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introduction

This is a special issue of *Vanguard*, one of the journals of the Eritrean People's Liberation Forces (EPLF) published monthly in the field.

This special issue compiles, analyzes and sums up the major events, developments and achievements of the Eritrean revolution in general and the EPLF vanguard in particular for the year 1975. It shows the profound revolutionary transformation of the Eritrean struggle for national independence and democracy and the all-round brilliant victories of the heroic Eritrean people. In a nutshell, it provides an account of the fruits of the combative toil and great sacrifice of our valiant masses as well as the long and arduous path ahead.

Eritreans for Liberation in North America (EFLNA) presents this unofficial translation from the original Tigrinya [*Vanguard*, No. 13 (Special Issue), January, 1976]. EFLNA and not the EPLF is solely responsible for any errors or distortion that may arise in translation. All pictures, captions and footnotes are by EFLNA.

Eritreans for Liberation in North America

ADVANCES ON THE POLITICAL FRONT

It is difficult to give a detailed account of all the political achievements scored by the Eritrean People's Liberation Forces (EPLF) in 1975. In general, it is clear that emphasis was laid on exposing the nature of the Dergue*, unmasking the conspiracies and crimes of imperialism and its puppets against the Eritrean revolution as well as mobilizing and organizing the Eritrean masses, and consolidating the internal political structure of our organization. These tasks have been extensively carried out in Eritrea and Ethiopia and, to a certain extent, in the international arena. Working with patience and perseverance, the EPLF has made thorough studies of the internal and external conditions and devised appropriate guidelines and tactics for the realization of these objectives in accordance with its principles. It is because it applied correct tactics in waging appropriate internal as well as external struggle against a variety of enemies of the revolution that it has been able to reap concrete political victories.

The bulk of our organization's political work in 1975 focused on our internal conditions, i.e., on the carefully planned development and consolidation of those factors necessary for the preservation, advancement and victory of our popular revolution. In brief, it was necessary to correctly build our vanguard revolutionary organization, mobilize and organize the masses, and bring an end to the civil war** so as to unite the combatants of the two fronts against the common enemy.

The nature of a revolutionary organization can be assessed by the level of consciousness of its combatants. The EPLF strove hard to

* The Ethiopian Military Junta.

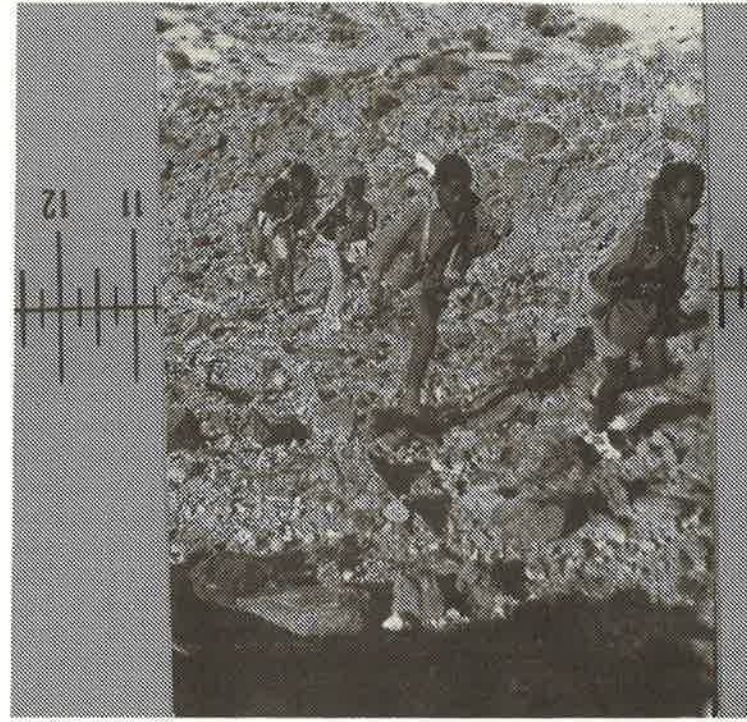
** The Eritrean civil war, aimed at the liquidation of the EPLF, was launched by the Revolutionary Council of the ELF in February 1972. The EPLF, persisting in self-defense, consistently educated its combatants, the fighters of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the masses of the Eritrean people that all the guns of the revolution should be directed against the common enemy while secondary contradictions between the EPLF and the ELF should be resolved through democratic dialogue. As a result of the EPLF's correct line and practice as well as the great efforts of the Eritrean masses and the refusal of the democratic forces of the ELF to fight against the EPLF, the fratricidal civil war came to an end at the close of 1974.

