionist Somali ruling class. Do not these deeds show that the separatists are only counter-revolutionaries, reactionaries and enemies of the broad masses? Do they not show that these people can only be compared to objects or vehicles that have no consciousness of their own but only accelerate with the power of Arab oil because they are even incapable of learning a bit from the fate of the reactionary classes of the past?

Despite the refusal of the secessionists to accept the peace call and their stubborn continuation of inflicting heavy damages on the broad masses, the government is doing everything possible to alleviate the sufferings of the people. Even though the separatists have managed to close down most means of communication, the government has been able to provide food by air.

The broad masses of Ethiopia!

The reactionary Arab ruling classes of the surrounding area have for centuries been attempting to turn the Red Sea into an Arab Lake. They have tried to expand into highland Ethiopia and bring even the Nile Valley under their control. And during the last 17 years, they have been seriously trying, directly or indirectly, to violate the territorial integrity of Ethiopia by making the use of the separatists who agree with all their aims.

Realizing that Ethiopia will be strong and be capable to thwart their age-old objective, if the Ethiopian revolution which erupted in 1974 continues to advance forward peacefully, the reactionary Arab ruling classes of the region, with the support of imperialism, with the co-operation of the separatist groups and with the overall coordination of the Sudanese leaders, are now fully poised against our revolution and our historical unity. It must be realized that it is the interference of these outside forces that aggravated the problem in Eritrea.

Today, the reactionary ruling classes of United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Somalia and the Sudan are committing crimes against our revolution by supplying provisions, by training and arming the separatists with arms which they get from NATO countries. For example, in 1975-76 alone, the joint aid provided by these countries for counter-revolutionary and separatist activities, apart from weapons and other assistance, was 60 million Birr. It is not difficult to estimate by how many fold this assistance has increased since then.

The military, material and political assistance from NATO and the reactionary Arab governments is still continuing. The fact that Egypt has started a propaganda campaign under the fictitious pretext that we are about to build a dam on Lake Tana and the Blue Nile, shows its interventionist plan.

In addition to the unlimited supply of light and heavy weapons which are provided by Iran and Syria, more than 60 Americans have recently been deployed on our border to train the traitorous separatists. These number does not include the instructors from Iraq and Egypt. All these definitely constitute direct interference in Ethiopia's internal affairs. Why is it that they interfere in our internal affairs when we do not interfere in any country's domestic affairs, when we do not violate their borders and territorial integrity but when we only struggle for equality, freedom and peace?

As is well known, the problem in Eritrea cannot be viewed in isolation from the long-standing objective of imperialists and reactionary Arab ruling classes to fully control the economic and strategic potential of the Red Sea through which seventy five per cent of the oil produced in the Middle East is shipped. Since the Red Sea is also strategically important to contain progressive movements in this part of the world, imperialists will continue to challenge us along our Red Sea border for a long time to come. Since international imperialism has a design to link its military network in the Mediterranean Sea with the military and intelligence bases it has established in the Indian Ocean, it fears the consequence of the appearance of revolutionary movements and countries in the Red Sea region. Therefore, imperialist and reactionary Arab governments who want to see not a strong and revolutionary Ethiopia but a weak Ethiopia in the region are today interfering in our internal affairs with the view to undermine our unity and subvert the revolution.

Revolutionary Ethiopia strongly condemns and is at the same-time prepared to withstand all the attempts of the reactionary Arab ruling classes in the region to turn the Red Sea into an Arab Lake because such a move is counter-revolutionary and anti-peace. Since Ethiopia has a long coastline on the Red Sea, she will continue to struggle in order to protect her national interest and safeguard the Red Sea as a peaceful international waterway. In this connection,

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Ethiopia, in collaboration with progressive countries and movements in the surrounding area, will continue to adhere to her correct policy of opposing those who want to use the Red Sea as a political instrument and those who want to expand the sphere of imperialist hegemony over the surrounding area. In connection with this struggle Ethiopia asks the co-operation of progressive Arab countries and broad masses. Ethiopia believes that all socialist, democratic and peace-loving peoples of the world fully condemn the plot of imperialists and their lackeys to deny her access to the Red Sea.

The broad masses of Ethiopia!

Since the large sum of money being provided by the reactionary Arab ruling classes daily intensifies their arrogance, the separatists reject all peace overtures and want to rely only on arms. Why are Ethiopia's revolutionary armed forces dying in northern Ethiopia? Is it, as the imperialists, reactionary Arab ruling classes and the separatists say, to perpetuate colonial rule over a country that is historically, culturally and ethnically unified? Is it, as the separatists claim, to exterminate the broad masses of Eritrea? How does the honest conscience of the people of the world answer these questions? Is it possible to imagine a revolution that stands for the supermacy of the oppressed and a society struggling to build socialism have such a reactionary objective? The truth is different.

A people's revolutionary war is national in character but international and progressive in content. Our struggle in Eritrea is of this kind. Its central objective is to liberate the oppressed masses of Eritrea who are held captives at gun-point by the separatist groups who are tools of imperialists and the reactionary Arab ruling classes. It is to enable them to enjoy the achievements of the revolution and assert their class right as their class comrades in the rest of Ethiopia. Since it is drawn from the working and peasant ranks our revolutionary army struggles to defend the achievements which the revolution has brought to the broad masses. It fights for the total and ultimate victory of the revolution. The revolutionary

army fully realizes that the sacrifices it pays are for the defence of the revolution and the unity of their beloved country.

The primary objective of our people's revolutionary war is to affirm the historical unity of Ethiopia and to safeguard her outlet to the sea. This struggle, will also free the people from pillage and constant worry and make them feel an atmosphere of security. It will be possible to create an environment in which it is possible to politicize, organize and arm the masses and to create the structures necessary for the building of socialism. Thus, contrary to what the reactionary Arab ruling classes and the separatists say, the Ethiopian revolution has never attempted to solve the problem of Eritrea militarily. The uninterrupted peace efforts are an uncontestable proof of this. The people's revolutionary war which we are waging in northern Ethiopia today to foil the plot of imperialism and reactionary Arab ruling classes has no different goal.

While the objectives of the broad masses of Ethiopia and the revolutionary army are these, the aims of our enemies are to undermine our unity, subvert the revolution, deny us access to the sea and thereby create a weak Ethiopia which is exposed to exploitation, oppression and imperialist domination.

Hoping that the peace-loving world public can not think and analyze things on its own, the imperialist puppets, the reactionary Arab ruling classes of the surrounding area and their domestic agents try to distort history and falsify the aims of the Ethiopian revolution. They still continue to hide the true character of their anti-people, reactionary and bankrupt conspiracy by regularly coming up with different covers. We propose the solution of regional autonomy which, starting from the concrete situation of Ethiopia, is the only scientific solution that would ensure the democratic rights of nationalities and which would be one of the foundations on which a just and socialist Ethiopia would be built.

But on their part, the separatist organizations have not been able to forward any idea except their wholesale shout about the independence of Eritrea.

In connection with the principle of regional autonomy or the right of nationalities to self-determination, Article 5 of the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia states: "The right to self-determination of all nationalities will be recognized and fully respected. No nationality will dominate another one since the history, culture, language and religion of each nationality will have equal recognition in accordance with the spirit of socialism". The programme continues: "This united struggle is based on the desire to construct a new life and a new society based on equality, brotherhood and mutual respect." What we want is to translate these objectives into reality.

As the programme states, when the policy is implemented each nationality "within its environs, has the right to determine the contents of its political, economic and social life, use its own language and elect its own leaders and administrators to head its internal organs." What should be understood here is that regional autonomy emerged in the course of the revolution as a general solution to the problem of nationalities of the whole of Ethiopia but not meant to serve special groups.

The broad masses of Ethiopia who have risen up in defence of your revolution and country!

The separatists in Eritrea grew arrogant and became contemptuous of the might of the broad masses when they put certain places under their control at a time when Ethiopia was being attacked from all directions especially by the reactionary Somali forces from the east and the south. Even now, it has not been clear to the separatists that the revolutionary army which has emerged in the course of the revolution is imbued with revolutionary fervour and decisiveness and is continuing to build itself further politically and

discipline wise. This revolutionary army which in a short while crushed the invasion launched against us through the collaboration of many reactionary governments on the eastern and southern fronts and thus was able to save the revolution from reversal and was able to defend the honour of the country is to withstand, with revolutionary resoluteness, any and all anti-people and anti-unity elements.

The broad masses of Ethiopia are now ready to challenge any attack or invasion that may be launched from whatever direction. In addition, socialist countries, progressives and all peace-loving forces are supporters and allies of our struggle. Therefore, there is no doubt that we will crush the conspiracies of all reactionaries and emerge victorious. The anti-imperialist struggle of the broad masses of Ethiopia has been tested throughout history. Our people have been tested in a long anti-imperialist and revolutionary fire. Therefore, their eventual victory is inevitable. Since our struggle is for equality and socialism, the just and legal war which is being waged on now will be concluded with our victory. Our struggle is for peace and socialism. But we know that reactionaries and those who are arrogant never acknowledge the supreme value of peace. *Therefore, one who does not want to seek peace at a peace table, will be forced to look for it at the battle field.* If necessary, the oppressed masses of Ethiopia are ready to fight for generations to defend their revolution and unity.

This is what we want those who stand for socialism, freedom and progress and all the peace-loving peoples of the world to understand. We ask them to appreciate the fact that our struggle is only meant to protect the revolution for which the broad masses have shed much blood and the unity and territorial integrity of our country. We want them to observe carefully that the encirclement by imperialists and reactionary forces directed against us is the outcome of an open conspiracy designed to destroy our very existence. We call upon all the peace-loving peoples of the world

who take, as their main task to oppose oppression and all forms of imperialist pressure, to support us in our struggle to crush the open invasion in northern Ethiopia. In particular, we believe that it is the revolutionary duty of socialist, progressive and democratic forces whose primary task is to oppose all forms of exploitation and oppression and to support the struggle for equality of all men and women, to stand on our side in the struggle to protect the revolution and the unity of Ethiopia.

The triumph of the Ethiopian revolution is a victory for socialism. The defeat of the revolution and the disintegration of the unity of the country will be a triumph for imperialism. Therefore, the revolutionary militants and peace-loving peoples of the world must view the matter with serious concern. We want them to be fully aware that our genuine objective is to give a sense of relief to the oppressed people of Eritrea by putting an end to their fears, to confusion and to the constant sound of bullets.

What we stand for is the equality of all Ethiopian nationalities and for peace but not to mount fratricidal destruction. We have risen to once again affirm in practice the truth that the masses are the makers of history and to build a people's democratic Ethiopia where all its citizens will enjoy justice and prosperity. That is why we say that the people of the administrative region of Eritrea who are historically, culturally, linguistically, economically and in their way of life tied to the nationalities in the rest of Ethiopia cannot be forced to secede at gun-point. We will fight to the end those enemies of the people who want to force them to do this.

For some time, the broad masses of Eritrea have been asking why the revolutionary liberation army which crushed the reactionary Somali army which had armed itself with modern weapons for 17 years was not coming to their rescue. Therefore, we are certain that they will stand and fight alongside the liberation army

with the realization that victory in this life and death struggle between revolutionary and reactionary forces is in their interest too. *The broad masses of Ethiopia!*

It must be realized that even now revolutionary Ethiopia has not folded its hand in its search for peace. Since the declaration of the peace policy, thousands of Eritrean inhabitants who had managed to escape from the pressure of the bullets of the bandits have been deployed in various educational and other field of activities and have been enabled to take part in the revolutionary process.

At the moment too, the government is making a major effort to help and care for the people while at the same time resisting the activities of the separatists. In particular, all the necessary assistance is being made to rehabilitate those who have recently been liberated from the grip of the separatists by the revolutionary army. By joining hands with the masses in all forms of rehabilitation and other activities, the revolutionary army is proving its popular and mass character.

The Provisional Military Government as of today has granted full amnesty to all those who have been misled to take part in anti-unity and reactionary activities and desire to give their hands peacefully and who are now ready to stand alongside the revolutionary army in crushing the counter-revolutionary conspiracy and in defence of the revolution of the broad masses of Ethiopia. Rehabilitation centres have been set up in Asmara, Mekele, Aduwa, Adigrat, Axum and Gondar for those who give themselves up and for those who have been made shelterless as a result of the engagement of the revolutionary liberation army with the bandits.

There is no force that can stop the forward march of our revolution. All those reactionary forces who want to create obstacles will be wiped out by the revolutionary storm. From the

class war being waged by the people's revolutionary army in northern Ethiopia will be born the genuine freedom and equality of the people of Eritrea. The time is fast approaching when the death shadow which has for a long time been hovering over the people of Eritrea will be removed by the revolutionary army.

The broad masses of Ethiopia!

You have risen up with resolute determination to wipe out oppression and exploitation from the face of your motherland. You have set out to build a people's democratic Ethiopia where equality and justice will reign. Because of these, reactionaries are in a state of total panic.

They have arrayed themselves against you in order to dim and extinguish the torch of struggle which you have kindled to lead you victoriously to socialism which is the only guarantee for your very existence and freedom. As your struggle has come to gain momentum, they have marshalled all their forces and have put you in a life and death struggle. But even if, with your popular might, you have administered one defeat after another to them, they have not ceased to challenge you. Even if you have, at various times, successfully confronted the threats posed against you from various directions, they have not refrained from changing their tactics and returning over and over again.

They gang up against you now from within, now from the outside and at other times simultaneously from both. Only quite recently, when they declared war against you from many directions, especially the one from the east and the south through the instrumentality of the reactionary army of Somalia and they obtained temporary victory, their arrogance was intensified. But since you have resolved to stand firm come what may, in defense of your unity, revolution, national freedom, you did not bow before them. On the contrary, once having rallied under the motto "*Revolutionary motherland or death*" you paid all the sacrifices the struggle required and were able to teach an unforgettable lesson to the

Somali armed forces, emissaries of the imperialist and reactionary Arab governments, and thereby ensure respect for the frontiers of your motherland.

Still, the reactionaries were not willing to learn from the disaster that was inflicted on them in the east and south. It is impossible to imagine that imperialists will accept the ultimate triumph of the oppressed until they are totally wiped out from the face of the earth. If they are defeated in one locality they will slowly creep up in another. Their frantic attempt in the north to acquire the victory that has eluded them in the east and south proves this fact.

Just as you have earlier heroically rose up and scored a major victory in the south and east by saying "*Everything to the war front*" and by mobilizing all your forces, you have to repeat the same feat and score a similar victory in the north, in the war which has been waged against you for a long time and which has currently been intensified. Your revolution cannot have a guarantee unless your compatriots in Eritrea, compatriots who are being pressured by imperialists and the reactionaries of the surrounding area through the activities of the separatists are liberated and are made to line up with you and unless your access to the Red Sea, which is decisive for your development and prosperity, is fully insured. Therefore, all of you who stand for national independence, democracy and socialism and those who have love of country must, under the motto "*Revolutionary motherland or death*", rise to bring down to their knees the traitorous separatists in Eritrea who have become pains on the side of your revolution.

Today too, under the slogan "*Everything to the war front*", you have to stand up with all the resources available to you alongside the Second Revolutionary Army.

Your enemies desire to see only a weak Ethiopia. They seek to divide the ranks of the oppressed. But, you have to prove in practice to the world that you stand for proletarian inter-

nationalism, for the unity of the oppressed and for a strong popular democratic country.

You, young men and women! With your sweat and blood; and you, the rest of the people of Ethiopia standing as the rearguard have to bring about the full liberation of the oppressed masses of Eritrea.

We, your genuine sons and daughters will always be at the front line of the struggle. We will stand on the throats of your enemies and die an honourable and worthy death rather than see your defeat and humiliation.

The right of Ethiopia's nationalities to self-determination has been recognized!

It will be translated into practice too!

The oppressed masses of Eritrea have no interests and aspirations different from those of the broad masses of Ethiopia! Progressive Arab forces will stand alongside the broad masses of Ethiopia!

The inviolable unity of the peoples of Ethiopia will remain honoured and respected forever!

A people's Ethiopia will be established with the blood and sweat of its genuine sons and daughters!

The world will belong to the proletariat!

We shall triumph!!!

II

Efforts made by the PMAC to Resolve the Problem in Eritrea Peacefully

Before February 1974, Ethiopian progressives had the opinion that the political movement in the administrative region of Eritrea was a genuine anti-imperialist movement. Especially after the split within the E.L.F. and the formation of the E.P.L.F. in 1971, there was a widespread belief that the aim of the latter was not to secede Eritrea from Ethiopia but to help liberate the whole of Ethiopia from the grips of feudalism. Since there were a number of radicals both from Eritrea and from the other administrative regions of the country within the E.P.L.F., the movement was considered Marxist. Also a number of young people from central Ethiopia joined this organization without much hesitation believing that a foundation was being laid in the struggle to overthrow the exploitative and oppressive feudal order.

Simultaneously, reactionary Arab regimes which have for many centuries been vying to establish their hegemony over Ethiopia by controlling the strategic Red Sea began providing unlimited political and material support to these political movements. These reactionary Arab regimes began to provide moral, material and political support to these political movements thinking that they have found an opportunity to weaken and dismember Ethiopia by intensifying ethnic and religious differences, and disunity among the people through the instrumentality of these movements. Gradually, the political stand and ultimate objective of the movements in Eritrea came to be obvious.

When the Ethiopian revolution erupted in February 1974, one of the major issues for which it had to find a solution was the problem in Eritrea. Consequently, as soon as the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, the Police and Territorial Army was established on June 28, 1974, priority was given and an uninterrupted effort was made towards solving this problem peacefully. Later on, when the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) was established, this issue was given even greater attention.

Nonetheless, since the movements in Eritrea are in effect instruments of reactionary Arab governments and international imperialism, they became comrades in-arms of all those counter-revolutionary feudalists, petty-bourgeois anarchists and high government officials of the former feudo-bourgeois government. The garb they used to wear in order to appear progressive has been completely removed over the last four years and it has become quite clear that these separatist groups are sheer instruments of imperialism and Arab reaction. This is why the effort at a peaceful resolution of the problem has not succeeded. Here are the details of the peace efforts that have been made.

I STEPS UNDERTAKEN IN THE MILITARY AND ADMINISTRATIVE SPHERES

When the Ethiopian revolution erupted in February, 1974, there was a view that the separatists in Eritrea were seeking peace, and in order to facilitate this, they were coming out from their guerilla bases. Ethiopian revolutionaries also had anticipated that since a nation-wide revolutionary movement to overthrow the exploitative feudo-bourgeois order had already started, if not all the separatists, at least those who called themselves progressives would join the Ethiopian revolution. As early as June, 1974, when the PMAC was just a coordinating committee and when the emperor was not yet removed from power, an attempt was made to create a favourable situation for the separatists to join the camp of the revo-

lution. In the beginning, it was necessary to bring to the open the nature of this problem which the feudo-bourgeois regime of Haile Selassie had attempted to keep secret and then make a call to the separatists to join the revolution. Then, in order to create a peaceful environment for the separatists to come to the negotiating table, an order was given to the security forces to act only in self-defense but not to make any direct attacks on the separatists. Thus, the security forces were all ordered to return and confine themselves to their barracks.

As it is well known, during the heyday of the feudo-bourgeois regime of Haile Selassie, those persons who used to be appointed as administrators of the region were the ones who were close confidants and or who were married to Haile Selassie's family or who were members of the feudal nobility. These individuals, instead of serving the people, used to collaborate with the capitalists and feudalists of the region and with the foreign capitalists with the objective of exploiting and oppressing the masses. This was one of the factors that aggravated the situation in the region.

Therefore, individuals from the region were appointed by the PMAC as chief and deputy administrators of the region because it was believed that reforming the administrative machinery of the region was a prerequisite for creating a favourable atmosphere for a peaceful discussion. But the separatists did not appreciate the efforts of the Ethiopian government for a peaceful resolution of the problem.

Taking advantage of the confinement of the security forces to their barracks, the separatists began to intensify their reactionary propaganda and military campaign. Displaying the huge quantity of arms which they obtained from the reactionary Arab regimes, they wanted to create the impression that they were a strong and powerful force. They began to build trenches and fortifications in key and strategic places in preparation for a full scale war. They also began to intensify their secessionist propaganda internally and externally. However, notwithstanding the separatists reactionary activities, the government was not discouraged. Thus, it still continued to seek a peaceful solution to the problem through intermediaries both from within and from without the country.

II—STEPS UNDERTAKEN IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE

1. Internally

Among the major steps that were undertaken was the discussion held in Asmara in December, 1975, between a very high level government delegation and the respected citizens of the region on how to bring about peace. Three hundred representatives of the various districts and provinces of the region participated in this discussion. On the government side, there were a PMAC member and other high level government officials.

During this discussion, the government delegation tried to explain in detail that the problem was one inherited from the old regime and was in the process of being resolved. The delegation further emphasised that if the aim of the secessionists was in effect to destroy the old system and to create a new one, where there would be no oppression and exploitation, this was the opportune moment for co-operative and united effort towards such an end. The representatives of the region were asked to exert their maximum effort. The government delegation also stated that the government was willing to compensate for all the damage that had been caused during the course of the conflict. In addition, the delegation stated that if the separatists continued with the war, they would be held responsible by history for all the loss of lives and property that would be inflicted on innocent people.

After a lengthy discussion, a committee consisting of 38 people was formed. The task of this committee was to facilitate peace negotiation between the government and the separatists and in general to create an environment conducive to a peaceful resolution of the problem. The committee demanded that the following steps be undertaken on the part of the government:

- a) that the security forces should be confined to their barracks and the security of the urban areas, especially that of Asmara, be left only to the police;

- b) that the security forces should not launch any military operation whatsoever;
- c) that all political prisoners in the region be released immediately;
- d) that students in the administrative region of Eritrea should not be made to participate in the Development Through Co-operation Campaign (*Zemecha*);
- e) that religious leaders and elders of the region participate in the peace negotiations that will be held with the leaders of the separatist forces abroad;
- f) that these demands be announced over the mass media.

But some of these demands, especially 1, 2, 3, and 6 could not be met since full-scale fighting resumed between the separatists and the security forces only within one month following this discussion. Moreover, since the proposal that the students of the region participate in the *Zemecha* programme in the other administrative regions where there was no security problem or around cities was not accepted and since the fighting resumed immediately, the students of the region were not able to participate in the campaign.

The members of the Committee went to rural areas and held talks with the separatist organisations. Nothing came out of these discussions. In fact, taking advantage of the decision to confine the army to its military barracks and limit its movement, the separatists came very close to Asmara, infiltrated the city and made a major attempt to capture it towards the beginning of February. This confrontation led to a tremendous loss in life and property. Thus, the attempt that had been started in the country and which was expected to bring results was temporarily aborted.

The problem in Eritrea was always an issue of major concern for the broad masses of Ethiopia. Consequently, a meeting in which participants from all the administrative regions of the country took part was held in December, 1974. A team headed by Archbishop Philipos was sent to Asmara to try to persuade the

separatists to come and hold talks for peaceful resolution of the problem. But the efforts of the team ended up in futility.

During the feudo-bourgeois regime, oppression and exploitation were practiced not only against the nationalities within Eritrea but also against other nationalities within the other administrative regions of the rest of the country. One cannot of course isolate the oppression of nationalities from class oppression. That is why the problem of nationalities is one of the major problems for which the Ethiopian revolution has to find a solution. In the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia, which was issued on April 16, 1976, a scientific approach to the problem was laid. In section two, article 5, the programme states the following in connection with the right of nationalities:-

"The right to self-determination of all nationalities will be recognized and fully respected. No nationality will dominate another one since the history, culture, language and religion of each nationality will have equal recognition in accordance with the spirit of socialism. The unity of Ethiopia's nationalities will be based on their common struggle against feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism and all reactionary forces. This united struggle is based on the desire to construct a new life and society based on equality, brotherhood and mutual respect.

"Nationalities on border areas and those scattered over various regions have been subjected to special subjugation for a long time. Special attention will be made to raise the political, economic and cultural life of these nationalities. All necessary steps to equalize these nationalities with the other nationalities of Ethiopia will be undertaken.

"Given Ethiopia's existing situation, the problem of nationalities can be resolved if each nationality is accorded full right to self-government. This means that each nationality will have regional autonomy to decide on matters concerning its internal affairs. Within its environs, it has the right to determine the contents of its political, economic and social life, use its own language and elect its own leaders and administrators to head its internal organs.

"This right of self-government of nationalities will be implemented in accordance with all democratic procedures and principles."

The Programme of the National Democratic Revolution is one of the major achievements of the revolution. And this article which gives scientific solution to the problem of nationalities is one of the most important sections of the programme.

In less than a month after the issuance of the Programme, a nine-point policy based on the programme of the NDR, designed to bring about a peaceful resolution of the problem in Eritrea, was declared. The policy was issued with the belief that the problem in Eritrea required an immediate resolution. Towards this end, it was hoped that the principle of self-determination and self-administration should first be applied in this region. The policy statement also invited progressive organizations and individuals in the region that did not have connection with imperialism and reactionary neighbouring countries to a peaceful dialogue. It also indicated that the government will provide all the necessary support to progressives in the region in their attempt to raise the political consciousness of the masses and to organize and arm them in accordance with the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution.

The policy also stated that the government would provide the necessary assistance for the homecoming and resettlement of those persons who were forced to live as refugees as a result of the war, for the rehabilitation of those people whose property was destroyed and for those who were made to leave their jobs and their schools. The Nine-point Policy Declaration also stated that political prisoners will be given amnesty or that their terms of imprisonment would be reduced. It also said that a special commission which would assist the refugees, rehabilitate and resettle those persons who were forced to leave their jobs and schools, and which would follow up the cases of political prisoners would immediately be established.

As soon as it was established with a large budget, the special commission prepared an extensive plan of development in order to be able to rehabilitate and resettle thousands of refugees. But since peace did not prevail in the region and since the separatists did not allow the refugees to return in large numbers, the plan was not put into practice to the extent desired. But still, the commission did rehabilitate quite many refugees.

The commission extends a warm welcome to those who desire to join the camp of the revolution. It provides them with employment. It attends to the problem of political prisoners. In addition, since it was hoped that after the issuance of the policy, progressive elements from within the separatists would come forward for peace talks, a government delegation led by a member of the PMAC was dispatched to Asmara. This delegation tried to make contacts with the separatists for over a period of one year. Several messages both oral and written, were exchanged between the government delegation and the separatists. In these messages, the government delegation put honest questions to the separatists asking them why there should be blood bath, why the masses should be made to suffer and why we do not sit together at the negotiation table and find a way how to settle the problem peacefully. These messages used to be sent both to the E.L.F. and E.P.L.F. Their replies some times gave hope. But most of the time they were slanderous and quite unprincipled. All in all the separatists could not come up with a common platform because the two separatist organizations had differences between themselves. In addition to their reactionary objectives, these two separatist organizations cared little for the suffering of the masses and could not agree to come to the negotiation table because each was afraid that it would be criticized and branded opportunist by the other if it negotiated with the government. They used to come up with all kinds of preconditions which had to be met before negotiations were to start since at the same time, they did not want to be accused of being unwilling to discuss the problem. For example, there were demands that the armed forces should leave the region, that the security forces should not fire at them, that foreign organizations and countries should be allowed to participate in the negotiation, etc.

It happened that just before the Nine-point policy was publicly announced in April, 1976, 500 people had assembled in Asmara for the purpose of finding better ways of collecting taxes. These

people who had come from the various parts of the region found an opportunity to discuss the political situation that had prevailed in the region. It also happened that on the occasion of the May Day celebration, the government publicly announced that it was ready and willing to hold peace talks with the separatists to resolve the problem in Eritrea peacefully. And therefore, starting from this premise, the participants of the Asmara meeting decided to find ways and means whereby the government and the separatists could start peace negotiation. Towards this end, they formed a committee that would help bring the government and the separatists to a face to face discussion. The government immediately supported the aim of this committee and gave the permission to go ahead with the mission. This committee which gave itself the name the peace council of Eritrea immediately elected a chairman, a vice chairman and a secretary. Then it continuously asked the separatists to come for peace talks.

The members of the committee travelled long distances by air, car, on animal back and on foot to contact the separatists in various areas and to persuade them to hold discussions with the government. When the members of the committee reached any locality with the aid of government vehicles, the local people used to provide them warm welcome hoping that they were going to be messengers of peace. The masses of the people even used to provide this committee with animal transportation and guide them to areas where the secessionists were to be found.

Since each group in isolated areas was demanding that it too should be directly contacted, the members of the committee had to cover vast areas and distances. The rank and file of the separatist groups welcomed the members of the committee with marked enthusiasm. Nevertheless, when the members of the committee were able to contact the leaders of the separatists, many times they were insulted and slandered and told not to return again. Even if once in a while the members of the committee were afforded a cordial reception by the leaders of some of the separatist sections, the objective of their

mission did not materialize for the simple reason that each and every guerilla leader put forward pre-conditions for the peace negotiation. Thus, although an endless effort was made by the committee, the attempt to find a peaceful solution to the problem became fruitless due to the arrogance of the leaders of the separatist groups.

2. Efforts Made on the International Level

Even though the Eritrean problem is purely an internal matter, some reactionary Arab governments have tried to use the separatists and religious differences in order to weaken and thereby dominate Ethiopia. Since the principal objective of the separatists is to separate Eritrea from Ethiopia and make it a member of the Arab League, they have for a long time been propagating the erroneous view that the peoples of the region are Arabs. Thinking that the political activities of the separatists would contribute to the down fall of the feudo-bourgeois regime of Haile Selassie, progressive Arab governments and other progressive countries and movements have earlier supported the separatist movements. But following the eruption of the Ethiopian revolution in February, 1974, the over all situation in the country became totally and qualitatively different from that which prevailed during the feudo-bourgeois order. It became quite necessary to explain the nature of the problem in the context of the new situation to all interested parties. The Ethiopian government continued this effort with the hope that each concerned party would understand the problem and would try to influence the separatists to come forward for peace discussions. In this connection, government delegations have toured several Arab countries to explain the situation of revolutionary Ethiopia and the nature of the problem in Eritrea.

The first of these missions was dispatched to the Sudan in December, 1974. The entire situation was explained to the government of the Sudan, especially to President Numieri. He was requested to help arrange contacts with the separatist groups for purposes of discussion. President Numieri accepted the request. But instead of

fulfilling this pledge he began to intensify his support for the separatists. Especially when the programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia was proclaimed and when it became evident that the Ethiopian revolution is guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism, the frightened anti-communist government of the Sudan began to openly campaign for the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia.

Similar delegations also travelled to Egypt, Lybia, Algeria, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, North Yemen and the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen and tried to explain the contents of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia and the Nine-point Peace Policy of May 16, 1976 concerning the problem in Eritrea. Even if the responses received from these countries were varied, one thing became very clear during these trips. Because of the false propaganda conducted by the separatists, most Arab peoples had been led to believe that the peoples of Eritrea are Arabs and moslems, while the population of the rest of Ethiopia is entirely Christian. Hence they had come to a conclusion that Eritrea is a separate entity. It was realized that the predominant and preposterous belief was that since Eritrea and the rest of Ethiopia have had no historical connection and since moslem Eritrea is a colony of Christian Ethiopia, every support should be given to the people of Eritrea in their struggle to gain their full independence. It also became clear that even if the neighbouring countries knew the true facts, they were nevertheless interested in the secession of Eritrea for their own strategic and other interests.

In particular, the Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat, boldly stated that Ethiopia must not view the problem in Eritrea as an internal problem. The leaders of Syria and Iraq were wholly unwilling to accept any of the true facts presented to them. In fact, some of these leaders went to the extent of saying that whether the peoples of Eritrea like it or not, they are of Arab stock and Ethiopia should grant them their independence immediately. Here and there, especially progressive countries like Algeria, Lybia and the peoples

Democratic Republic of Yemen suggested that a peaceful solution should be found immediately through offering some sort of internal autonomy. They expressed their willingness to help and to co-operate in all such efforts. But the attempts made even along this line did not produce the desired results.

Efforts were also made to establish contacts with the separatist organizations through socialist and progressive countries. The government of Ethiopia has never turned down any request from any country to hold talks with the separatist organizations.

For example, on a number of occasions, the Ethiopian government was informed through the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen, the USSR, Cuba and Lybia that the separatists were ready to hold discussions. But after venue and time were arranged, the separatists failed to show up. They were doing this just to give the false impression that they were in favour of the peaceful resolution of the problem while in fact they were against it. Besides, they were fully aware that if such discussions were held under the auspices of progressive and socialist governments, their reactionary stand would be totally unmasked. Consequently, up until recently, all efforts to hold discussions with the separatists did not materialize.

III. MEETINGS HELD WITH LEADERS OF THE SEPARATIST GROUPS AND THEIR RESULTS

As it has been pointed out above, the Provisional Military Government had made every possible effort to hold discussions with the separatist organizations. Upon the request of the government of Ethiopia, socialist countries had tried their best to convince the separatists to come for peace discussions. As it has been mentioned above, on a number of occasions the leaders of the separatist organizations failed to show up for the projected peace discussions after venue and time were arranged for such discussions. Below we will try

to describe some of the occasions when contacts with the separatists were attempted and failed:

1. In 1976 when an Ethiopian delegation was in the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen, the comrades of PDRY suggested that the delegation should hold discussion with Ramadan Nur, a leader of the E.P.L.F. who was also there at the time. The Ethiopian delegation accepted this suggestion. But on the basis of the talks held between the comrades of PDRY and Ramadan Nur, the PDRY comrades concluded that Ramadan Nur, was a complete reactionary, and consequently proposed that a discussion with him would be totally fruitless. Therefore, no discussions were held.
2. In March 1977, the Ethiopian government was informed through Cuban comrades that Issayas Afeworki and Ramadan Nur, leaders of the E.P.L.F, were ready to hold peace talks in Aden. The Ethiopian government relayed its readiness to hold peace talks with them. But since at that time these two individuals were in Mogadisho, it was agreed that they should come to Aden within 15 days and that the discussions should commence. But instead of reporting to Aden, these individuals went to Kuwait and other Arab countries. Consequently, the plan for peace talks failed.
3. The Ethiopian government was contacted through comrades of PDRY that individuals who claimed that they were the leaders of a so-called workers party of Eritrea wanted to hold peace discussions in Aden. The Ethiopian government agreed to hold talks, but the individuals failed to show up.
4. In 1977, the Ethiopian government was informed through the government of Lybia that the leaders of the three

separatist groups were willing to hold peace discussions. The Ethiopian government agreed to hold discussion with them. But the leaders of the separatist organizations who claimed that they would come to the conference after explaining the case to their followers did not show up.

Despite all these machinations, it became possible to hold discussions with the leaders of the E.P.L.F. on three occasions through the auspices of the Socialist Unity Party of the German Democratic Republic. These meetings were held on February 2, March 22, and June 11, 1978.

At the first and third meetings Isayas Afeworki and Al-Amin Mohammed Siad were among the leaders of the E.P.L.F. who were present. At the second meeting there was also another individual by the name of Ibrahim Affa.

Before the first meeting was to be held, Isayas Afeworki and his group put the following pre-conditions to the GDR comrades :

- a) that Ethiopia should recognize Eritrea's right to independence;
- b) that Ethiopia should withdraw its armed forces from Eritrea;
- c) that a united democratic party which would guarantee the independence of Eritrea be established in Ethiopia;
- d) that socialist countries should provide guarantee for the independence of Eritrea.

After a discussion which took eight hours, the GDR comrades were able to convince them to drop these pre-conditions. But still there were clear indications that Isayas Afeworki and his group were under the influence and direction of the reactionary Arab ruling classes. The fact that Isayas Afeworki refused to speak in no other language but Arabic is one clear evidence of this. Since the desire of the Ethiopian delegation was primarily to start

the talks, it did not insist that Isayas Afeworki and his group speak in other languages. But as Isayas Afeworki and his group spoke in Arabic at all the three meetings, it became necessary that the Arabic be translated first into German and then into English. During the talks, the GDR comrades were present as observers.

The following were the main points reiterated by the Ethiopian delegation.

- i. Eritrea, throughout Ethiopia's long history, had not only been an integral part of Ethiopia but the core of its civilization as well.
- ii. Notwithstanding the continuous attempt of imperialism and reactionary Arab governments to dominate and control Ethiopia, and notwithstanding the temporary success of Italian colonialism in partitioning and colonizing the administrative region of Eritrea, through the life and death struggle of the masses under the slogan "*Ethiopia or death*", Eritrea was reunited with her motherland, Ethiopia, first through federation and then integration.
- iii. The feudo-bourgeois order which was responsible of the exploitation and oppression of the entire Ethiopian peoples has been shattered to its foundation. A fierce class struggle is being waged to build a socialist Ethiopia. Under such a system there would be no place for any form of exploitation and oppression and therefore the solution to the problem of the oppression of nationalities cannot be seen outside of this context.
- iv. The broad masses of Ethiopia have scored tremendous victories and are the sole beneficiaries of the achievements of the revolution.
- v. On the basis of the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia, regional autonomy has been

accepted as the correct solution to the problem of nationalities.

After having explained all the above points in detail to the representatives of the E.P.L.F., the delegation took the position that talks could continue on the basis of the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution and the Nine-point Policy Declaration.

But the representatives of the E.P.L.F. tried to deny the true facts of Ethiopian history. They tried to argue that the administrative region of Eritrea had never been an integral part of Ethiopia. They said that even if some nationalities in the administrative region of Eritrea had some connections with Ethiopia, during the period of Italian colonization all the nationalities in the region evolved into one and unified entity.

During these three meetings, especially during the second and the third their reactionary and anti-peace stand came to be more and more obvious. Especially for the second meeting, while the government delegation had arrived in Berlin on time, the representatives of the E.P.L.F. deliberately stayed away for three days. This necessitated the government delegation to prepare its return home on the fourth day. But since on the fifth day the representatives of the E.P.L.F. arrived, the GDR comrades persuaded the government delegation to return to Berlin. Even after this, the representatives of the E.P.L.F. created problems so that the meeting would not take place. Nevertheless, after many hours of discussions, the GDR comrades persuaded them to come to the meeting.

All what this shows is that the separatists were not at heart willing to resolve the problem through peaceful discussions. Their intention for not coming on time for the second meeting was that the government delegation would be discouraged and consequently would return home. But as pointed out above, the government delegation returned to Berlin. This undermined their plan not to

hold discussions. Therefore, they eventually openly stated that they were totally unwilling to engage in any talks.

All such attempts of the leaders of the separatist groups to avoid discussions were merely intended to cover their false version of history and reactionary political stand. Still it was not possible for them to prevent the talks from being held and in the process the government delegation was able to expose them before the GDR comrades.

The following were the main points raised by the leaders of the E.P.L.F. during the three meetings:

- i) that the right of nationalities to self determination through regional autonomy as stated in the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia (NDR) and the Nine-point Policy Declaration is anti-Marxist, it should be totally rejected;
- ii) that the Ethiopian government should recognize the right of Eritrea to full independence;
- iii) that the Ethiopian government should accept the separatist organizations as the sole representatives of the peoples of Eritrea;
- iv) that the talk should center only on the above points but not on the Nine-point Policy Declaration.

It became clear that the stand of the leaders of the separatist group is anti-NDR and outright reactionary. Since this was their stand, the government delegation explicitly stated to them that any one who does not accept the programme of the NDR is an enemy of the Ethiopian revolution and that the Ethiopian revolution and the unity of the country are not subject to any form of negotiation. It was further stated to them that any one who claims to represent the peoples of Eritrea simply because the people have been forcefully put under his control at gun-point cannot be their

authentic spokesman. It was pointed out that only those who prove themselves through revolutionary struggle, who stand for the true interests of the broad masses, who advocate and struggle for the unity of the oppressed and the labouring masses, and those who struggle for the ultimate emancipation of the oppressed are the genuine representatives of the masses.

While the series of discussions stopped at this point, the government delegation stated that the Ethiopian government still remains ready to hold discussions with any group that accepts the programme of the NDR and is willing to resolve the problem peacefully.

IV MAIN REASONS FOR THE FAILURE OF THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the continuous effort of the Ethiopian Government over the last four years to resolve the Eritrean problem peacefully, no substantial results have been achieved because of a number of factors.

1. One of the major obstacles has always been the role of reactionary Arab governments. These governments have for a long time been attempting to violate the territorial integrity of Ethiopia. Although these Arab governments are fully aware that the Ethiopian peoples are followers of different religions and that, in particular, the majority of its peoples are followers of the Islam and Christianity, they deliberately try to portray it as a wholly Christian country with the purpose of making it a target for the hatred of the Arab and Islamic world. Their reactionary and backward outlook prevents them from comprehending that oppressed peoples who follow different religions could live together harmoniously.

These reactionary Arab regimes have always regarded Ethiopia as the major obstacle to their ambition to dominate Africa.

Ethiopia is a country which is in their midst but which does not claim to be Arab. Therefore, they consider her a major hurdle for their reactionary design to bring the entire Red Sea under their total domination. For this reason, they have taken the alternative that the best policy is to dismember Eritrea from Ethiopia and make it part of the Arab League. Thus, they give massive financial and military assistance to the separatist groups. They are also terrified of the possible influence that the Ethiopian revolution will have upon the oppressed masses of their own countries. Therefore, they want Ethiopia to remain quite weak and unstable as in the old days. In addition, they not only want the Eritrean problem to continue indefinitely but also they want Eritrea to be a beach head for counter-revolutionary activities against Ethiopia. Especially the ruling Baath parties of Iraq and Syria, which advance Arab nationalism and hegemonism in all Arab countries and in other countries which claim to be Arab, wish to include Eritrea within this sphere. The notion "Eritrea is an Arab land" is a reflection of this reactionary aim.

Egypt and the Sudan are dependent upon the waters of the Blue Nile. Since they fear that Ethiopia may have greater control over these waters, they do not want Ethiopia to become a strong country. Because of this, they provide tremendous political, economic and propaganda support to the secessionist organizations and undermine all attempts to achieve a lasting solution to the problem in Eritrea. Especially the government of the Sudan provides military bases, training centers, arms, propaganda and many other facilities to the secessionist groups.

2. During the feudo-bourgeois regime of Haile Selassie, imperialists did not support the secession of Eritrea. There was a reason for this. Their interests were guaranteed by the existence of strong anti-communist regimes in north-east Africa and the Middle East.

They tried to strengthen reactionary regimes such as feudo-bourgeois Ethiopia, Egypt, the Sudan, Iran and Saudi Arabia in

order to contain the spread of communism in the region. They also did this to ensure their full control of the Red Sea and the Indian ocean. But since the Ethiopian revolution has seriously affected their strategy and since they realize a strong revolutionary Ethiopia could be an inspiration to the oppressed peoples of the region, they frantically work to strangle the Ethiopian revolution at its infancy. Towards this end, they use the secessionist groups in Eritrea as one of their instruments.

3. Among the major reasons for the failure of the peaceful resolution of the problem in Eritrea is the reactionary stand of the separatist groups. The previous assumption that one of the separatist groups was progressive and Marxist has been proven false. Just as the Ethiopian revolution has exposed so many opportunists, in the same manner, it has exposed the political stand of the separatist groups.

All the three separatist groups, namely E.P.L.F, E.L.F. and E.L.F-P.L.F are all basically the same. The political stands of all the three are reactionary and have the same content. Their principal objective is to dismember Eritrea from Ethiopia and establish an entity which would serve the interests of the imperialists and reactionary Arab governments, but not to bring genuine freedom to the people of the region. If there is any difference between them, it is that each desires to establish its own separate rule over the working peoples of Eritrea. Secessionism is not the guarantee for the freedom of the oppressed. Freedom cannot be attained by running away from revolution; on the contrary, it is revolution which ensures freedom. To work against this principle is tantamount to working against the interest of the oppressed.

The Ethiopian revolution has opened the door to freedom and victory for the working masses of the whole of Ethiopia. It is providing the broad masses with genuine economic and political liberties. This applies to the peoples of the administrative region of Eritrea as well. Since it is obvious that a genuine revolution is taking place in Ethiopia and since this revolution will eventually eliminate

the exploitation and oppression of the broad masses of Ethiopia and will eliminate all contradictions, including the problem of nationalities, all the progressive forces of the world are on our side. Today, all those who oppose the Ethiopian revolution are only allies and lackeys of imperialism.

If the separatists were real revolutionaries, they would have been able to make a correct scientific analysis of the whole question and would have ended up as allies of the revolution instead of being agents of imperialism and reaction. They would have given priority to solving the problems which the Ethiopian masses face instead of running after power and money. Instead of acting as tools of imperialism, they would have joined the anti-imperialist struggle that is being waged the world over. If such were the case, the problem that exists in Eritrea would have found a quick and lasting solution. But their class interest and reactionary aims have not made it possible for them to follow this course.

V. FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR A PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

The solution of the problem in Eritrea is intimately tied with the development and growth of the Ethiopian revolution. The struggle that the Ethiopian masses wage against the separatist groups is essentially a class struggle. A peaceful solution can only be attained with the collaboration of the broad masses and genuine progressives. Since for a long time, the working masses of the region were coerced at gun-point by the separatist groups, it has not been possible for genuine progressives to openly declare their correct political line. Because of the systematic intimidation and terror they were subjected to by the separatists, the broad masses of the region have repeatedly appealed to the revolutionary government of Ethiopia to free them from the reactionary separatist groups which are negotiating to sell them to imperialists and reactionary Arab regimes. Therefore, to enable the broad masses

of the region and all those genuine progressives to openly and democratically assert their correct political stand, it is necessary to eliminate the pressure that the reactionary separatists exert on them. There is no doubt that if a favourable situation is created for them the broad masses of the region will reject the separatists and assert their own interests. Projects which could not be carried out in the administrative region of Eritrea will then be implemented. The peasant will get his own land, will raise his political consciousness and become organized and armed in order to be able to defend his right and interest. Similarly urban dwellers too would be able to be organized. All in all, as the revolution takes root in the region the problem will gradually wither away.

The above mentioned peace efforts made in the political and administrative spheres and all the steps that have been undertaken were all meant to make it possible for the masses of Eritrea, like their brethren in the rest of Ethiopia, to be beneficiaries of the achievements of the NDR of Ethiopia without their blood being shed. But it is clear that because of the concerted conspiracy of imperialists, reactionary Arab ruling classes and their mercenaries, the separatists, the efforts made by the Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia have not succeeded in achieving the desired results.

Today, there is a bitter struggle being waged by our liberation army and the broad masses of the region with the rest of the people of Ethiopia standing as a rearguard. This struggle deserves all popular support because it is meant to bring security, peace, equality and prosperity to the broad masses and guarantee the achievements of the Ethiopian revolution. All the support obtained thus far should also be understood from this perspective. Revolutionaries never want wars. But if reactionaries choose the course of war, revolutionaries are left with no alternative but to annihilate them through revolution and popular war. Still, since their main mission is to prevent the suffering of the broad masses, it is always their wish and their duty to try to search for peaceful ways of settling problems. Hence, the door still remains open for those progressive elements for a dialogue provided that they accept the NDR.

III Policy Declaration of the Provisional Military Government to Solve the Problem in the Administrative Region of Eritrea in a Peaceful Way

(May 16, 1976)

It is an undeniable historical fact that the northern region of Ethiopia called Eritrea for the last 87 years was the seat of the history, culture and administration of ancient Ethiopia. However, because of its location along the Red Sea and the strategic importance of its sea coast, the northern region of Ethiopia had been coveted by various forces during the last few centuries.

Powers like Turkey, Egypt, Italy and then Britain who wanted to control the Red Sea and East Africa have often sought to carve out Eritrea out of the rest of Ethiopia. In this effort, they made use of religious, nationalist and standard of living differences among the peoples of the region. In the process, the people were subjected to various colonial administrations. The Italian colonial and fascist regime used the Eritrea region as a base and as a bridgehead for the invasion of other parts of Ethiopia.

During the colonial occupation when Eritrea remained carved out by force from the motherland, the people in the region made great sacrifices for unity and independence. During the five-year Italian fascist occupation of the whole of Ethiopia, numerous

Eritreans were among Ethiopia's heroes and patriots who gave hard times to fascist troops. As history attests, at no time had Eritrean heroes failed to meet the challenge of the enemy when it concerned national unity and independence.

Following the end of World War II, when the fascist forces were routed with the consent of the big powers, Britain continued to rule Eritrea for 10 years for her strategic purposes instead of handing over the region to Ethiopia. The Eritrean people continued their struggle against the British rule to free themselves and unite with the motherland and to preserve the independence and unity of Ethiopia. Raising the motto "*Ethiopia or death*", numerous were those who perished as patriots and martyrs struggling against colonial rulers and various anti-unity forces. Britain resorted to various means to weaken the Unionist Party which had the support of the majority of the people. To this end, she helped create the Islamic League based on religion and the pro-Italian party based on the legacies of Italian colonialism. But the majority of the people of Eritrea continued the struggle to oust Britain and to reunite Eritrea with Ethiopia. However, a federation was established in 1952 in disregard of the wish of the people and under pressure from the imperialists.

During the federation, the despotic government of Haile Selassie extended its oppressive rule to Eritrea. The peoples of the region who had fought to get rid of colonial rule and live in freedom with the mother land, were stripped of their democratic rights and step by step were put under the yoke of feudalism and imperialism. This created a favourable situation for those forces opposed to the unity of the Ethiopian people. It was obvious that, as the oppression continued to increase, internal contradictions paved the way for external enemies to sneak in; a movement for separation that was started by the colonial rulers continued to grow with the help of foreign governments who had expansionist interest and wanted Eritrea for its strategic importance.

From the very beginning, the secessionist movement included reactionary leaders who were instruments of colonial rulers and expansionist forces interested in the strategic importance of Eritrea. As the movement grew in age, progressive groups are known to have joined it as the result of their opposition to the economic, social and political oppression perpetrated against the broad masses by feudalism and imperialism.

It is also true that there are reactionary and progressive groups within the movement with irreconcilable views on the political questions, external relations and matters pertaining to contradictions among the people in the Region. It is an undeniable truth that the reactionary group which, for its own benefit and comfort, has become servile to the strategic interest of expansionist forces has been exploiting religious differences and contradictions among nationalities. This group has been responsible for the loss of lives of numerous innocent Eritreans every time it launched an attack against the progressive group.

The despotic government of Haile Selassie was aware of the problem in Eritrea but did nothing to find a peaceful solution for it. Moreover, aristocrats sent as administrators to Eritrea cashed on the trouble and used money allocated to the region for personal enrichment thereby contributing to the worsening of the situation. During this long period, the blood of many Ethiopian brothers was shed for no purpose. Property was destroyed. The economic and social life of the region got worse from day to day.

The February 1974 popular revolutionary movement brought to the open the demands of the broad masses and pointed out that the Eritrean problem was also a major problem of the country awaiting solution. In the absence of a political organisation capable of coordinating the revolutionary struggle of the people at a crucial period, the establishment of the Provisional Military Government became a historical imperative.

Soon after its establishment, among the pressing political, economic and social problems given priority by the Provisional

Military Administrative Council, was that of finding a peaceful solution to the problem in the Eritrea Administrative Region. Since July, 1974, ceaseless effort to this end has been made internally and through diplomatic channels. These efforts attest to the Provisional Military Government's sincere intentions to find a peaceful solution to the Eritrean problem. While revolutionary measures were, step by step, being taken to destroy the feudo-capitalist economic, social and political structure which had for so many years exploited the oppressed masses of Ethiopia, the peaceful resolution of the Eritrean problem was also always on the agenda.

Aware of the existence of progressives who have raised arms and struggled against the autocratic regime of Haile Selassie in the Administrative Region of Eritrea, the Provisional Military Government has made repeated calls to them so that they may, by working side by side with other progressive Ethiopians, take the Revolution to its final goal instead of opening the way to those feudals, reactionary forces in the neighbourhood and imperialists who are bent on causing bloodshed in Ethiopia so that they may be able to reverse the course of the revolution of the Ethiopian people and achieve their expansionist goals. These calls by the Government and the efforts made towards finding a peaceful solution had raised high the hopes among the people of the Administrative Region of Eritrea in 1975. In January of the same year, the right wing reactionary leaders of the secessionist movement who are desirous of ensuring that the broad masses of people in Eritrea get no peace but should rather live in a state of tension and suffering for ever and, if possible, make the region kneel under the yoke of the neighbouring reactionary forces and imperialists, made an effort to ruin and foil the search for peace. As a result of this conspiracy, they have split the blood of many Ethiopians and caused the destruction of much property. The Provisional Military Government has at no time ceased its search for a peaceful solution. In co-operation with the broad masses in Eritrea, it has fought against the conspiracy and machinations of this reactionary group which is in an open alliance with the enemies of the people.

Since the start of the popular revolutionary uprising of February, 1974, monarchial rule has been overthrown. Socialism has been embraced as the path to progress. The broad masses of Ethiopia have been awakened through the sacrifice of the Ethiopian youth who took part in the National Work Campaign for Development Through Co-operation. Land has been given to the tiller. The major means of production and distribution belonging to imperialists and bourgeois reactionaries have been transferred to public ownership. So have urban lands and extra urban houses. The equality of all religions has been recognized. The right to self-determination of nationalities has also been recognized. A proclamation has been issued to safeguard the rights of workers and to enable them to get organised. All in all, the Ethiopian National Democratic Revolution is on the right path. There should have been no doubt that these and similar other measures would have contributed to the removal of causes of the problem in Eritrea. However, because of the conspiracy of the enemies of the revolution and the people, and the subsequent lack of peace in the Administrative Region of Eritrea, the oppressed people of the region have been unable either to participate fully in the revolution or derive benefits from its fruits.

Whenever the revolutionary process takes correct line and the oppressed masses of Ethiopia continue to score victories, the right wing reactionary leaders of the secessionist movements strengthen their ties with the reactionary forces in the neighbourhood and imperialists in a frantic attempt to complicate the problem further. In their attempt to undermine the revolution and disrupt the unity of the oppressed masses of Ethiopia, the right wing reactionary leaders had subjected the broad masses of Eritrea to hardship and suffering. This reactionary group had aggravated the hardship of the peace-loving and oppressed people of Eritrea by sabotaging economic activities, transport services and trading in essential commodities like grain and food items. In order to escape from this hardship, some Eritreans had taken refuge abroad during the last fifteen years and are living under very adverse conditions.

The broad masses of Ethiopia will join hands to alleviate the hardship and suffering of the oppressed people in Eritrea perpetrated by this reactionary group. It is an urgent as well as historic duty of Ethiopian revolutionary forces, especially the revolutionary forces in Eritrea, to be united and to foil the reactionary group which, in collusion with counter-revolutionary feudalists, reactionary forces in the neighbourhood and imperialists, is against the revolution and people.

The victories gained so far by the Ethiopian people had demanded great sacrifices, vigilance against internal and external enemies, great wisdom and patience. These victories have been gained through a heroic struggle.

The Ethiopian people's revolutionary struggle has now assumed a correct and an unswerving line. This correct path has been outlined in the Programme of the Ethiopian National Democratic Revolution. The Programme clearly identifies internal and international friends and foes of the Ethiopian revolution. The Programme enumerates in detail the problems of the country and indicates ways of finding their solutions. It unequivocally declares that the first objective of the revolution is to establish a people's democratic republic. This Programme will embrace more than 90-percent of the Ethiopian people. Nevertheless, the people have to struggle a great deal more to implement the Programme. Many problems and obstacles have to be overcome at every stage of the revolutionary process. The broad masses must be aware of the fact that the task ahead is not an easy one and that great determination and vigilance are required to attain the desired objectives.

One of the difficult questions answered by the Programme of the Ethiopian National Democratic Revolution is the question of nationalities. Paragraph 5 of the Programme reads:

“The right to self-determination of all nationalities will be recognized and fully respected. No nationality will dominate another one since the history, culture, language and religion of each

nationality will have equal recognition in accordance with the spirit of socialism. The unity of Ethiopia's nationalities will be based on their common struggle against feudalism, imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism and all reactionary forces. This united struggle is based on the desire to construct a new life and a new society based on equality, brotherhood and mutual respect.

“Nationalities on border areas and those scattered over various regions have been subjected to special subjugation for a long time. Special attention will be given to raise the political, economic and cultural life of these nationalities. All necessary steps to equalize these nationalities with the other nationalities of Ethiopia will be undertaken .

“Given Ethiopia's existing situation, the problem of nationalities can be resolved if each nationality is accorded full right to self-government. This means that each nationality will have regional autonomy to decide on matters concerning its internal affairs. Within its environs, it has the right to determine the contents of its political, economic and social life, use its own language and elect its own leaders and administrators to head its internal organs.

“This right of self-government of nationalities will be implemented in accordance with all democratic procedures and principles.”

For many years, the Ethiopian progressive elements had struggled both at home and abroad for the rights of the broad masses enumerated above. Among those who had joined the ranks of the guerrillas in the Administrative Region of Eritrea are some who had waged an armed struggle to implement these rights. Henceforth, there is no reason why the progressive forces in Ethiopia cannot struggle in unity to implement the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution. It is to be recalled that it was on this basis that the Provisional Military Administrative Council addressed a revolutionary call to progressive elements in Eritrea on the occasion of May Day celebrations.

In accordance with the Programme of the Ethiopian National Democratic Revolution and the repeated revolutionary calls in the past, the Provisional Military Government has made the following decisions to provide a peaceful solution to the problem in the Administrative Region of Eritrea.

DECISION

1. The anomalies which had existed before will be done away with and the people of the Eritrean Administrative Region will, in a new spirit and in co-operation and collaboration with the rest of the Ethiopian people, have full participation in the political, economic and social life of the country. They will in particular play their full role in the struggle to establish the people's democratic republic in accordance with the Programme of the Ethiopian Democratic Revolution.
2. The Programme of the Ethiopian National Democratic Revolution has affirmed that the right of self-determination of nationalities can be guaranteed through regional autonomy which takes due account of objective realities prevailing in Ethiopia, her surroundings and in the world at large. To translate this into deeds, the Government will study each of the region of the country, the history and interactions of the nationalities inhabiting them, their geographic positions, economic life and their suitability for development and administration. After taking these into consideration, the Government will at an appropriate time present to the people the structure of the region that can exist in the future. The entire Ethiopian people will then democratically discuss the issue at various levels and decide upon it themselves.
3. Having realised the difficulties existing in the Administrative Region of Eritrea and the urgency of overcoming them, in order to apply in practice the right of self-determination of nationalities on a priority basis, the Provisional Military Government is prepared to discuss and exchange views with the

progressive groups and organizations in Eritrea which are not in collusion with feudalists, reactionary forces in the neighbourhood and imperialists.

4. The Government will give full support to progressives in the Eritrean Administrative Region who will, in collaboration with the progressives in the rest of Ethiopia and on the basis of the Programme of the Ethiopian National Democratic Revolution, endeavour to arouse, organise and lead the working masses of the region in the struggle against the three enemies of the Ethiopian people—feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism and imperialism—and thereby promote the unity of the oppressed classes of Ethiopia.
5. The Government will give all necessary assistance to those Ethiopians who, because of the absence of peace in the Eritrean Administrative Region for a long time, have been in exile in neighboring countries and in far-off alien lands so that they may, as of today, return to their own country.
6. The Government will make a special effort in rehabilitating those Ethiopians who might have lost their property because of the adverse conditions that had existed. All those who have been dislocated from jobs and education as a result of the existing problem will be enabled to avail themselves of the employment and educational opportunities which Ethiopia can offer in any part of the country.
7. People who have been imprisoned as a result of the existing problem will be released. The cases of those who have been sentenced to life imprisonment or death will be carefully examined and reviewed as soon as peaceful conditions are restored and, on the basis of their offences, they will either receive reduced prison terms or be altogether released.

8. The state of emergency will be lifted as soon as the major decisions begin to be implemented and peace is guaranteed in the Eritrean Administrative Region.

9. A special commission entrusted with the task of ensuring the implementation of decisions 5 to 7 above will be established by proclamation.

There are quarters that are conspiring to reverse the victories gained as a result of the struggle of the Ethiopian people and to put our country again under the yoke of feudalism and imperialism. These forces, which are working day and night in order to realise their dreams are dangerous forces that are weaving counter-revolutionary conspiracies around the country, spending millions of dollars daily towards achieving their goals and coordinating their counter-revolutionary activities.

The Ethiopian people must be fully vigilant, organised and armed throughout the length and breadth of the country and be on guard against these forces.

The Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia believes that the problem in the Eritrean Administrative Region can be peacefully solved along the lines outlined above. On the other hand, by allying with the broad masses the Provisional Military Government has the responsibility and duty to defend the revolutionary gains of the Ethiopian people from reactionary forces and to crush those who are inimical to the unity of the working masses and the Ethiopian revolution.

The Provisional Military Government is making yet another revolutionary call upon the broad masses and progressive forces in the Administrative Region of Eritrea to give their fullest support and co-operation to the effort the Government is making to solve the problem in the region.

Ethiopia Tikdem!

May the Unity of the Oppressed Masses Flourish!

reality of our country, it is necessary to explain in brief how
Ethiopia's genuine revolutionaries were able to attain the supremacy
of their correct political line.

I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETIES

IV

Before we speak about nationalities, national movements and
their rights, it is perhaps necessary to recapitulate the various
social systems mankind has passed through at different historical
epochs to show how nations and nationalities arose. When we
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social development mankind has gone through, the aspect

Marxism and the National-Colonial Question

This is one of the topics that occupy a large space in Marxist-Leninist literature. Marxists of many countries have written on it; they have carried out discussions and arguments among themselves. At different times, bourgeois spokesmen and social chauvinists had tried to give it different meanings. Previously Marx and Engels and then Lenin and Stalin had carried out a major struggle against all those opportunists who tried to give the concept a false interpretation. Lenin and Stalin, in addition, have correctly translated the principle into practice.

It may not be an exaggeration if we say that this is one of the topics on which Ethiopian Marxist-Leninists have probably discussed extensively. This should not surprise us. Ethiopia is a land of many nationalities.

When we examine the various ideas advanced in connection with the question of resolving the problem of nationalities in our country, we note that different groups present different positions. In the course of the development of our revolution, the incorrect and opportunist lines have now been defeated. Still, on the basis of the general scientific outlook and the concrete

reality of our country, it is necessary to explain in brief, how Ethiopia's genuine communists were able to attain the supremacy of their correct political line.

I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETIES

Before we speak about nationalities, national movements and their rights, it is perhaps necessary to recapitulate the various social systems mankind has passed through at different historical epochs, to show how nations and nationalities arose. When we examine the entire human history, we note that the rise of nations and nationalities is of a fairly recent origin. We will try to explain why this was so by looking at the various stages of social development mankind has gone through.

1. Pre-class Society

The structure of human groupings in pre-class societies was different from those which appeared with the emergence of class societies. The difference lies in the ways in which the groupings carried out their inter-relationship.

In pre-class societies, connections were based essentially on blood relationship and family roots. But with the emergence of class societies, the connection became mainly economic. Let us now look at the structure of pre-class societies.

A. Family

Family is a primitive productive unit. It is the first form of human grouping known in history. Here are its characteristics:

- 1) the members are all blood relatives ;
- 2) they speak the same language ;
- 3) they share the same belief and customs.

B. Tribe

Tribe replaced family as a social formation. Here are its characteristics:

- 1) the members are of the same racial origin;
- 2) they speak the same language;
- 3) they share similar beliefs and customs;
- 4) they have a common tribal hunting area.

Compared to family, tribe has a much looser blood kinship and unites many families. The above mentioned types of human groupings were present in primitive communist societies.

2. Stages of Social Development after the Emergence of classes

Families and tribes were the social units before the appearance of class societies. We have mentioned that during this period, mankind was passing through the stage of primitive communism.

People always try to establish their hegemony over nature, by conquering their surroundings. To facilitate this, they are forced to make division of labour. Division of labour appeared during primitive communism. The first such division was among cattle breeders and farmers. Then appeared handicraftsmen. It then became necessary to establish a way of exchange among these producing groups. A merchant class that benefits from facilitating the exchange thus arose and wealth began to be accumulated in the hands of a few individuals. This differential in wealth gave rise to classes. Recognizing that one can force others to work for one's benefit, state appeared as a coercive instrument of the powerful. After the division of people into classes, nationalities were the first form of social formation that appeared.

A. What is a nationality?

- 1) it has a common territory;
- 2) it has a common language;

- 3) it has a common outlook and customs;
- 4) its members are united through primitive economic relationship rather than through blood kinship.

What we want to indicate here is that under slave and feudal social systems, the highest form of social formation is nationality. The degree of development of nationalities is higher under the feudal system than under the slave system. Still, both social systems were characterized by nationalities. Therefore, in this respect the two social systems have differences in quantity but not in quality.

As productive forces under feudalism grew and were no longer able to be contained within the system, this system too was forced to disintegrate. Thus appeared the capitalist system. At this point nationalities were replaced by nations. Thus, for the first time we come to see the phenomenon of nations.

Stalin explains this new phenomenon in the following way:

*"A nation is not merely a historical category, but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism. The process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism is at the same time a process of the constitution of people into a nation."**

B. *What is a Nation?*

- 1) it has a common territory;
- 2) it has a common language;
- 3) it has a common psychological makeup manifested in a common culture;
- 4) it is a historically constituted, stable community of people formed on the basis of an advanced economic life.

Unless all the above conditions are fulfilled, we cannot say that there is a nation. It is because of this that nations appeared only with the emergence of capitalism.

* Stalin, *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*, p. 28.

II. THE ORIGIN OF NATIONAL MOVEMENTS AND THEIR GOALS

National movements arise wherever there is national oppression. Contradictions arise when national majorities and nations subject national minorities and other nations to oppression. Since no growth or development can take place unless contradictions are resolved, struggle ensues among the two groups. Thus emerge national movements.

The ruling class of one country puts other nationalities under a system of oppression not to establish the greatness of its nation but primarily to enhance its own economic interests. It is true that on a secondary level there arise the oppression of the languages and cultures of the oppressed nations. Basically the oppressed classes of both the oppressor and oppressed nationalities have class unity. In the same manner the ruling elements have an identity of interest. The ruling class of the oppressor nationality uses as an instrument the oppressed classes of its own nationality in streamlining its rule of exploitation over all nationalities. That is why Engels said that "A nation cannot become free and continue at the same time to oppress other nations".

In order to understand the phenomenon of national movements, we will try to analyze the nature of national movements that rose up to destroy feudalism and replace it with capitalism. Such movements were results of the union of many nationalities which came under one centralized government. We will also look at the type of national movements that emerged in the struggle against colonialism.

I. National movements that arose to destroy the feudal social system

In countries that have today attained full capitalist development, the class that led the bourgeois revolution and established

the capitalist system is the bourgeoisie. The primary motive of the bourgeoisie was not to liberate the oppressed nationalities. It was to create and monopolize a national market and maximize its profit. In this connection Stalin says: "The chief problem of the young bourgeoisie is the problem of the market. . . . The market is the first school in which the bourgeoisie learns its nationalism."*

In order to fulfill the above mentioned goal, the bourgeoisie tries to present its own class interest as if it is identical with the interest of the whole nation or the universal interest of mankind. It mobilizes workers, peasants and other sectors of the society by raising the slogan "liberty, equality and fraternity." Then, it carries out a massive national movement against feudalism in order to bring under its unified control all the isolated markets. In the process, it shatters all the walls that separate the various nationalities and creates a unified nation. This is how in western Europe, the German, French, English and Italian nations with strong central governments were formed. This meant that each of the above mentioned countries of western Europe became an integrated national states. For example, through the intermediarityship of capitalism, the Italian nation was formed from the unification of Tuton, Roman, Etruscan, Greek and Arab nationalities. The French nation was built from the Gaul, Briton, Tuton and Roman nationalities. We can say the same about the formation of other nations.

2. Movements in countries where feudalism is not abolished

In countries where feudalism has not been fully eliminated, a centralized government can be formed before the country has become a nation state. In this context the nationality or nationalities which control the leadership of the central government try to impose the

*Ibid., p. 31.

supremcy of their cultures, languages and general outlook on other nationalities. Because of this nationality movements which try to resist feudal or colonial opprosson arise.

In eastern Europe, many nationalities came to be placed under one centralized feudal government in order to jointly resist the wars of invasion from the east. Nationalities which came to be grouped together in this way fell under the oppression of one or two nationalities. To resist the oppression, the oppressed nationalities started movements.

3. Anti-imperialist movements

We have seen above how and when western European countries became nations and developed a full-fledged capitalist economy. They were able to resolve contradictions among nationalities at least temporarily. As we know from history, the situation did not stop at this level. When capitalism continued to develop and reached the imperialist stage, other countries became colonies thus bringing new nationalities under the control of western European capitalist countries. The new capitalist states thus became multi-national states. Soon nationalities under the control and oppression of foreign nations started movements for independence. Thus the national question became a colonial question. If colonial yoke has to be overthrown, progresives support even secession.

In this connection what sort of movements should be supported? Which ones should be opposed? Stalin gives us the answers:

*"This does not mean, of course, that the proletariat must support every national movement, everywhere and always, in every individual concrete case. It means that support must be given to such national movements that tend to weaken, to overthrow imperialism and not to strengthen and preserve it."**

*Ibid., p. 286.

III. THE RIGHT OF NATIONS TO SELF-DETERMINATION

What is the right of self-determination? Stalin writes:

*"The right of self-determination means that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, that no one has the right forcibly to interfere in the life of the nation, to destroy its schools and other institutions, to violate its habits and customs, to repress its language or curtail its rights."**

A nation has the right to secede and form its own independent state. Therefore, it is the obligation of every communist to accept that the right of self-determination includes the right to secession.

But at the same time, it is utopian to believe that the contradictions among nations and nationalities can be resolved only through secession. At different times, Marxists, starting from the concrete reality of the situation, have adopted various policies in the struggle for the resolution of contradictions among nations or nationalities. In order to explain that the solution to the problem of nations or nationalities should be based on historical and objective factors, Stalin writes:

*"The national question must not be regarded as something self-contained and fixed for all time. Being part of the general question of the transformation of the existing order, the national question is wholly determined by the conditions of the social environment, by the whole course of social development in general."***

*Ibid., p. 36.

**Ibid., p. 109.

Contradictions among nations and nationalities can be resolved either on the basis of unity or separation. Communists choose among these alternatives by making a concrete analysis of the place and time. Lenin says the following to show that the right to self-determination does not mean only the right to create mini-national states :

*"The right of nations to self-determination means only the right to independence in a political sense. . . . Consequently, this demand is by no means identical with the demand for secession, for partition, for the formation of small states."**

For example, between 1860 and 1869, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels tried to find a solution for the contradiction between the Irish and English nations within the context of unity. This was because they thought that the working class movement called the Chartist Movement of the oppressor English nationality would liberate the oppressed Irish masses. But since, after 1869, the English working class came to be more and more an instrument of the English ruling class, Marx and Engels began to give support to the Irish nationalist movement and the secession of Ireland.

Their views on Poland show similar considerations. Around the 1850's, Marx and Engels supported the secession of Poland from Russia because they felt that this step would weaken the imperialist supported Russian Tsarist rule and enable the Poles to achieve their independence. But at the beginning of the 20th century, Polish communists opposed the separation of Poland because they realized that Poland and Russia were economically and culturally very close to one another and the oppressed peoples of Russia had begun a revolutionary movement.

* Lenin, *On the National and Colonial Questions*, Peking ed., p. 5.

If we examine the above two cases, we note that communists present varied solutions to the problem of nations at different stages of historical development. Why is this the case? Communists know that the primary contradiction in class societies is the one that exists among classes. The moving force of history is the struggle between classes.

At any time, Marxists support national movements as long as such movements intensify the class struggle and tend to weaken imperialism. But if the movement tends to weaken the class struggle and strengthens imperialism, they deny it their support. In short, it is true that the problem of nations and nationalities can be partly resolved either through unity or through separation. But the important point we have to consider is always the interest of the working class.

Let us now look at the various sorts of solutions to the problem of nations and nationalities.

A) Separation or Secession: Whatever the level of their social development, countries under the control of colonialism and imperialism have to try to secede from the metropolitan power and establish their own independent state. They can secede as nations, nationalities or ethnic groups. For example, in England, national oppression can be overcome only through separation as long as revolution does not take place there.

B) Unification: Our era is the era of the proletarian revolution. Therefore, national movements cannot be seen apart from the international class struggle. Contradictions that arise as the result of the existence of many nationalities in countries where feudalism has not been abolished and where there is at

the same time a centralized government have to be seen in the context of anti-imperialist struggle. Imperialism strongly seeks to divide nationalities. On the other hand, communists strongly want the unity of all oppressed classes. Therefore, wherever it seems that oppressed classes are ready for struggle, the resolution of contradictions among nationalities must be sought in the context of unification. But even this takes different forms. These forms are:

1. **Federation:** Federation is the result of an agreement between two or more nations to unite. Federation entails even the right to secede. The federated nations also maintain the right to deal with other governments independently.
2. **Confederation:** Confederation is the result of a joint agreement between two or more nations to establish a common defense structure. The respective nations in no way have administrative connections. The connection is only for defense reasons.
3. **Regional Autonomy:** Regional autonomy is the right accorded to nationalities which live in the same region. Here, primacy is given to the nationalities with the largest population and with a higher degree of cultural development. The other smaller nationalities are accorded rights on the basis of the level of their social development, that is, according to the level of their economic and cultural development. As Stalin teaches us, regional autonomy can be applied on different levels. It includes the narrow right of internal self-administration, the right for political administration and the right to enter into a union based on mutual agreement.

Therefore, regional autonomy, as some people think, does not mean only a very limited and narrow administrative right. In this connection, here is what Stalin adds:

"Soviet autonomy is not a rigid thing fixed once and for all time. It permits the most varied forms and degrees of development. It passes from narrow administrative autonomy (the Volga Germans, the Chuvashes, Karelians) to a wider, political autonomy to a still wider form of it (the Ukraine, Turkestan); and, lastly, from the Ukraine type of autonomy to the higher form of autonomy—to contractual relations (Azerbaijan)."*

Some also try to present federation which is the last stage of regional autonomy being as different from the first and middle stages of regional autonomy. This view is incorrect. The difference between the stages is only quantitative. While the right to secede and establish independent relationship with foreign countries are accepted at the stage of federation, it is not recognized at the other stages. Therefore, when we seek to solve contradictions among nationalities within a unified context, we have to keep the following points in mind before we determine whether the unity should take place within the context of federation or the other stages of autonomy. When regional autonomy is presented as a solution, it must be able to fulfil the following conditions. It must :

- i) create a condition under which the revolutionary movement of the oppressed masses of the region can defend itself against agents and infiltrators;
- ii) improve the economic, historical and cultural development of the region ;
- iii) maintain the unity which the nationalities have already achieved and create a framework which can strengthen it even more .

*Stalin: *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question* p. 126.

C) Regional Autonomy and Cultural-National Autonomy:

There are qualitative differences between regional autonomy and cultural-national autonomy. At a meeting held at Brun, Austria, in 1899, the Austrian Social Democrats suggested as a solution to the problem of nations and nationalities cultural-national autonomy.

When we say cultural autonomy, we note that it is only limited to the right of nations and nationalities to protect and develop their particular cultures. But since culture is a reflection of the economic inter-relationship, cultural autonomy is not meant to change property relations. It does not bring the productive forces under the control of the oppressed classes and it does not indicate how the working people assume control of political power.

National autonomy is the right accorded to members of a particular nationality wherever they live. This means that it alligns people not on class basis but on the basis of national origin. In fact, it means that the rich who own the means of production and workers should all become members of the same union. As we know from history, in the country from where this idea originated, there came to exist five socialist parties with no relationship whatsoever. In Russia too, this phenomenon led to strengthen the Jewish organization (the Bund) which contained both the reactionary Jewish rich and the Jewish poor. Therefore, cultural or national autonomy are reactionary solutions which are always advanced by bourgeois spokesmen.

Regional autonomy is fundamentally different from both national autonomy and cultural autonomy. If put into practice, regional autonomy will bring the following benefits:-

- i) It does not divide nationalities that live together but it allows them to resolve the contradictions that exist among them within a unified framework;

- ii) It helps to intensify the class struggle and pave the way for socialism which provides the final solution;
- iii) Nationalities and other groups at a lower level of social development can create their own internal administrative structure;
- iv) It enables them to enrich their language and allows them to be educated in their respective languages;
- v) It helps them to maintain and enrich their cultures as needed;
- vi) It allows them to plan and create a system of economic equality.

Therefore, regional autonomy is a solution which is based on region and unity and which solidifies the unity and struggle of oppressed peoples.

The Soviet Union which made the first socialist revolution has applied the principle of regional autonomy at different levels to resolve contradictions among various social formations ranging from fully developed nations to ethnic groups. The People's Republic of China applied the same principle in solving the contradictions among its more than 50 nationalities.

Various stages of regional autonomy were applied and are still being applied in the Soviet Union. These are the following:

- a) Union Republic
- b) Autonomous Republic
- c) Autonomous Region
- d) National Areas

Union Republic: At the present, a union republic is a republic which contains various social formations ranging from fully

developed nations to ethnic groups. The union republic takes its name from the name of the biggest nation within its boundary. There are 15 such republics in the Soviet Union.

These union republics:

- 1) have their own national emblem and constitution;
- 2) have their representatives at the United Nations;
- 3) can establish their own defense force;
- 4) retain their right to secession.

Each republic has 32 representatives in the Supreme Soviet* of Nationalities.

Autonomous Republic: This republic also bears the name of the majority nation. While this republic has wide political and administrative autonomy, it has no right to secede from the union republic of which it is a part. It has no representation at the United Nations. It sends 11 representatives to the Supreme Soviet of Nationalities.

Autonomous Region: This right is accorded to nationalities and even smaller groupings. The region bears the name of the majority nationality. An autonomous region has a wide political and administrative autonomy. In the Supreme Soviet of Nationalities, it is represented by five persons.

National Areas: This right is given to those whose level of social development is below that of nationalities. The right is only administrative. Each National area sends one representative to the Supreme Soviet of Nationalities.

In short, it means that the Soviet Union accords rights to different peoples on the basis of their degree of social, economic and cultural development and on their numerical size.

In order to solve her problem of nationalities, the People's Republic of China adopted the following degrees of regional autonomy.

- a) Autonomous Region
- b) Autonomous Prefecture
- c) Autonomous County
- d) National Villages

Previously in China, the stage of social development did not go beyond the stage of nationalities. Therefore, the right to be accorded could not go beyond this stage of economic and cultural development. Thus, the right given to even the most advanced nationalities had to be limited to that of an autonomous region which means that they do not have the right to secede. But even if the right to secede was not given, China has been able to solve the contradictions among its nationalities.

We note some quantitative differences between the policies adopted by the Soviet Union and China. Yet, history has proved that both countries were correct. The respective policies are based on conclusions which the communists of both countries reached when they were trying to solve their problem of nationalities.

These conclusions are that:

- 1) the problem has to be resolved by taking into account the existing world situation;
- 2) the internal situation, especially the level of economic and cultural development of the society, has to be deeply analysed.

By using these criteria, the Soviet Union and China were able to solve their respective problems of nationalities by applying various degrees of autonomy.

IV. TENDENCIES OF BIG NATION CHAUVINISM AND NARROW NATIONALISM

There is no question that in any country where many nations or nationalities live, tendencies of big nation chauvinism and narrow nationalism continue to exist until that country builds socialism. The oppressor nation or nationality which holds power always tries to assert its supremacy. It ignores the languages of minority nationalities; it despises their cultures. This is a manifestation of the tendency of chauvinism which can culminate in racism. On the other hand, the oppressed nation or nationality shows the tendency to see the oppressed classes within the oppressor nation or nationality not as its allies but as its enemies. It tends to favour its own ruling classes rather than the oppressed classes of the oppressor nation or nationality. This is a manifestation of narrow nationalism.

Marxists strongly oppose the big nation chauvinism of oppressor nationalities and the narrow nationalism of oppressed nationalities. This is because the working class is guided by the principle of internationalism and not chauvinism. Therefore, cadres born from oppressed nationalities have to fight narrow nationalism. In this way, the oppressed classes can assume an internationalist outlook.

V. THE QUESTION OF NATIONALITIES IN ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia contains many different peoples at different stages of social development. When we say this, we are not talking only about the various nationalities but also about other groups at still lower levels of development.

It is not possible to state how many nationalities and ethnic groups exist in Ethiopia. Still, some studies indicate that there are about 75 nationalities. There are no figures for the number of those at still lower stages of social development. Even if we realize

that an accurate study must be made as soon as possible by a central body, still, we cannot refrain from indicating how the problem of nationalities in Ethiopia was created and how it can be solved.

Ethiopia is not a country with a fully developed capitalist economy. Consequently, the walls that separate the various nationalities have not fallen down. Ethiopia is a country where many nationalities and ethnic groups live under one central government. Therefore, the major issue that must be raised is the equality of all nationalities but not colonialism. Based on the general statements we have made on the question of secession, federation and regional autonomy, we will briefly investigate the concrete situation in Ethiopia.

A) The Question of secession: We have previously indicated under what set of conditions secession could be presented as a solution. Secession can be supported as long as it intensifies the class struggle and weakens imperialism. If it does not do these, it has to be opposed. Secession from revolutionary Ethiopia benefits imperialism and harms the oppressed masses. Therefore, the question of secession cannot even be raised.

B) The Question of federation: Federation is one form of union. Still, it provides a wider autonomy including the right to secede and to establish independent relations with foreign countries. At this moment, there are no conditions in revolutionary Ethiopia that can allow this right to be translated into practice. At the same time, the economic and cultural preconditions for the practice of such a right are not fully obvious in any part of Ethiopia. Thus, federation loosens the unity of struggle of the broad masses of Ethiopia instead of strengthening it and cannot be translated into revolutionary practice. Therefore it becomes obvious that the problem of nationalities in Ethiopia can only be resolved through regional autonomy. But a central institution which should study the problem of nationalities and indicate how the principle

of regional autonomy can be translated into practice as a solution to the contradictions must be established.

While we talk about federation, it might be thought that the type of federation which once existed between Eritrea and the rest of Ethiopia is one correct solution to the problem. Let us leave the details of the situation during those days to historians. But still, we note that this bourgeois federation was by no means based on a scientific study of the distribution of nationalities. It was simply a design put forward by imperialism when the region previously claimed by Italy was to be reunited with the rest of Ethiopia. Marxists do not opt for federation as a solution on the basis of mere liking. Before they decide, they study the economic condition, the cultural development and territorial distribution of the population of the particular nation or nationality.

Some misguided people say that the problem in the administrative region of Eritrea can be solved if the former federal status is reinstated. There is nothing scientific in this view. Federation is bilateral. Unless both parties agree, it cannot be imposed or implemented forcefully. But the secessionists who are fighting our revolution with arms want total separation. Unless this is the case, we do not see why the shape of the future unity should come only through violence. All nationality contradictions in Ethiopia will only be solved by applying the principle of regional autonomy after a detailed study is undertaken in each case.

VI. TENDENCIES OF BIG NATION CHAUVINISM AND NARROW NATIONALISM IN ETHIOPIA

Like in other countries with many nations or nationalities, in Ethiopia too there are manifestations of big nation chauvinism and narrow nationalism. When the Amhara and Tigray

ruling classes were competing for the crown of the feudal monarchy, they presented their own nationalities as superior to and different from the other nationalities in order to be able to forcefully rule over the latter. As a result, the Amhara and Tigray nationalities have developed tendencies of big nation chauvinism.

If we take the other nationalities, they show tendencies of narrow nationalism since they have lived under the oppressive rule of the Amhara and Tigray nationalities for a very long time. But as the situation is fully studied and known, a solution to the problem will also be found. Since the communists born from the oppressed nationalities have an internationalist outlook and aim, it is certain that, however long it might take, they will find a solution to the problem. In our epoch, both the problems of nations and nationalities can only be resolved within the context of socialism.

VII. THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION AND THE PROBLEM IN ERITREA

It would not be an exaggeration if we say that today one of the major obstacles on the path of the Ethiopian revolution is the problem in Eritrea. The secessionist struggle in Eritrea which started about 18 years ago, went on for 12 years under the feudo-bourgeois regime and continued even after the Ethiopian revolution erupted in 1974.

Previously, Ethiopian progressives had given their support to the groups assuming that they could disrupt the feudo-bourgeois system and then create a nation-wide revolutionary situation. But once the Ethiopian revolution erupted and continued to move forward, these groups which once were expected to

bring about a revolutionary situation that would lead to the overthrow of feudo-bourgeois system and to contribute in the struggle to unite the broad masses of Ethiopia to wage a nationwide class war, gradually became an opposition to the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia.

Since 1960, the separatists which at different times were divided into various factions eventually evolved into three separate groups. But even if the E.L.F., E.P.L.F. and E.L.F.—P.L.F. have given themselves different names, they are one and the same in their deeds. Even if at different times they branded themselves socialists in order to collect a substantial amount of arms, they have clearly exposed their anti-socialist stand in practice when they attacked our revolution.

The main reasons they present to justify their attempt to secede are the following :

- 1) The Eritrean question is a national question.
- 2) The Eritrean question is also a colonial question.

We will briefly analyze each of these positions.

CONCERNING THE ISSUE OF NATION

There is no need to prove the point that the separatist elements in Eritrea who say that the question in Eritrea is a national question start from the premise that Eritrea is a nation. But hoping that they have improved their position, since 1977 they have started to say that Eritrea is composed of nine nations. In actuality, not only in Eritrea but in the whole of Ethiopia, there is no a single people that has developed into a nation. In Eritrea alone, there are no less than nine nationalities at different stages of social development. The separatists do not represent even a single of these

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nationalities. In effect, they try to create divisions within each of these nationalities. That is why the Afar, the Kunama and the Barya have rejected them from the very beginning and have allied themselves with the Ethiopian revolution. And that is why these nationalities are today being persecuted by the separatists.

There is one other point. Over 50% of the total population of Eritrea belongs to the Tigray nationality. But the majority or two-third of the members of the Tigray nationality is to be found in Tigray, Gondar and Wollo administrative regions. This shows that the movement of the separatists is based on region, but not on nationality. Thus one can clearly see that the claim of the separatists that they lead a nationalist movement is non-scientific and deceitful when one realizes that the nationalities who constitute about 70% of the total population of Eritrea, live in the administrative regions of Tigrai, Gondar and Wollo. Therefore, the Eritrean question is not a question of one nation or a question of the many nationalities that live in Eritrea.

The movement in Eritrea is by no means a national movement. But even if it were, Stalin says that it must be viewed from the following perspective:

*"... Cases occur when the national movements in certain oppressed countries come into conflict with the interests of the development of the proletarian movement. In such cases support is, of course, entirely out of the question. The question of the rights of nations is not an isolated, self-sufficient question; it is a part of the general problem of the proletarian revolution, subordinate to the whole and must be considered from the point of view of the whole."**

* Ibid., p. 286.

CONCERNING THE ISSUE OF COLONIALISM

Colonialism comes into being when capitalism reaches the stage of imperialism and when capital overflows its own domestic or national boundaries into other areas in order to exploit other peoples in a direct or indirect manner. The question of colonialism does not arise where weak feudalism exists. Eritrea was reunited with the rest of Ethiopia during the time of Haile Selassie's feudal government after a long period of foreign rule. Therefore, when this is the actual case, the attempt to present the issue as a colonial question is merely to deceive people and not to care for the interest of the oppressed masses of Eritrea. This position does not, in the least, take historical materialism into account.

Imperialists vie for colonies because colonies are sources of cheap raw materials, cheap labour and market for manufactured goods. If from this perspective we see the movement of raw materials and goods between Eritrea and the rest of Ethiopia, the real situation becomes very clear. Even after the union, individuals born in Eritrea had the highest investment per capital both in Eritrea and the rest of Ethiopia. Therefore, the attempt to present the issue as a colonial question has no foundation whatsoever.

We have said that these groups earlier had support from the progressive quarters because it was felt that they would weaken the feudo-bourgeois regime of Haile Selassie. But they continued with their armed struggle even after the revolution of the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia erupted. Consequently, these groups which are led by big capitalists and the petty-bourgeoisie have exposed themselves as being thoroughly anti-democratic, anti-socialist and anti-peace.

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Marxism-Leninism teaches us that we have to accept any movement as long as it advances the class struggle. Correspondingly, we have to oppose any movement that dilutes or retards the class struggle. At this revolutionary moment, the movement of the separatists in Eritrea weakens the class struggle. Therefore, we oppose it and fight it. The problem of nationalities in Eritrea, like in the rest of Ethiopia, will thus be resolved through a systematic application of the principle of regional autonomy.

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because weak, the lowland nobility used to plunder the people of the highland. Islam and Christianity or religious differences were employed as covers for these ethnic wars. The most dominant nationality in this part of the Horn of Africa was the Tigray. The Tigray nobility from Hamasien, Shene, Warkal and especially from Asame constantly plundered and pillaged the minority nationalities inhabiting the adjacent lowland.

V

Genesis of the Problem in Eritrea

*"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle."**

Like all other political questions, the problem in Eritrea has to be explained in terms of contradictions among classes in the historico-economic plain. Though the name Eritrea and its history are new phenomena, by-products of the era of imperialism, nevertheless, imperialism did not root out many aspects of patriarchy and feudal relations that used to exist in the region for a long time. The contradictions among classes, nationalities, ethnic groups and villages that exist even today in the region, predate Italian colonialism.

Before Italian colonialism, the highland Amhara and Tigray, under the patronage of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the absolute monarchy, had built a feudal society which enabled them to have political hegemony in this part of the Horn of Africa. The lowland inhabitants of this region used to lead a scattered and nomadic life. Since the economy of the highlanders was more developed than the economy of the nomadic people of the lowland, the highland Amhara and Tigray nobility was easily able to dominate the nomadic people of the lowland. Ethnic warfare was the principal means on which the inhabitants of the two regions patterned their social relations and exchange of their produces. During times when the power of the highland nobility

* Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party.*

became weak, the lowland nobility used to plunder the people of the highland. Islam and Christianity or religious differences were employed as covers for these ethnic wars. The most dominant nationality in this part of the Horn of Africa was the Tigray. The Tigray nobility from Hamassien, Shire, Welkait and especially from Agame constantly plundered and pillaged the minority nationalities inhabiting the adjacent regions.

These brutal relations among nationality groups and tribes were generated by socio-economic conditions. It is only under socialism that national contradictions totally wither away. Since mankind will have control over nature under socialism, the contradictions between those who lead sedentary life and those who lead a nomadic life will be resolved. A new social order will be built, modern farms will be established in the lowlands, cities and towns will be built, industries will be established and a strong working class force will emerge. Such a social system will abolish once and for all the oppression of all nationalities and classes.

FEUDAL FORMATIONS IN ERITREA

Now we will attempt to study and analyze the patriarchal and feudal characteristics of the administrative region of Eritrea because, as we have mentioned earlier, feudalism still today has a tremendous political significance. Four types of feudal formations, predating Italian rule, can be identified in the different parts of the administrative region.

1. The first form is the one which is found in highland Eritrea and in the administrative region of Tigray. This form of feudalism is highly interconnected with the monarchy and the Orthodox religion. The nobility which represents this feudal order is found, especially in Serae, Akale-Guzay and Hamassien. Italian rule had to some extent weakened the power of this feudal nobility. This was because Italian imperialism began to settle its nationals on the highlands. And since this scheme was to be carried out extensively and since the feudal

production relations were an obstacle to this project, Italian colonialism had to weaken the power of this feudal nobility. The nobility was most hit in Hamassien because Italian activities were most concentrated in this area. Italian colonialism also appropriated lands which previously were owned by the Ethiopian Orthodox church. And because of this, the Ethiopian Orthodox church played an important role in the 1942 anti-British, anti-Italian and anti-Arab struggle under the slogan "*Ethiopia or death*".

While Italian imperialism on the one hand weakened the power of the feudal nobility of the Tigrigna speaking nationality, on the other, it encouraged fierce competition between the members of the chauvinist Amhara and Tigray nobility. The traditional rivalry between the ruling classes of the Amhara and Tigray is not something that can be underestimated. In an attempt to dominate the whole of Ethiopia, Italian imperialism skillfully manipulated these rivalries. Its siding once with the Shoan dynasty of Sahle Selassie and at another time with the Sebagadis dynasty in northern Ethiopia is a case in point. In this regard it is sufficient to recall the role which Italian imperialism played in the rivalry between Menelik II and Yohannes IV and during the fascist invasion of Ethiopia in the rivalry between Emperor Haile Selassie and Haile Selassie Gugsu. This divide-and-rule method was extensively employed in Eritrea among the Tigrigna speaking section of the population. Especially in Akale-Guzay and Serae, they brought into prominence the family of Ras Tessema by attempting to link it with the Sebagadis dynasty. The reactionary role of these feudal remnants is very pronounced in the history of the region. We would like to point out that we mention these royal families not because we are fascinated with their genealogy but to point out the reactionary role they have played in Eritrea as representatives of their class.

2. The second feudal form is represented by the caste society in western Eritrea. This caste system embraces the Tigre,

Bilen and in part the Beja nationalities. What are the characteristics of this caste system? The Tigre, the largest of the minority nationalities in Eritrea, is one of the oldest national groups of historic Ethiopia. They still speak the old language of the Orthodox church of Ethiopia, Ge'ez. It is no exaggeration to speak of the Tigres as the oldest Ethiopians.

What is the main characteristic of the caste system which holds grip of the Tigre and partly the Beja and the Bilen nationality groups? In short, it is a system where the ruled and the rulers are sharply divided by birth. It is not possible to move from one caste to the other. This type of society is more widespread in Asia than in Africa. For example, in India there are two major castes known as the Brahmins and the Untouchables. Because of the low level of development of the productive forces, the caste system we are describing here is simpler than the complex caste system of India. It resembles the relationship between the peasant and landlord in pre-revolutionary southern Ethiopia. But in form it resembles the Indian caste system. Here too the society is divided into the *Shemagele* and the *Tigre*, which are equivalent to the Indian Brahmins and Untouchables.

Among the *Tigre* nationality, the *Shemageles* do not engage in production. They are served by the *Tigres*. They do not intermarry with the "inferior" *Tigre*, because if they do, that will mean the end of their caste system. *Tigre* is not only the designation of the lower caste but also the name of the nationality. *Tigre* means one who is born to remain dependent, untouchable and in perpetual bondage. The Beni Amir nobility, a section of the ruling class, sometimes refers to the Tigre as *Ndessna*.

The term *Ndessna* means one who has a master or one who is possessed by another person. At other times the Beni Amir nobility contemptuously refers to the *Tigre* as *Kassa* or *Arab*. To simplify matters and to avoid confusions that may arise,

the term *Tigre* is used here to describe the ruled caste and also the nationality. Henceforth, we shall refer to the oppressed *Tigre* caste as *Ndessna*.

Before we return to an analysis of the second type of feudal form in Eritrea, we have to describe what the Beni Amir are, because the term is often misused and with a good reason. Beni Amir is not a term that denotes a nationality. Amir is a name given to an oppressive and dominant caste that historically evolved from union of the Tigre and Beja nationalities, the latter a Sudanese element. This caste lives predominantly in the Barka region of Western Eritrea. During the 16th century, a warlord of the Fung dynasty of the Sudan by the name of Amir—hence the term Beni Amir—and his followers subdued the Belaw ruling caste and their *Tigre* and Beja subjects in the Barka region and established their rule over the *Tigre* and Beja nationalities.

We also find an older caste system in the Red Sea region which is similar to the caste system of the Beni Amir. Here the caste system is headed by a cluster of families called the Belaw. Before it was pushed by the Beni Amir from the Barka region, the Belaw ruling caste held absolute hegemony over the vast majority of the *Tigre* nationality. Even if there is no adequate historical record of how the Belaw ruling caste was driven out from western Eritrea by the Beni Amir ruling caste, the rivalry exists even today between these two ruling castes. All evidences so far available seem to indicate that it is the Belaw ruling elements that developed the caste class system in Eritrea. The Belaw ruling caste was paying tribute to the Amhara and Tigray nobilities up until the 16th century. But from the time the Turks took over the port of Massawa until the coming of the Italians, they were peddling between the Ethiopian authorities and the Turks. Osman Saleh Sabe, representing the

Below, is today the leading expert in this art of peddling which his ancestors were masters at.

In the area dominated by the Beni Amir, besides class oppression and exploitation, the oppression of nationalities is also very pronounced. While the *Ndessna* speak Beja, the Beni Amir nobility speaks Tigre. We have said earlier that the Tigre nationality which still speaks Ge'ez is one of the oldest nationalities of historic Ethiopia. Here we refer even to the period predating the Axumite civilization. Basically, the whole of the Beja nationality is not under the domination of the Beni Amir nobility. While a section of the Beja nationality lives in Eritrea, the rest lives in eastern Sudan along the Red Sea. The latter leads a nomadic way of life. The successive Sudanese governments who have ruled over it have tried to destroy the language of the Beja nationality. The Beja language is related to the languages of the Afars, the Somali and the Oromo. While the government of the Sudan broadcasts E.D.U. and E.L.F. propaganda in Amharic and Tigrigna over Radio Oumdurman, it has never aired a program in the Beja language, the language of the entire people of the eastern Sudan. In this respect, a lot is expected from revolutionary Ethiopia in developing the languages and cultures of its oppressed nationalities.

3. The third feudal form is the religiously based caste feudalism which evolved in the course of the last two hundred years. Some *sheiks* created their own sects and soon mobilized people as followers. A large number of the Tigre people flocked to the *sheiks* and holy men believing that they would get a respite from caste slavery. Instead they came under a more oppressive and terroristic "divine" system. To mention a few of these religiously based castes, Adi-Sheik Al-Amin and Adi-Sheik Mustaffa are among the prominent ones. The "holy" families and the *sheiks* now constitute the upper crust of the ruling caste.

4. The fourth form which is similar to the third one is represented by the major Islamic sect known as *Murkaniya* and/or *Katimiya*. This sect does not fall within the caste system. Established in 1877 by Osman Murkani, it has acquired a wide following both in western Eritrea and in eastern Sudan. This sect is very similar to the Mahadi in the Sudan and we think it can be classified as a form of religious feudalism. The "holy" family appropriates an untold wealth from the simple folk.

ITALIAN POLICY IN ERITREA

The maintenance of the caste system was an important policy of Italian colonial rule. Since the Beni Amir ruling caste was an important instrument for Italian colonialism, its caste system remained intact throughout the period of Italian rule. In his book *Eritrea: A Colony in Transition*, Trevaskis, the British colonial administrator of Eritrea, wrote:

*"With the advent of Italians, it was natural that the Tigray, who had become no more than serfs, should seek to be freed from their disagreeable obligations. In the event the Italians, while abolishing the more intolerable dues and services owed by the Tigray, found the traditional, political and social structure of the tribes too convenient for their purposes to be unduly weakened by reform. And so they were careful to support the authority of the traditional chiefs and, thereby, preserved the obnoxious social system over which they presided."**

The most important feature of this policy was the systematic settlement of Italian nationals in highland Eritrea. The Italians were not merely colonial administrators. Like European settlers in Rhodesia, South Africa and Algeria they were engaged in all types of business activities. The Eritrea of 1935 in many ways resembled present day Rhodesia. Today in Rhodesia, the white to black ratio is 1:16. In Eritrea the ratio used to be 1:15. In

* G.K.N. Trevaskis, *Eritrea: A Colony in Transition 1941-52*, Oxford Univ. Press, London 1960, p. 14.

1935, the number of Italian settlers was 50,000; by 1941 it reached 70,000. In addition there were 18,000 Arabs and 25,000 persons of mixed races. The total estimate of the entire population of Eritrea in 1943 was 750,000. Most of the colonialists settled in the highland regions inhabited by the Tigray nationality. We estimate the size of this Tigray population to be around 300,000 in 1941.

During this period, the Eritrean working class was subjected to extreme exploitation. It laboured as house-hold servant, as garage mechanic, as bartender, as aid to masons and carpenters and as manual labourers at extremely low wages.

During its tenure of rule, Britain did not change the social structure built by the Italians. About this, Trevaskis says:

*“Society (in Asmara) broke down into European, Asian and Eritrean racial groups. . . . The Europeans, or Italians as they mostly were, . . . a whole community in themselves. The Arabs were traders and shopkeepers; but, within the petty-bourgeoisie to which they belonged, there were also Abyssinian moslims or Jeberti. The majority of the Eritreans were labourers, white-collared workers and artisans. Most, also, were Christian Abyssinians. Here then was a society shaped by race, religion and occupation... a society where race and religion indicated occupation and class of the individual....”**

In the sphere of education too, the Italians had adopted a racist policy. Educational opportunity was limited to the fourth grade. Even a Swedish missionary school which provided education for its religious functionaries up to the sixth grade was closed down by the Italians. The broad masses in Eritrea were thus put in a state of total enslavement and illiteracy. This situation did not change a bit when the British colonialists replaced the Italians in 1941. Invoking articles of the Hague Convention of 1907 concerning countries defeated in wars, the British said that Eritrea was

**Ibid.*, p. 46

still legally an Italian colony and that they were only temporary administrators, and thus left the judicial and police power in the hands of the Italians. During the early years of British rule, there were separate hospitals, restaurants and cinema houses for blacks and whites. About the racial barrier which the British inherited and perpetuated, Trevaskis writes:

*“The former departments of the Italian administration continued to function much as before, under varying British supervision For this the British were largely indebted to the accommodating behaviour of the Italian officials.”**

Trevaskis hypocritically comments why the British continued to follow the racist policy of the Italians:

*“The first major problem was posed by the Racial Law and a body of subsidiary legislation designed to enforce racial segregation, confer social and economic privileges on Italian citizens, and generally uphold the principle of ‘white superiority’. There was every justification for the immediate annulment of this whole body of offensive law. But at a time when the temper of the Italian population was a matter anxious concern to the Administration, there was much to be said for leaving matters as they were.”***

As we saw, the British continued with the racist, administrative and economic policies of the Italians. The racist policy evoked a deep feeling of anger and resentment on the part of the oppressed masses. Although the British were in charge of the overall administration, the Italians remained as mayors, judges and police officers. The fascist and criminal codes continued to operate. Above all, the economy remained under the full control of the Italians. During the ten years of British rule, there was massive unemployment.

* *Ibid.*, p. 21.

** *Ibid.*, p. 30.

The British also tried to divide the people of the region by exploiting religious differences. Trevaskis says that "The Christian Abyssinian comprised more than 2/3 of the Eritrean population". "Socially and economically, however, they were the weakest elements in it." He continues. "No group was hit so severely than the Christian Abyssinian. The Christian Abyssinian found nothing but unemployment or employment at starvation pay." This is truly a slip of the tongue on the part of Trevaskis but is the truth. To provoke tension, the British officially claimed that the ratio of the Christian population to the Moslim is one to one as "turned in by the village chiefs." This is absolutely false. In Eritrea the Moslims are a small fraction of the population inhabiting mostly the desert regions. In mainland Ethiopia on the other hand, the adherents of the two religions are probably equal in number. This is confirmed in a recent book entitled *Languages in Ethiopia* which Bender wrote for the Ford Foundation. Bender estimated that 80% of the population in Eritrea speak Tigrigna of which the vast majority is Orthodox Christian.

POLITICAL STRUGGLE DURING THE PERIOD OF BRITISH OCCUPATION

In opposition to the exploitative economic and political policies of the British, a patriotic movement called "*Fikri Hager*" was clandestinely organised in 1942 by the Tigrigna speaking part of the population. This movement was strongly supported by the Ethiopian Orthodox church. This patriotic front which cut across class lines was established under the motto "*Mother Ethiopia or death*". It was strongly anti-British and anti-Italian. The following is a sample of the leaflet that this patriotic movement clandestinely used to put out:

"You the people of Eritrea, think of your Mother Ethiopia. She will not betray you in as much as you will not betray her. She feeds you. The Italians wipe you out; they rape your wives. While they starve you, the British feed and fatten the aliens. Have you not seen that Italians and Arabs become rich while you go wearing rag-tags. Have

you not seen that the British humiliate you while they treat the aliens. Well there are traitors who tell you that the British are your friends. Do not believe them. Can you really believe that the British care more for you than their fellow white men? Do not the British give more preference even to their Sudanese and other friends? Know this! You cannot get support from anyone, but only from your Mother Ethiopia. Fight the aliens! Be prepared to die for your Mother Ethiopia... Long live Ethiopia!"

What we also learn from this leaflet is the brutal treatment that Sudanese soldiers who were brought by the British used to inflict upon the oppressed masses of Eritrea. For example, when on August 18, 1946, a Sudanese soldier was killed in a feud, Sudanese soldiers cold-bloodedly murdered 48 innocent people and wounded over 60. Such inhuman acts intensified the bitterness of the masses against colonial rule.

It is also clear that the leaflet condemns the activities of traitorous group led by Ras Tessema and his cohorts. This is a family we had mentioned earlier which the Italians were pampering to compete with the Shoan ruling houses. This group had the intention of establishing an entity to be known as "Greater Eritrean State," made up of highland Eritrea and the Administrative region of Tigray. According to the plan of this traitorous group, this entity would remain under British tutelage for an indefinite period of time. The British, while on the one hand supporting the traitorous activities of the group led by the Ras Tessema clique, on the other side, allied with Haile Selassie in suppressing the *Wayane* uprising in the administrative region of Tigray which was fighting for the secession of the region. Typical of them, the British were politically supporting the secessionists and at the same time militarily annihilating the very secessionists.

The Ras Tessema clique had the support of the nobility only. It could not have been otherwise because this clique had two major

reactionary stands. First, it supported the continuation of the racist British colonial rule. And second, it advocated the replacement of the rule of the Sahle Sellassie dynasty and by that of the Sebagadis dynasty. This archaic political thinking could not in the least interest the masses. This traitorous group was organized in 1947 as a political party under the supervision of the then British colonial administrator, Brigadier Beynon. It called itself the "Progressive Liberal Party." A few intellectuals joined this party. The principal political actor of the so-called E.L.F., Woldeab Wolde Mariam, also became a member of this party. Woldeab Woldemariam was a loyal editor of the weekly newspaper that used to be put out by the British colonial administration in Tigirgna. His political stand was identical with that of the Ras Tessema clique. As we shall see later on, Woldeab Wolde Mariam today peddles around the capitals of the various Arab countries saying that the people who inhabit the administrative region of Eritrea have no historical connection with the rest of the peoples of Ethiopia whereas he started his political career by calling for the unity of Tigrigna speaking people of Tigray, Gondar, Wollo and Eritrea as a historically constituted nationality and that they should struggle for independence. Of course, he pleaded for imperialist support for his enterprise.

In contrast, when we examine the class composition of the patriotic movement which embraced the Tigrigna speaking section of the Eritrean population with the exception of a small number of traitors, the workers, peasants and the intellegentsia all struggled under the motto, "*Ethiopia or death!*" In addition, other elements such as the Ethiopian Orthodox church and members of the feudal nobility whose interests were affected by colonial rule also joined this front. Because the Ethiopian Orthodox church and few members of the nobility joined this front, some pseudo-progressives who do not understand the nature of class struggle, tried to label this patriotic front as reactionary. Since their analysis was based on religion but not on class, they could not explain why religious and patriotic elements could participate in an anti-colonial and anti-

imperialist struggle. Even though the Orthodox church and some feudal elements joined the patriotic front largely to regain their properties confiscated by the Italian colonialists, the very fact that they joined this anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle for national independence makes them progressive.

The broad masses, especially those of the urban areas, were angered by the blatant racial discrimination practised by the Italian and British colonialists. Notwithstanding the class and nationality oppression and exploitation that prevailed in feudal Ethiopia, still independent Ethiopia was a symbol of freedom and independence not only for the masses in Eritrea but also for the entire black peoples of the world. It is difficult to adequately describe the nationalist sentiment of the broad masses of Eritrea, especially of those in the highland areas. The secessionists and those who are downright liars claim that this patriotic front was a creation of Haile Selassie and the Ethiopian Orthodox church. But no one else can deny the fact that the movement was a genuine reflection of the true sentiment of the masses of the region.

It is a historical paradox that while those who struggled under the motto "*Ethiopia or death*" were humiliated during Haile Selassie's rule, individuals like Tesfa-Yohannes Berhe, the Secretary General of the so-called Liberal Progressive Party, who used to advocate the continuation of British colonialism were given all the political and legal power to rule over Eritrea as though it were their own real estate. It was sad to see those genuine patriots being persecuted by the combined force of Haile Selassie's government and those who were trying to sell Eritrea to imperialism.

POLITICAL MOVEMENT OF MINORITY NATIONALITIES

The alignment of class forces within the lowland nationalities was slightly different. Issues of classes, nationalities and religions

were highly intertwined. Under the auspices of the British colonialists, a political organization called Rabita-El-Islamiya was formed in 1946 under the chairmanship of Abubaker Osman Al-Mourkani and the secretary generalship of Hadji Ibrahim Sultan. As we mentioned earlier, Abubaker Osman Al-Mourkani was the head of the Islamic sect known as *Katimia Tarika*. This organization had the intention of bringing Eritrea under its total control with the support of its muslim followers. Since the class interests of the members of this organization were somewhat varied, the sect immediately began to desintegrate. By exploiting the existence of religious inequality in Ethiopia, and especially by invoking the persecution of Muslim Ethiopians during the reign of Yohannes IV, it adopted a reactionary political line that advocated either the continuation of British rule over Eritrea or the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia. (Here one should recall that the Italians used to give preference to the Islamic religion in order to realise their divide-and-rule policy). What Rabita EI-Islamiya did not understand was the fact that even the secession of Eritrea could not guarantee religious equality. This was because the Tigrigna speaking nationality in Eritrea, the largest nationality group, was a strong follower of the conservative Ethiopian Orthodox church. Including those in Eritrea, the northern Orthodox Ethiopians are reknown for their religious fanaticism. Therefore, given the minority status of muslims, there was no way that the secession would bring about religious equality in Eritrea. Hence, Rabita EI-Islamiya's policy could have not led beyond continued dependency of British colonialism and the continued application of Italian and British policies.

Rabita EI-Islamiya on the other hand, did not embrace the "holy" Islamic castes and their followers. The followers of this "holy" castes were members and sympathisers of the patriotic front led by the Unionist Party. Why was it that Rabita EI-Islamiya could not mobilise the followers of the "holy" caste,? This was because both Rabita EI-Islamiya and the Islamic "holy" castes were engaged in stiff competition among themselves over the appropriation of the surplus produced by the oppressed. Above all,

since Hadji Ibrahim Sultan was involved during the last minute in the emancipation struggle of the *Ndessna*, and since he was also involved in the Rabita EI-Islamiya movement, the Islamic holy castes joined the patriotic front in order to oppose him. What was the nature of the *Ndessna* movement? Under the Italian colonial rule, the *Ndessna* were virtually slaves. As soon as the British replaced the Italians, the *Ndessna* started a movement to ameliorate their wretched social and political conditions. In 1942, the *Ndessna* in the Sahel region started a rebellion which lasted for seven years. As a consequence of this rebellion, the British in 1949 were forced to lift the heavy taxes that the *Shemagele* ruling caste used to impose upon the *Ndessna*. Still, the British did not take any step to curb the other feudal obligations of the *Ndessna*. Since the *Ndessna* movement was controlled by the religious fanatic, Hadji Ibrahim Sultan, it essentially remained reformist. Even in the areas where the caste system was abolished, feudal relationships between the ruler and the ruled were re-established.

The broad masses of Ethiopia who have abolished feudalism from the rest of Ethiopia have a historic responsibility to help liberate their oppressed Beja and *Tigre* class-brothers from the oppressive yoke that had been imposed upon them for the past 700 years by the Belaw ruling castes, the *Kentibas*, *Nahibs* and in general by the Beni Amir (*Shemagele*) ruling caste system. That day is not far when the oppressed Bejas and Tigres will be liberated. The day will not be far off when the Beni Amir ruling caste will be told either to work for its own livelihood or to go back to Mecca from where it claims to have originated.

To return to our main point, as a result of the steps taken by the British to reduce the tax imposed on the *Ndessna*, the political situation in western Eritrea radically changed. Rabita EI-Islamiya too was split into two in 1950. Rabita EI-Islamiya was entirely made up of the adherents of Islam with the few exceptions we mentioned earlier.

Sheik Ali Raday and Sheik Mohammed Idris Adem who were terrified by the *Ndessna* emancipation movement in the Sahel area established a political group known as the "Moslem League of the Western Province." The plan of this group was to put the region between Akordat and Tessenei under British colonial rule. They opted for the stand which would ensure them to maintain their political and social hegemony as long as possible. Trevaskis says the following about the aim of the group:

*"Their difficulty was that they had no positive convictions and now that they were limited to western Eritrea. . . . They were anxious for British support and, but for the Beni Amir-Hadendawa (Beja) feud, might well have declared themselves in favour of western Eritrea's union with the Sudan. As it was, they fell back on the somewhat absurd demand that western Eritrea should acquire independence after a period of British trusteeship."**

It is clear that the very notion of Eritrea's secession, at least in parts of Eritrea, was advanced as early as 1950 by the representatives of the most reactionary classes in Eritrea. It is perhaps not surprising that individuals like Sheik Idris Mohammed Adem, founders of the Western Eritrean Moslem League, are today the leaders of the so-called Eritrean Liberation Front (E.L.F.). There is an unmistakable link between the E.L.F. and the Muslem League of the Western Province. The same personalities who played the dominant role in the earlier organization now lead the E.L.F. That is why we date the foundation of the E.L.F. to 1950 and say that the E.L.F. is merely a continuation of the Muslem League. In some other respects, it is even possible to trace the origin of the E.L.F. to the bandit or "shifta" movement of the early 1940's.

Here, it is necessary to describe how on the one hand the Beni Amir caste system was maintained for a long time around the Barka region, and on the other hand, how the struggle for emancipation of

* *Ibid.*, p. 97.

the oppressed in the other regions where the caste system existed was conducted. The Beja nationality which was dominated by the Beni Amir ruling clique carried out a violent struggle from 1942 to 1946 over the issue of grazing lands. During the Italian period, the Beni Amir who were an important instrument for Italian colonialism were provided with all the opportunity to enlarge their grazing lands. The nomadic Beja nationality had to obviously resist the encroachment of the Beni Amir. With the defeat of the allies of the Beni Amir, the Italians, it was natural for the Beja to attempt to restore their traditional grazing areas. In certain areas, they succeeded to push out the Beni Amir. In retaliation, the Beni Amir ruling clique organized a roving bandit group consisting of 700 people, under the leadership of Ali Muntaz and Idris Awate (later the founder and commander of the E.L.F. army). This roving bandit carried out an extensive pillage and plunder against the Beja, Kunama and Barya nationalities for a period of four years. While the oppressor caste was militant and armed, the oppressed castes were not in a position to launch an emancipation movement as their class brethren did in Sahel. Thus the Beni Amir ruling caste remained intact.

In order to contain this volatile situation, the British made the Beni Amir ruling caste pay compensation for the material and human loss that they had inflicted upon the Beja nationality. They also gave full amnesty to the roving bandits of Idris Awate. We shall later on see this same Idris Awate emerging as military commander of the so-called E.L.F. It is possible to say that the core of the so-called E.L.F. whose practice is to burn villages, to annihilate minority nationalities and plunder the peasant masses, was in fact formed in 1942. Even if it subsequently tried to wear a progressive mask, the E.L.F. was in actuality a collection of former bandits who were members of the Beni Amir ruling caste. The brigandage that the members of the so-called E.L.F. carry out daily against the peasant masses in Eritrea is an illustration of the organization's class and caste content. Even though the E.L.F. receives vast sums of money from reactionary Arab regimes, it never compensates the peasant masses for the provisions it acquires

from them. In this way, it has been exploiting the broad masses, especially the oppressed *Ndessna* of the Barka region for the past 17 years. And that is why there cannot be doubt that the oppressed masses of the region will align themselves with the Ethiopian revolution. There is no doubt that the Ethiopian revolution will liberate the *Ndessna* of the Barka from the Beni Amir caste slavery.

It is evident that the E.L.F. is one of the major arch enemies of the Ethiopian revolution. When we examine its history, we note that this organization was established by feudalists like Idris Adem and Idris Awate. The anti-feudal Ethiopian revolution and the feudal oriented movement in Eritrea are two incompatible forces and there is no way of reconciling them.

Idris Adem comes from the Beni Amir ruling caste. During the period of the federation, he was the president of the Eritrean Parliament. He was also one of the founders of the Muslim League of the Western Province which advocated the secession of western Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1950. This reactionary individual was also the president of the so-called E. L. F. between 1960 and 1969 and again between 1969 and 1975. His commander-in-chief, Idris Awate, too comes from the Beni Amir ruling caste. As a leader of a bandit group he carried out a systematic campaign of extermination against the oppressed Beja and Kunama nationalities between 1942 and 1946. Later on as military commander of the E.L.F. he continued his murderous activities. It is obvious that an organization found and led by such individuals could be nothing other than thoroughly reactionary and counter-revolutionary.

THE POLITICS IN ERITREA FROM 1952 TO 1974

After disrupting the economy of the region, the British left Eritrea in 1952. Upon their departure, they dismantled machines and large industrial complexes and sold them to the Sudan and Pakistan. Once the British left, various political forces representing different strata of the ruling classes began competing in order to take

control of the economic and political power of the region. All types of political deals and agreements were subsequently made among these political forces. Since the masses had no right to vote, the parliament in Eritrea was filled with the representatives of the feudal and the comprador bourgeois elements. From the Ras Tsema family alone, there were 17 individuals who were members of this rubber-stamp parliament. Though the Unionist Party had the support of the masses, it was only the feudalist element that was mostly represented. From the Barka region, it was only the Beni Amir ruling caste and elements that served as British and Italian agents that had full representation in the parliament. It was at this point that the Beni Amir ruling caste and these agents tried their best to take full control of the first government established under the Federation. This ruling caste and the Italian and British agents, who had earlier said in the open that the Unionist Party was their principal enemy and that Eritrea should be divided, now formed a united front with the Unionist Party and began to fully co-operate with the feudo-bourgeois regime of Haile Selassie. They also exerted their maximum effort to take full control of the administrative bureaucracy in Eritrea.

At that time, they tried their best to make Salah Hinit, who later on became Haile Selassie's minister, the chief administrator of Eritrea. But this effort did not materialize. And as a consequence, the ranks of the Beni Amir ruling caste and the colonial bureaucratic agents began to disintegrate. Nevertheless, they were able to get appointed Sheik Ali Radai as chairman of the feudalist parliament in Eritrea. But Sheik Ali Radai was soon replaced by Sheik Idris Adam. The perennial opportunist, Tedla Bayru who had been made chief administrator of the region, was replaced by Asfaha Wolde Michael through the intrigue of Andargatchew Messay.* After having played out his reactionary role, Sheik Idris Adam too, after a brief tenure, was dismissed from his chairmanship of the feudalist-dominated parliament. The attempt of the Beni Amir ruling caste to dominate the administrative bureaucracy likewise failed. The Tigrigna speaking bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements

* Son-in-law of Haile Selassie

took control of the bureaucracy. As a consequence, the alignment of class forces in the region began to be radically altered.

An organization called the "Eritrean Liberation Movement" (E.L.M.) was established in 1956 by Ibrahim Sultan and Woldeab Wolde Mariam. It should be recalled here that Ibrahim Sultan was one of the leaders of Rabita El-Islamiya and Woldeab Wolde mariam, a member of the so-called Liberal Progressive Party. For a while, this latter organization was influential in the urban areas and in the Sahel region. These secessionists tried to bring the Eritrean case once again before the United Nations through the aid of Arab countries. In order to outmanoeuvre the so-called E.L.M. Idris Adem formed in 1961 another organization by the name of the Eritrean Liberation Front (E.L.F.) and put the notorious bandit, Idris Awate, in charge of its military affairs.

Through its foreign spokesman, Osman Saleh Sabe representing the interest of the Belaw ruling caste, the E.L.F. began conducting propaganda claiming that Eritrea is part of the Arab world. This movement in the early years had the characteristic of a Jihad. Sheik Idris Adem had the apparent belief that by creating chaos in Eritrea and shedding blood, the U.N. would once again intervene and as a result, he believed that he would emerge as the powerful political figure of the region. In this attempt, he thought that he would get popular support. And even today there are many other disciples of Idris Adem who are engaged in bringing death and destruction to innocent people. What has to be remembered here is that the feudalism-dominated E.L.F. turned immediately to its bandit activity as soon as it realized that it could not achieve its aim through the game of parliamentary politics.

Similarly, the E.L.M., thinking that it would outmanoeuvre the E.L.F., infiltrated in 1964 thirty armed people through the Sudan. The followers of Idris Awate murdered cold-bloodedly all thirty of them on the ground that the armed bandit of E.L.M.

was composed of Christians and members of oppressed castes. The important thing that should be remembered here is that because of the rivalry and feud among these bandit groups, the masses of the region were subjected to lot of sufferings. The E.L.M. completely abandoned its former political line and reached a political understanding with the E.L.F. As it suffered a heavy defeat in the hands of the E.L.F., the E.L.M. soon disappeared as a political force of any consequence. Consequently, the E.L.F. became an organization of the lowland people dominated by the Barka ruling caste. The conflict between the E.L.F. and the E.L.M. was largely a result of class differences. While the E.L.M. was an organization of the petty-bourgeoisie, the E.L.F. was an organization of the feudal Belaw and Beni Amir ruling castes. Up until 1969, there was virtually no representation of the oppressed and/or the *Ndessna* within the E.L.F.. Even by 1969, there was only one individual from the ranks of the oppressed classes.

REGIONALISM, ABSOLUTISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE ERITREAN BOURGEOISIE

When the British left Eritrea in 1952, the region suffered a temporary economic crisis. With the exception of few capitalists, such as Casciani, Denaday, Fenilli, Melotti, Bamushmush and Abba Habesh, over 60,000 Italian and Arab settlers left the region selling their property. Then the weak Eritrean bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie came to control the economy of the region.

This change brought about the rapid growth of the power of the bureaucracy which was dominated by the Tigrigna speaking elements. Within a short period of time, many became owners of cars. They moved into villas vacated by the Italians and Arabs. The main beneficiary was the former separatist group which was known as the Liberal Progressive Party and which was led by Tesfa Yohannes Berhe, a member of the Ras Tessema family. This was also the group that dominated the bureaucracy. This was also the

group that used to harass and persecute the members of the Unionist Party. The growth of the bourgeois and the petty bourgeois elements was very rapid. Industrial products found a wide market all over Ethiopia. New factories, especially textile factories, began to be established. Eritrea soon became the center of Ethiopia's light industry. Between the date of the establishment of the Federation and 1974, the Eritrean bourgeoisie became economically fully integrated with the Ethiopian ruling classes.

This was how more or less the Eritrean bourgeoisie originated and grew. Both the bourgeoisie and the working class were mainly from the Tigrigna speaking population. The population of the lowlands was under the complete domination of the Beni Amir and the Belaw ruling castes gathered under the cover of the so-called Eritrean Liberation Front. The people of the lowlands were basically outside the framework of the emerging bourgeois economy and thus whatever they produced went to maintain the marauding bandits. They were thus left to extreme exploitation and deprivation. At the same time, from the people who lived in areas where E.L.F. operated, hundreds were killed by the repressive regime of Haile Selassie on the pretext that they were sympathisers of the marauding bandits. The chauvinistic government of Haile Selassie was objectively the unwitting supporter of the E.L.F. While on the one hand, the ELF was designing every means to exterminate the people, the feudo-bourgeois government of Haile Selassie was also engaged in a systematic annihilation of the lowland people giving thus a credence to the E.L.F.'s reactionary propaganda that the Christians were carrying out an extensive campaign of extermination against the Muslim section of the population. As a result, quite a number of lowlanders fled to the Sudan. While the broad masses were thus subjected to this type of repression and brutality, it is estimated that the E.L.F. lost only 300 of its combatants up to 1972.

It seemed, therefore, that there was a full understanding between the reactionary E.L.F. and the equally reactionary feudo-bourgeois regime of Haile Selassie to jointly exterminate the innocent and

peaceful population of the region. The E.L.F. deliberately used to start shoot-outs in and around villages in order to bring about the death and destruction of the oppressed through massive retaliation of Haile Selassie's brute military force. By conducting such activities the E.L.F. still hoped to reinvolve the U. N. in the Eritrean issue. On the other hand, Haile Selassie's government did not care for the welfare of the broad masses of the region. To illustrate how little it cared for the broad masses of the country, it is enough to recall its inhuman policy towards the Wollo famine in which hundreds of thousands died.

The E.L.F. and Haile Selassie's government had also similar language policies. During both the British administration and the Federation, Tigrigna was used as a medium of instruction in primary schools. But later on Haile Selassie's government banned the use of Tigrigna in these schools. This chauvinistic policy was strongly opposed by the population. The Amharic language, instead of becoming the common medium of communication amongst the peoples of Ethiopia, was made an instrument to suppress other languages and cultures. Many young people who were angered by this policy joined the E.L.F. Nevertheless, the E.L.F. too adopted a similar language policy. By claiming that the Tigrigna language was the language of the Christian population alone, it chose Arabic as its *lingua franca*. The Tigrigna speaking people who joined the ranks of the E.L.F. were regarded as mere spies.

The cultural oppression that prevailed in the region during Haile Selassie's time did not affect the growth of the Eritrean bourgeoisie. Let us take a look at the new class alignment that developed. During the period of their colonial rule, the Italians had strengthened the power of the ruling castes over the peoples of the lowland. Even amongst the people where there were previously no ruling castes, for example among the Saho, they appointed individuals like the grandfather of Ahmed Nasser, the current chairman of the so-called E.L.F. as overlords. At the same time however, they strongly weakened the power of the traditionally

powerful Tigrigna speaking nobility with the exception of members of a few selected families.

This situation changed during the time of the Federation. The Tigrigna speakers took control of the bureaucracy. The Tigrigna speaking bourgeoisie became a distinct and powerful class and a full ally of the feudo-bourgeois regime of Haile Selassie. The feudal nobility of western Eritrea which had been relatively weakened through the process of integration and alliance between the Tigrigna speaking feudo-bourgeois elements and feudalists, in central Ethiopia formed a "liberation movement" then under the leadership of Sheik Mohammed Idris Adem who was the chairman of the feudalist dominated Eritrean parliament. This is how the E.L.F. tried to resist the traditional dominance of the highland ruling class over the people of the lowlands which, for centuries, had to pay tribute to the Amhara-Tigray ruling coalition. During Italian colonialism, the highland ruling classes were weakened. But during the Federation, their dominance began to revive. The ruling classes of lowland Eritrea did not watch this development with their hands folded. With the support of Italian bureaucrats and ex-Italian soldiers, they formed a movement. While these were the facts, how was it possible that progressives both in and outside Ethiopia deluded themselves by believing that the E.L.F. was a progressive movement?

There were a number of people who, without knowing the real nature of the E.L.F. joined it in the apparent belief that by working within its ranks, they would help bring about the demise of Haile Selassie's rule. Since at that time nobody fully understood the class composition of the E.L.F., Ethiopian and international progressive forces came to adopt a similarly wrong view towards it. Consequently the E.L.F. grew stronger. Why was it that Ethiopian and the international left forces and radicals pinned their hopes on such a thoroughly reactionary movement?

When Ethiopia was under the grip of U.S. imperialism and when there was no strong progressive movement which could challenge the tyranny of the feudo-bourgeois order, a number of honest individuals committed a serious error by considering E.L.F. as an anti-feudal movement. The conflict between Idris Adem, the founder of the E.L.F. and Haile Selassie did not stem from a fundamental class difference. Both of them were thorough feudalists. What accounted for their conflict was Haile Selassie's attempt to establish an absolute monarchical rule all over the country. Idris Adem, as a feudal regionalist, did not want to see this type of absolute political power established over his fief. And therefore, to oppose Haile Selassie's absolute domination and thereby to maintain his fief intact, Idris Adem started a rebellion under an organization by the name of the Eritrean Liberation Front. To restate the case, it was a conflict between absolutism and local regionalism, between Haile Selassie and Idris Adem each representing opposite tendencies so dominant in Ethiopian history. It is this fact that the Eritrean petty-bourgeoisie failed to grasp.

ON THE QUESTION OF DEMOCRACY IN ERITREA

The Eritrean petty-bourgeoisie advanced the myth that during the racist British colonial rule and the Federation, there existed a full-fledged bourgeois democracy in Eritrea which was annulled following Eritrea's integration with Ethiopia in 1962. Indeed there was some form of bourgeois democracy. But this so-called democracy did not even give the masses the right to elect and to be elected. For example, women were not allowed to vote. Elections took place only in Asmara and in Massawa. From among the rural population, 80% of those who had the right to vote for members of parliament were the rural notables, village chiefs and judges. And those who were elected were invariably members of the feudal and caste nobility.

For example, among the 62 members of the parliament, 17 were members of the Ras Tessema family. Even from among the 5

members which the city of Asmara elected, 4 were regional and local judges. These were Fitawrari Solomon Haile Melekot, Kegnazmatch Berhane Din, Bellata Demissie Wolde-Michael and Kegnazmatch Habtezigie Ekubazgie.

The laws which the parliament used to pass were anti-democratic. It can correctly be said that during the Federation, Eritrea was essentially a police state. Who can forget the absolutism and unprovoked crime of General Tedla Ekubit, the former police commissioner and General Goitom? The latter was openly embraced by the E.L.F. when he ran away to join it after the Ethiopian revolution erupted. General Goitom is today a member of the central committee of Osman Saleh Sabbe's E.L.F.-P.L.F. Can the workers of Asmara and other cities forget the crimes that General Goitom committed against them every time they staged legal and peaceful demonstrations?

The Eritrean feudalists and Haile Selassie's viceroys were full accomplices in the crimes of Generals Tedla Ekubit and Goitom. Let us take a glimpse at the bill of detention without trial passed by the parliament and approved by Tedla Bayru, the first chief administrator of Eritrea. According to the bill, anyone suspected of aiding the bandits could be detained for a period of 3 to 6 months without trial. In practice, the 3 to 6 period of imprisonment used to be extended indefinitely. Thus, an individual released from prison could be sent to the prison again even before he had the chance to see his home and family. During the ten year period of the Federation, innumerable workers and intellectuals used to be thus detained without trial. Sub-section 2 of this same article 10 victimized especially the peasantry. The sub-section provides that if an individual joined the ranks of the bandits, his relatives would be imprisoned for a period of up to six months. By being labelled as relatives of bandits, hundreds of elderly parents suffered prison terms. This was the feature of the "democracy" which is said to have existed in Eritrea during the Federation.

The claim that there was democracy in Eritrea during the Federation was one among other falsifications of history. When the broad masses were thus being subjected to all types of ill-treatment, when voting right was denied to the masses and when elections were restricted to Asmara and Massawa, how can one claim that there was even bourgeois democracy in Eritrea? In fact, the rural masses and women saw the ballot box for the first time during the time of Haile Selassie's feudal parliament. All show these clearly that the notion of the existence of democracy in Eritrea is only a myth created by the petty-bourgeoisie. In reality, the situation was no better than what prevailed in the other regions of Ethiopia. Ethiopian radicals could not understand the class composition of the separatist groups because their political consciousness was low, because they were organizationally weak and because they could not analyze the concrete Ethiopian situation from a correct class stand point. Thus, they were not able to explain the true character of the secessionists to the progressive forces of the world. Their other error stemmed from the mistaken *focoist* belief that anyone who goes to the woods with a gun in hand is progressive or that the gun automatically makes him progressive. How funny it would be if one were to characterize Mengesha Seyoum and Ali Mirah as such because they too today claim to carry guns.

We do not see the separatists and regionalists any differently from feudal absolutists. Of course, revolutionaries do not advocate unity among feudalists. They rather prefer their division and disunity. We do not encourage the feudalists to strengthen their front. It is a great error to think that feudalists would stand on the side of the oppressed masses of Ethiopia. We are not saying that the E.L.F. feudalists were previously progressive and became reactionaries only recently. What we are saying is that they were thoroughly reactionary always. In the course of the Ethiopian

revolution, we have been able to witness the thoroughly feudal character of the so-called E.L.F.

GROWTH OF THE E.L.F.

The Tigrigna speaking section of the population has never substantially supported the E.L.F. In retaliation, the E.L.F. destroyed villages like Shebek and Debre-Sina inhabited by Christian highlanders. When in 1967, a group of Anseba peasants moved to the Barka River basin due to land shortage in the highlands, the throats of 69 of them were cold-bloodedly slit by the E.L.F. The E.L.F. leadership complained that while the muslims do the fighting, only the Christians were grabbing the land. One person who miraculously escaped from this massacre was able to relate how these 69 innocent peasants were slaughtered literally with swords and knives. Some of us still recall the photographs of poor peasants who had their ears severed by the E.L.F. because these people cut fire wood in some remote areas. We recall individuals like Kebede Kiflu who joined the ranks of the E.L.F. but were later on cold bloodedly murdered by the E.L.F. at Kassala. In addition, the E.L.F. used to extract one Birr from each Christian rural proletariat which used to work on cotton and banana plantations in the Barka region owned by the Italians. The monthly pay was only Birr 25 (U. S. 10 dollar). On the other hand, the E.L.F. used to exact only 60 cents from the muslim rural proletariat.

The Kunama and the nomadic Beja nationalities never supported the E.L.F.'s separatist policy. In fact, the Kunama nationality is one of the forces that is engaged in a bitter struggle against the E.L.F. The Kunama nationality which was a victim of the raids of Idris Awate in the 1940's, has never been easily captivated by the propaganda of the groups. It knew the true intentions of the E.L.F. all the time.

It has now been 17 years since the E.L.F. has been plundering and pillaging those oppressed elements of the region that refuse to give their full support to it. Even in the Sahel area which is

favourable to guerilla warfare, the E.L.F. has virtually no support. It is in this region that the caste system was overthrown through a long struggle. Thus, even if the region is inhabited by the same nationality as that of the Barka, the base of the E.L.F., the group has not been able to penetrate Sahel during the last 17 years of its existence. The people of the area do not want to see again that ugly caste system which the E. L. F. represents.

The E.L.F.'s major support always comes from the areas dominated by the caste system. For example, the area dominated by the Bilen ruling caste has remained one of the strongholds of the E.L.F. It is enough to mention that Tesfai Tekle, the current deputy military commander of the E.L.F. comes from the Bilen ruling caste.

Like all political organizations the E. L. F. reflects its class composition. The E. L. F. is mainly an organization of the feudal ruling elements of Eritrea. Nevertheless, we find individuals who are confused and who have low political consciousness within the ranks of the E. L. F. Just as the members of the Haile Selassie's army used to come from the ranks of the oppressed and just as the members of Hitler's army were workers, there are elements from the rank of oppressed that serve the interests of the E.L.F. But the question is for which classes does this organization stand and what is its ultimate objective? It is a fact that since the oppressors constitute a small segment of the society, they do everything possible to mobilize the oppressed to maintain and advance their class interests.

Among the oppressed that was victimized by the E. L. F. propaganda and subsequently came to support it are many people from the Saho nationality. There is a reason for this. The Saho nationality was subjected to the domination of the Tigrigna speaking ruling class, particularly in the Akaleguzay area. Thus, thinking that the E.L.F. would liberate them from their massive oppression, a large segment of the Saho nationality became full supporter

of the E. L. F. The repressive Haile Selassie's government too, employing its divide-and-rule policy, used to arm and send people in the adjoining areas against the Saho nationality. In the process, a large number of people belonging to the Saho nationality was exterminated.

The E. L. F. took advantage of the situation and sided with the Saho nationality even though it had no radical solution to the problem of nationalities of the region which in essence was the land question. In this connection, we cannot forget the atrocities committed by the E.L.F. against the inhabitants of Tsena Deglai. It is a stark fact that the E.L.F. has been carrying out such a systematic policy of murder and plunder against the masses for the last 17 years. About this, even its collaborationist, the so-called E.P.L.F., says:

*"Because of their religious fanaticism and bandit attitude, some leaders, posing as revolutionaries, have made their practice the murdering of the people of the Kebassa and robbing their cattle. With the money they have thus accumulated, they have begun leading a luxurious life in the Sudan."**

This is the characterization of the E.L.F. by the E.P.L.F., its separatist ally. But in the process, the E.P.L.F. too exposes its own reactionary stand.

What do the leaders of E. P. L. F. mean by the term "Kebassa" people? They say that "Kebassa" means highland. Since the leaders of the E.P.L.F. do not want to identify themselves with the Tigrigna speaking nationality, and in order to claim that they are different from the same nationality to which they belong, they coined this term the "Kebassa". It is a fact that a large segment of this nationality inhabits the Tigray Administrative Region which is even more hilly and mountainous and which even by their definition should also be characterized as "Kebassa". It is a fact that the term "Kebassa" does not mean highland. It is a name of an

* The E.P.L.F. manual for "Political Education"

ethnic group, the Kebassa Chiwa, which lives in north-eastern part of Hamassien province and to which they themselves belong. We shall later on elaborate why the leaders of the E.P.L.F. look down upon the Tigray nationality from which they mostly come.

THE HISTORY OF THE SPLIT OF THE E.L.F. AND THE EMERGENCE OF E.P.L.F. AND E.P.R.P.

The feudal and aristocratic clique which dominated the leadership of the E.L.F. from 1960 to 1970 began to quarrel among itself. The source of the quarrel was which element should get the larger share of the money which the E.L.F. used to appropriate from the masses and from the large fund made available to it by reactionary Arab regimes. Exploiting this opportunity, petty-bourgeois elements began to emerge as prominent figures within the E.L.F. In the process, Osman Saleh Sabe, one of the leaders of the group and who also belongs to the Belaw ruling caste, was defeated and formed the so-called E.P.L.F. Some opportunist students like Issayas Afeworki who came from the Tigrigna speaking section of the population, began to make a deal with this thoroughly reactionary organization under the pretext that the E.L.F. was massacring the Christian elements of the population of Eritrea. At that time, the E.P.L.F. was led internally by Omaro and externally by Osman Saleh Sabe. Although Omaro was the most notorious persecutor of the Christian elements of the population, this did not stop the Issayas Afeworki group from co-operating with the E.P.L.F.

In an exercise of incredible cynicism, Osman Saleh Sabe who for the previous ten years used to claim that the people of Eritrea were Arabs and muslims, found it expedient to say that a policy of systematic genocide was being carried out by the E.L.F. against the Christian elements of the population after he was kicked out from the leadership of that organization. He characterized the two individuals that the E.L.F. murdered at Kassala in 1970 as Christian martyrs.

Following the split some Ethiopian students who proclaimed themselves to be Marxist-Leninists began establishing contact with him. Since he was looking for every possible ally, Osman Saleh Sabe did not hesitate to fully cooperate with them. In 1973, he gathered these individuals together and made it possible for them to form an organization called "Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party", E.P.R.P. Hence, it is easy to understand why the E.P.R.P. played a counter-revolutionary role against the Ethiopian revolution. It is not without reason why it is said that the force behind this petty-bourgeois organization is the reactionary government of Saudi Arabia. The government of Saudi Arabia is the principal supporter of Osman Saleh Sabe. And Saleh Sabe in turn is the major financial and military source of the E.P.R.P.

The crime committed by the cowardly leaders of the E.P.R.P. against the Ethiopian revolution is quite incalculable. Under the umbrella of a reactionary separatist organization and by taking advantage of the low level political consciousness of the Ethiopian youth, the E.P.R.P. brought havoc to the Ethiopian revolution. Even though the E.P.R.P., at times appeared daring and strong in the central parts of the country, its leaders were cowards and subservient.

Osman Saleh Sabe did not only control this self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist petty-bourgeois group, but he was also instrumental in the creation of the so-called Ethiopian Democratic Union, E.D.U., at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Ethiopian feudalists had for a long period of time maintained that Ethiopia is a Christian island in a region dominated by moslems. And starting from this premise, they had for a long time persecuted the moslem population of Ethiopia. But today, these same feudalists are under the patronage of the moslem Kalifa of Saudi Arabia, once again confirming the Marxist thesis that the history of all societies is the history of class struggle. Thus, the moslem Kalifa and anti-moslem Christians join together to wipe out the Ethiopian revolution.

Osman Saleh Sabe was not the only one who used to supply money and arms to the opportunist clique of Issayas Afewerki. During the time when it was weak, the E.P.L.F. was subjected to

an annihilation campaign by the E.L.F. Then it began to receive financial and military assistance through Tesfa Yohannes Berhe from Haile Selassie's government. The person who served as conduit for the transaction was caught and was brought to trial. Tesfa Yohannes Berhe appeared before the court as a witness and said that it was done by government order. The residents of Asmara were extremely amazed by this disclosure. We can also recall that Haregot's (ex-mayor of Asmara) son who used to pass money to the separatists appeared before the high court in Addis Ababa, but was eventually declared innocent.

This is the one side of the story. The other side is the campaign of massacre against the oppressed that used to be carried out by government officials like Asrate Kassa, Tesfa Yohannes Berhe etc. . . on the ground that the oppressed had provided support to the Issayas Afewerki group. How many millions of dollars did the top bureaucrats of the rotten feudo-bourgeois government of Haile Selassie collect as bribe promising that they would free those sons and daughters of the oppressed whom they themselves, to begin with, put in jail? In effect, the oppressed masses of Eritrea were mere toys of the exploiting ruling classes.

It is therefore, the historical responsibility of the broad masses of Ethiopia to do everything towards the full liberation of their class brothers and sisters in Eritrea from the grips of the reactionary separatists and all reactionary forces. Since the conflict in Eritrea stems from the struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed classes, the working people of Ethiopia are bound to become victorious in the confrontation too. They have dealt a crushing defeat to the feudal chauvinists who pretended to stand for the unity of Ethiopia while directly and consciously supporting anti-unity forces. It is now time we root out once and for all, the separatists, the enemies of the broad masses of Eritrea.

Between 1971 and 1973, radicals who were expelled from the Haile Selassie University joined the E.P.L.F. without fully under-

standing the class character of the organization. By 1973, these progressives were able to assume not organizational but at least ideological leadership of the organization. But when in 1974 the Ethiopian revolution erupted and when the total membership of the E.P.L.F. was no more than 500, those reactionary elements who controlled the organization, especially its security apparatus began to round up and incarcerate the radical elements. The excuse for this was that the progressive elements had formed a faction within the organization. The year 1974, in which the Ethiopian revolution exploded, was also a period in which radical elements were being systematically eliminated from the ranks of the separatist organizations, especially from the E.P.L.F. It can be recalled that preceding this was the elimination of the feudo-bourgeois clique which was led by Aman Andom.

The Tigrigna speaking petty-bourgeois, which hitherto had adopted neutralist policy vis-a-vis the groups over-night changed its position and adopted a narrow nationalist line. The separatists who used to pose as progressives frantically attempted to take over Asmara instead of joining the revolutionary struggle of the broad masses of Ethiopia. This change of tactic was meant to strangle the Ethiopian revolution. They thus became causes for the loss of many innocent lives. Their ranks were swelled by petty-bourgeois elements who were scared by the revolution. International imperialism too, began giving them political support directly and material support secretly.

It is not an exaggeration to say that E.P.L.F. did not exist before February, 1974. The membership of the E.P.L.F. was not more than 500 before the eruption of the Ethiopian revolution. Prior to this time, Ethiopian progressives had counted on the E.P.L.F. to play a progressive role partly because of radical students who had left the Haile Selassie University and had become members of the movement. But in actuality, E.P.L.F. grew in strength because it absorbed counter-revolutionaries in thousands after 1974. Its ranks were swelled by reactionary petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalists who were scared by the radicalism of the Ethiopian revolution. And consequently, it began playing an open

counter-revolutionary role. Still, as the E.L.F. was once considered "progressive" because it was engaged in a power struggle with Haile Selassie, so also the E.P.L.F. continued to be regarded as "progressive" because it had a conflict of interest with E.L.F. The truth is that the E.P.L.F. is a counter-revolutionary offspring of the Ethiopian revolution.

SUPREMACY OF THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION OVER

E.L.F., E.P.L.F. AND E.L.F.—P.L.F.

We have to differentiate the E.P.L.F. from the E.L.F. The E.L.F. is clearly feudalist. The E.P.L.F. is mainly an organization of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois elements. Today, E.P.L.F. is organizationally stronger than the E.L.F. which has been around for the last 17 years. Compared to the E.L.F., the E.P.L.F. tries to project a progressive image. But on the main question of strategy, it is not different from the E.L.F. Like the E.L.F., it too is engaged in dividing the ranks of the oppressed masses of Ethiopia under the pretext of liberating Eritrea. Of course, since it is composed of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements, it adopts more deceptive policies and tactics. In the military sphere however, it does not have the experience of the ELF which at least knows how to save its skin. But even such policies and tactics cannot succeed in subverting the Ethiopian revolution. Tactical errors can be corrected only when there is a correct strategy. The revolution of the broad masses of Ethiopia will triumph because it had a correct strategy from the beginning. But since the anti-unity strategy of the separatists is wrong, their eventual defeat is inevitable however much they try to change their tactics.

After its rank was swelled by reactionaries who fled away from the Ethiopian revolution, the E.P.L.F. has been split into two. One is the group led by Osman Saleh Sabe and calls itself the E.L.F.—P.L.F. The other faction is the one led by Issayas Afeworki. It was after the split that the E.P.L.F. like the other separatist groups, began to receive direct assistance from imperialists and the

reactionary Arab governments of the region. In its political programme that it issued for the first time, the E.P.L.F. declared that it was ready to receive aid from anywhere in its struggle against Ethiopian "colonialism" while at the same time claiming to be anti-imperialist. If the E.P.L.F. is really anti-imperialist as it vociferously claims, why then does it attack the Ethiopian revolution which is carrying out an open struggle against imperialism? Objectively the E.L.F. the E.P.L.F. and the E.L.F.-P.L.F. are all fifth columnists of international imperialism. Whatever they call themselves, they all stand to defend the interests of imperialism for they are sabotaging our anti-imperialist revolution.

During their seventeen years of existence, while they brought untold sufferings to the masses of the region, the separatists did nothing contrary to the interest of U.S. imperialism. As Saleh Sabe so openly confirmed many times, the separatists never had a contradiction with U.S. imperialism.

The opportunist E.P.L.F. had never had a programme before. But in what it came out with two years ago as its programme, it says, "We welcome the assistance of any country or organization which recognizes and supports the just struggle of the Eritrean people without interference in its internal affairs" (our emphasis).

By "any country", the E.P.L.F. in effect meant the United States, the west European countries and the reactionary Arab governments. This fact has been confirmed in practice. Could it be that South Africa is also one of these countries? Not only today when U.S. imperialism is driven out of Ethiopia, but even during the time when Haile Selassie was massacring the peoples of Eritrea with weapons provided by the U.S., the separatists used to say openly that they have no contradictions with international imperialism.

Is it to prove its anti-communism to its mentor, American imperialism, that the E.P.L.F. physically liquidated all the radical elements whom it had previously imprisoned? In this connection with

this bastardly act, it is not difficult to guess the role played by the American C.I.A. and Saudi Arabia. The Italian left-wing newspaper, *quotidiano dei lavoratori democratica proletaria*, in its issue of May 1976, under the title "counter-revolutionary criminals in Eritrea gunned down communists" reported:

"Some recent events show once more that the activities of the reactionary forces inside the Eritrean Liberation Movement can harm the masses to a greater extent than the Ethiopian repression. We refer in particular to the counter-revolutionary maneuver made, by the right wing trend in the P.L.F., who has started an indiscriminate repression against the democratic and revolutionary combatants rejecting the masses and all the liberation movement demands for a real democracy and the unity of all patriotic forces. This is the last step in a process started in February 1974, with the arrest of 12 political commissioners and marxist military commanders, as a result of a plan devised by the security service of the P.L.F. in order to destroy the revolutionary influence in this front. The right wing of the P.L.F. had all the time many difficulties to carry on this project, due to the reluctance of the majority of the combatants who recognized the political and military value of the arrested comrades, but they have widely profited from the emergency conditions by the war and the weakness of the organizational structures of the created left forces. With the complicity and the silence of most of the members of the leadership, in particular of Issayas Afeworki and Ramadan Mohammed Nur who, though incredible it may seem, have reputation democrats. The security service under the leadership of the ultra-reactionary Solomon Wolde-Mariam, easily threaten, arrest and, in some cases, torture the components of the left wing and their sympathizers, imposing over the P.L.F. unhealthy atmosphere. Only the fear of unpredictable reactions from the base, has prevented the execution of arrested comrades during the 2 years. But, according to the latest news, which came from the Sudan through reliable information channels of the field combatants, a certain number of

revolutionary militants have recently been killed and several hundred arrested and kept in concentration camps arranged by the security service of the P.L.F. Among the murdered comrades, are probably three representatives of the internal left movement; Yohannes Sibhatu (responsible for the press service), Mussie Tesfa Michael (political commissioner) and Afeworki Teclu (also political commissioner). About the others, there are no news so far, but all hypotheses are possible on this respect. The specific reason for this move particularly at this moment is not known, except for the urge to get rid of dangerous political enemies, well known by all Eritrean democrats for their human and political qualities."

This Italian journalist who wrote the above account was able to expose the atrocities committed by the right wingers against the radicals although he seems not to have fully understood the gravity of the situation. The radicals were being eliminated exactly at a time when the E.P.L.F. was casting off its leftist garb and was becoming fully anti-communist and counter-revolutionary. When the writer says that, "The specific reason for this move particularly at this moment is not known", and that the situation was created by the condition of the war, he does not seem to understand that in 1975 when the Ethiopian revolution took a decisive measure against the feudo-bourgeois ruling class, the separatists, thinking that conditions were ripe for the realization of their separatist designs, began to bring the war to the city of Asmara itself. The consequence of this was that a large contingent of counter-revolutionary petty-bourgeois elements which joined the E.P.L.F. was able to strengthen the position of Issayas Afeworki and company within the E.P.L.F. And as a result of this, the Issayas clique felt strong enough to eliminate all the left elements within the E.P.L.F. The writer does not understand this and does not see the problem in Eritrea in the context of the struggle between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces and the alignment of class forces in the whole of Ethiopia. Thus, he tends to view the problem in Eritrea as though it is a contradiction

between two feuding countries, that is between Ethiopia and Eritrea. We can see how mistaken he is when he calls the E.P.L.F. a "liberation movement". How can progressives liberate themselves from revolutionary Ethiopia? The struggle is for the liberation of Ethiopia itself.

There is a widely held belief that the members of the E.P.L.F. are Marxists. But in all their publications and even according to the statement given by their deputy leader, Issayas Afeworki, to the king of Saudi Arabia, they have never claimed to be Marxists. It is true that an organization does not have to publicly announce that it is Marxist. On the other hand, it can also claim, like the so-called E.P.R.P., that it is Marxist and still engage in anti-Marxist activities. What is important is for what class it stands and what political line it follows. Incidentally how many are the capitalist countries that claim to be socialist! The members of the E.P.L.F., far from being Marxists, are even worse than narrow nationalists. The contempt that these reactionary bourgeois and petty-bourgeois individuals, who mostly come from the Tigrigna speaking sector of the population of Eritrea, have for their own Tigrigna speaking nationality is shocking, to say the least. We have seen earlier that in order to make themselves distinct from the Tigrigna speaking nationality, they call themselves "Kebassa" or highlanders. We have also seen earlier that these "Kebassa" have the same stand as the other separatist groups on basic issues. The politics of all of them is based on the historically and scientifically untenable premise that Eritrea is an Ethiopian colony.

Colonial rule becomes established when capital overflows its own national boundaries and takes over another country thereby establishing full domination over the local people. This is exactly what Lenin teaches us. Capital accumulation is greater in Eritrea than in any of the administrative regions of Ethiopia. Even if the British colonialists dismantled industrial installations and sold them to Pakistan and the Sudan, Eritrean capitalists were still able to create wide markets for their goods over the whole of Ethiopia.

In 1957, that is five years after the Federation, the total industrial capital in the administrative region of Eritrea was 16,739,000 Birr. The total in the rest of Ethiopia was 44,000,000 Birr. After twelve years, the total in Eritrea had reached 153,597,000 Birr and in the rest of Ethiopia only 188,768,000 Birr. (*Ethiopia: Statistical Abstract* 1970). This means that during Haile Selassie's rule, capital accumulation in Eritrea grew nine fold while in the rest of the country it grew only four and half fold. Capital investment in Eritrea was 45% of the grand total of Ethiopia. Thus it is more correct to say that capitalists like Haregot Abbay, Tesfa Yohannes Berhe, Asrate Kassa, Barattello, Danadai were exploiting the whole of Ethiopia than to say that Eritrea was and still is an Ethiopian colony.

Expounding its theory of colonialism, the E.P.L.F. says:

*"Just as the Europeans have a low opinion for black Africans and just as they have placed them under cruel administration, Ethiopia's ruling classes rule over the children of Eritrea in the same manner."**

The real issue is very clear. We do not even bother to show the incorrectness of this view. In reality it is the leaders of the so-called fronts that should be condemned for their blatant chauvinism. While they talk about the racism that Europeans practiced against black Africans, this is what they write under the title, "The Culture of the people of Eritrea":

*"When we compare the people of Eritrea who live in the region adjoining the Sudan with the neighbouring people of the Sudan we note that the former have a higher degree of political consciousness. In the same manner, when we compare the people of Eritrea like the Danakil, Kebassa etc... who live along the border area with Ethiopia, we find the Eritreans more civilized."***

*The E.P.L.F. manual for "Political Education" p. 3.

***Ibid* p. 12

Italian fascism has in truth produced its black grand children who speak its own language. It indeed makes one sad and angry to see that the Eritrean bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie adopt the same attitude towards the working peoples of Ethiopia which the Italian colonialists used to have towards the oppressed masses of Eritrea. The so-called liberation fronts have confirmed their chauvinistic attitudes on several occasions. There is a reason for the manifestation of this kind of attitude. As we have seen earlier, Italian colonialists and the feudo-bourgeois government of Haile Selassie had developed capitalism in Eritrea. And therefore, the chauvinistic attitude of the separatists has an economic basis. In short, it is the sentiment of the ruling class. The working class of Eritrea, the lowest paid sector of the Ethiopian working class, does not share this attitude. The accumulation of capital in Eritrea was only for the benefit of the ruling class. In fact, the peasants of highland Eritrea whose soil has been eroded, lead a most impoverished life. But, the establishment of the so-called liberation fronts was not inspired by such concerns.

If it is necessary to give further evidence of the contempt the separatist fronts have for the oppressed, we can quote from a letter which in 1964 Wolde Ab Wolde Mariam, today a pensioned "sage" living in Cairo, wrote to the United Nations:

*"To justify his unjust and unjustifiable demand for the annexation of Eritrea to his empire, the emperor impudently asserted that the Eritreans and Ethiopians belonged to the same ethnic group and that they shared the same language, tradition, social system, customs and usages. We wish this was true because we do not have any hard feeling against our African brothers of Ethiopia; but it is not the case."**

*Document submitted to the U.N. XVIII General Assembly, signed Woldeab Wolde Mariam, entitled *Colonialist Ethiopia against the United Nations and Eritrea*.

This same peddler who here says that Eritrea has no relationship with the rest of Ethiopia, once used to advocate that the administrative regions of Eritrea, Tigray and half of Wollo should form a state under British protectorate!

Thus, as we have shown concretely, the propaganda of the separatist movement in Eritrea is based on falsehood and deceit. Any movement which claims to be a national movement should at least be proud of its language and its history. And in this respect, it becomes very difficult for us how to characterize this movement of the remnants of the feudal ruling classes in Eritrea. One can not even characterize the so-called E.L.F., E.P.L.F. and E.L.F.—P.L.F. as narrow nationalists for they do not represent any specific nationality. In order to distinguish themselves from the Tigrigna speaking nationality, they have christened themselves as "*Kebassa*". Nor for that matter can we call them chauvinist because they claim to be colonized. Therefore, how shall one characterize these confused elements whom the capital left behind by the Italian colonialists has made them behave like raving dogs. We may have difficulty in characterizing these movements as chauvinist or narrow nationalist. But their main motivation has always been to have full control over the left-over capital.

Notwithstanding the attempt of the separatists to spread falsehood, it is a historical fact that most parts of Eritrea have always been part and parcel of Ethiopia. In fact, for a long time, Eritrea was the core of Ethiopia's civilization. But these disciples of Italian colonialism not only deny that the peoples of Eritrea and the rest of Ethiopia have a common history and have linguistic connections, they even go to the extreme of asserting that their relationship is only that of the colonizer and the colonized. Is it the Tigrigna speaking people of the administrative region of Tigray who have colonized Eritrea? Is it the Afars of the administrative region of Wollo who have colonized their fellow Afars who live in Eritrea? Or is it the Saho who live in the Tigray administrative region who have colonized the Saho who live in Eritrea?

Most of the nationalities who are found in Eritrea are one and the same with the nationalities who inhabit the other northern and north eastern administrative regions of Ethiopia. The separatists in Eritrea do not want the unity of the various segments of these nationalities. Therefore, for the separatists the Eritrean question is not even a nationality question. In fact, it is the progressives of Ethiopia who constantly advocate the unity and self-determination of each of Ethiopia's nationalities. The separatists want to divide the Tigrigna speaking nationality, the Saho nationality, the Afar nationality etc.... But the stand of the progressives and the broad masses is that all the Tigrigna speaking must unite, that the Afars must constitute one united nationality and similarly the Saho etc.... While the separatists frantically attempt to create division among the various nationalities and to dismember these nationalities, revolutionaries struggle to maintain the historic unity of each nationality. While the separatists work to create disunity within nationalities and try to make them instruments of imperialism, Ethiopian revolutionaries tell them to respect the right of nationalities and not to act like Signor Antoneli, the Italian diplomat, who helped to carve out an artificial entity known as Eritrea. Ethiopian revolutionaries say that the unity of the oppressed has to be strengthened in order to create a people's democratic Ethiopia in which the rights and liberties of all nationalities are respected. They struggle to put these principles into practice. This is why Ethiopian revolutionaries are engaged in a life and death struggle against these criminal and separatist elements.

Probably, the only remaining stand that these reactionary separatists can advance is that they have the right to establish an artificial state. As is well known, during the era of the scramble for Africa, European colonialists drew arbitrary boundary lines and created disunity among peoples. In most parts of Africa, they created artificial states. It can be remembered that when, as the result of the anti-colonial struggle carried out by the people of Africa, many countries became independent, the Organization of

African Unity, (OAU), decided to maintain the national boundaries established by the colonialists. We mention this to show the progressive content of the position taken which has made it possible for the relative existence of peaceful relationships among African countries and which, as a result, has helped minimize conflict among African states.

No one can deny that most African countries are states created by the colonialists. What is surprising is that the separatists today want the same right as the European colonialists to create an artificial state in Eritrea. What this shows us is that the separatists have the mentality of the European colonialists. When their stand is shown to be groundless on the basis of theory and history, they resort to funny and weak points. What they simply want is to have monopoly over the capital left behind by the Italian colonialists and to become a comfortable ruling clique in Eritrea.

The shifting position of the separatists is not limited to this. It is clear to any observer that the problem in Eritrea stems from the issue of whether the region should secede from Ethiopia or remain an integral part of Ethiopia. Secessionism is the stand of the reactionary separatists while unity is the stand of the oppressed. All other issues are secondary to this. It is also within this context that the war in Eritrea must be seen. The war in Eritrea is between those who want secession and those who want unity. The considerable loss of life and property that has been sustained in Eritrea as a result of the war could not be construed as the major reason for the problems that prevail in Eritrea. The war is simply the result of the two opposing aims. The separatists of course do not accept this scientific view of the problem. They do not want to see the Ethiopian revolution emerge victorious and the liberation of the oppressed masses.

Thus, in order to achieve their objective, they carry on their adventurist policy of starting armed skirmishes by hiding themselves within the bosom of the masses. In order to confuse the world public, they say it is the "fascist Dergue" that is responsible for the death of the innocent.

Such petty - bourgeois cleverness does not, in the least, bother genuine revolutionaries. This is because, notwithstanding the vile propaganda of the separatists which presents the war as the major cause of the suffering of the masses of the region, what actually lies behind the war is the separatists motive to dismember Ethiopia. The war in Eritrea is the consequence of the separatists reactionary aim.

This extremely reactionary method of struggle has also been employed by the E.P.R.P. which is an ally of the separatists. The reactionary E.P.R.P. was blaming the Dergue for the death of innocent people while itself had an army of hired assassins recruited mainly from the ranks of the youth whom it was temporarily able to influence. For all the havoc and destruction it itself brought about, it used to hold the Dergue responsible. But the reactionary E.P.R.P. could not eventually escape the responsibility for what it did. The damage and destruction that the E.P.R.P. brought about was the consequence of its reactionary method of struggle. In short, the E.P.R.P. was itself the cause of the problem.

Why do reactionaries employ such a method of struggle? The answer is quite simple. They think that they can get mass support by blaming the camp of the revolution for damages caused by themselves. In this way, they assume they can discredit the revolutionary camp. But the broad masses are today quite conscious and knowledgeable of the tactics that reactionaries employ. The progressive forces of the world too have come to understand the real situation in Eritrea and have rejected the separatists. Provocation occupies a large chapter in the history of the struggle of the working class movement. Reactionaries always resort to it in order to advance their politics of counter-revolution.

The other reactionary character of the separatists is their military adventurism. When the Ethiopian revolution was endangered by external and internal class enemies, and especially when the reactionary ruling clique of Somalia with the support of imperialism launched a war of invasion against Ethiopia, the separatists, being aided by the fifth columnists and reactionary bureaucrats, were able to occupy some towns. They did not confine themselves to this. Thinking that the civilian population once trapped, would have no alternative but to join them, they closed down the four main highways that link Asmara with the other parts of Ethiopia. They thus were instrumental in creating a Wollo type famine situation in the administrative region of Eritrea, particularly in the city of Asmara. We are certain that the peoples of Ethiopia will always remember this criminal and anti-human deeds of the separatists as they always remember the case of the Wollo famine. It makes one more angry when one realizes that while the reactionary leaders of the so-called liberation fronts condemn the oppressed mass of the region to starvation, they themselves lead a luxurious life. But there is no doubt that the broad masses of Ethiopia, soon enough, will do every thing in their power to help liberate the masses of the Eritrean region. The working people of Ethiopia have to crush these criminal elements who have brought havoc and destruction on the innocent masses of the region. There is no alternative but to liquidate these elements who have forced this country with such a poor economy to transport food to 300,000 inhabitants of the city of Asmara by air and who have been instrumental in diverting the material wealth created by the sweat and labour of the working class and the peasantry towards war instead of towards economic construction. It has always been the desire and hope of Ethiopia's progressives that the problems would be solved by peaceful means. But we all know the response given by the separatists.

We have pointed out earlier that one of the major distinguishing characteristics of the separatists is their military adventurism. We have also indicated that as long as any thing serves their objective they do not care how much death and destruction they inflict

on the oppressed masses. Despite this policy of theirs, the concrete state of the Ethiopian revolution should have made clear to them that their adventurism cannot take them very far. Today, they are on the defensive. Their offensive period is over. They must be trembling because the force they are facing is a force that is well trained, politically conscious and knows fully well for what cause it is fighting. While once they were euphoric of their momentary gains, today they are in a trap from which they cannot easily escape.

Even if the reactionary separatists have tried to carry out the same adventurist policy as did Siad Barre, in terms of the measures they take, they are even more idiotic than him. Siad Barre tried his chance after accumulating arms over a period of 17 years. But the separatists became intoxicated with the momentarily favourable situation that was created for them and began to rush towards occupying towns and cities. Their adventurism only proves in practice that they are stupid people whose thinking is not even as sophisticated as that of the bourgeoisie. There is a reason why we say that they are stupid. By hurrying to occupy towns, they only went from an offensive to a defensive position and thus came to a face to face confrontation with our revolutionary army which is much larger in number and which is much better armed than them. They might have thought that their rush to the towns would enable them to bring under their control the capital left behind by the Italian colonialists. But in terms of military science, their tactic is untenable and childish. That is why we characterize them as mere military adventurists.

The separatists might try to justify their madness on moral grounds. But what is the morality of a frantic attempt to create disunity within the ranks of the oppressed and subject them to greater oppression and exploitation. From now on, no one would be deceived by them whatever rational they might marshal to justify their deeds. It is only the position which advocates the unity of the oppressed that is morally superior and justifiable.

The political analysis and strategy of the separatists have proved to be bankrupt. The separatists cannot, henceforth, face the power of the broad masses of Ethiopia. Therefore, they might be tempted to arrange through international imperialism the direct involvement of reactionary outside forces in the war. This is their only option. But whatever happens, a politically conscious, a well organized and armed people will always emerge victorious. No force can stop it from attaining this goal.

As we have seen earlier that the power struggle between the feudalists and Tigrigna speaking bourgeoisie on the one hand and between the regional feudalists and feudal absolutists on the other, gave rise to the secessionist movements in Eritrea. But after the feudo-bourgeois class headed by Aman Andom was crushed in 1974, the Barka feudalists and the Tigrigna speaking bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie made peace among themselves and formed a common front against the Ethiopian revolution. In other words, E.L.F., E.P.L.F. and E.L.F. - P.L.F. formed a united counter-revolutionary front against the Ethiopian revolution and this front was given full support by imperialists and the reactionary Arab governments.

Facing this counter-revolutionary front are the Ethiopian working class, the peasantry, the revolutionary army and the progressive forces of the world. The struggle in Eritrea is between revolution and counter-revolution. The war is a class war. In an era when the world is divided into two opposing camps, namely the socialist and imperialist camps, the victory of the Ethiopian revolution is an extra victory for the socialist forces.

This is why imperialists have been trying to undermine the Ethiopian revolution, especially after the feudo-bourgeois ruling class headed by Aman Andom was crushed. They attack the Ethiopian revolution by using the separatists in Eritrea and others as instruments. Yet, it is certain that the revolution will teach the separatists in Eritrea the same lesson that it has taught the other reactionaries that have acted as tools of imperialists.

We have repeatedly said that the separatists are not fighting for the rights of the nationalities in Eritrea. Yet, we are not claiming that the problem of nationalities has been resolved either in Eritrea or in the other administrative regions of the country. It can not be denied that the revolution has removed some of the ugly features of the oppression of nationalities. Still, the relationship among the various nationalities will have to acquire democratic and revolutionary shape. In this connection, the programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia states the following:

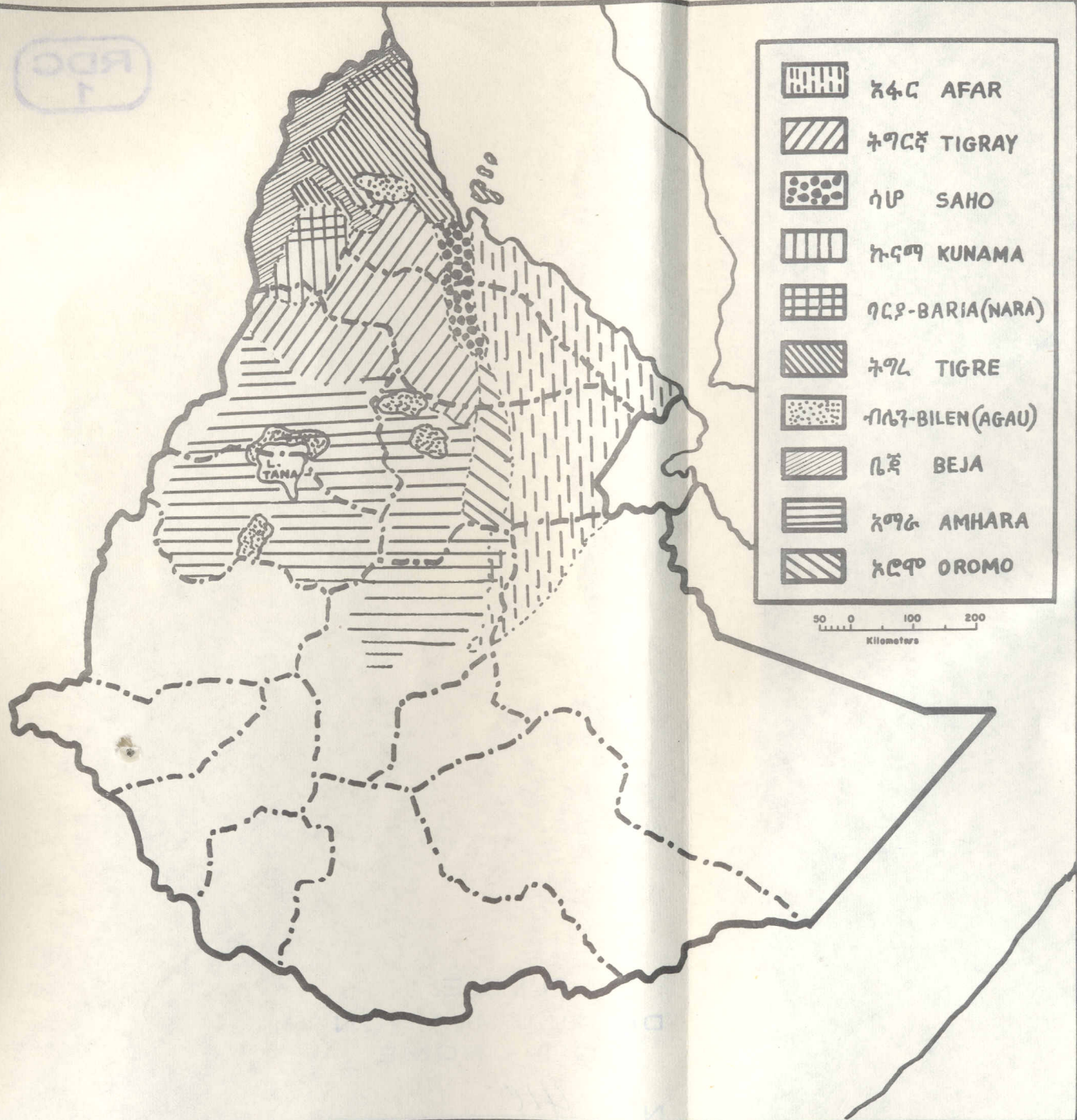
“The right of self-determination of all nationalities will be recognized and fully respected. No nationality will dominate another one since the history, culture, language and religion of each nationality will have equal recognition in accordance with the spirit of socialism.”

This is a Marxist-Leninist principle. The present question is how to implement the policy of regional autonomy in practice. At the same time, it is undeniable that it is extremely difficult to solve the problem of nationalities in the absence of a working class party. Similarly, it is also difficult to build socialism without regional autonomy. In this connection, it is necessary to strengthen and bring to merger the union of the Marxist Leninist Organizations as the core of the forthcoming working class party and simultaneously intensify the class struggle. Forming a working class party, building a socialist economy, implementing the principle of regional autonomy, all these dialectically inter-related issues are urgent questions of the Ethiopian revolution. In all these respects and fields, Marxist-Leninists raise no other banner but the banner of proletarian internationalism.

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