strengthen its internal structure and launched an extensive campaign to eliminate illiteracy and to raise the political consciousness of the masses of its combatants in order to guarantee the proper implementation of its political programme. All this met with satisfactory results. The concrete victory attained in raising the political maturity of the new fighters who joined the front en masse in 1975 cannot be underestimated. It is the outcome of the continuous political education they have received while in training and after their assignment to the various units and departments. Our special political victory of 1975 has been the proper training and politicization of hundreds of youth (Fitewerari**) and women and their participation in the ranks of our revolutionary organization in the interests of the oppressed Eritrean masses. This, in general, has been the struggle waged to transform the quantitative growth of our organization, brought forth by the advance of our revolution, into qualitative development.

The relationship among combatants is clearly defined and based on the interests of the revolution. The fundamental conviction of the EPLF is that the strength of the organization emanates from the consciousness of the combatants and the people; that at all times its tasks should be decided on with their conscious participation. On this basis, political questions and important issues relevant to our revolution in general and our organization in particular have been summed up and put forward to the masses of fighters for information and discussion so as to enable them to shoulder their responsibilities as revolutionaries. To assure the unity of thought and action of the masses of our fighters, our organization's draft "Programme for the Stage of National Liberation" was put forward for study, discussion and suggestions. An extensive campaign of political education, criticism and self-criticism, and exposition (of errors) was also conducted to uproot the occasional manifestations of opportunism and liberalism. Furthermore, in order to build principled unity among the fighters, divisive behavior and anarchist tendencies of individuals and non-revolutionary groups were put under control through the proper application of our disciplinary measures and the maintenance of discipline through consciousness.

The EPLF provides general political education to all its combatants. In addition, it has opened a school for the training of cadres so as to assure the continuity and victory of our people's revolutionary resistance.

** The "Fitewerari" (the Tigrinya word for Vanguard) are the youth (ages 8-15) combatants in the EPLF. They receive the military training and political education that are given to all combatants. Free from backward sentiments and relations and imbued with revolutionary ideals, they participate in all fields of revolutionary activity.



The "Fitewerari" on their way to carry out a mission.

Several cadres, capable of shouldering revolutionary duties in a variety of fields, have already been trained and are resolutely performing their revolutionary tasks in accordance with our programme. At present a large number of comrades are receiving the necessary training at the cadre school. This training of cadres is a continuing process since the vanguard and leading activists of our popular revolution are conscious cadres—workers, peasants and revolutionary intellectuals—committed to the interests of the masses.

A popular revolution cannot triumph without the conscious and total participation of the masses. The EPLF clearly understands and believes that the mobilization and organization of the masses of our people is the greatest guarantee for the continuity and victory of our revolution. Accordingly, the EPLF has been able to mobilize, organize and draw into the revolutionary struggle thousands of people. It has organized different sections or classes of our society, such as workers, peasants, women, youth, students, etc. The masses of our people, whether in the countryside or the cities, who have been organized and are still in the process of being organized, are receiving extensive political education. To facilitate the process of organizing and raising the consciousness of

the popular masses, our organization has, in 1975, produced for mass distribution monthly publications, such as *MAHTA* (Spark), *DIMTSI HIZBI* (Voice of the People), *AQUAI* (The Peasant), etc. Conscious of their role in the revolution, the organized masses have been waging struggles and making the necessary sacrifices for the defeat of colonialism and the total liberation of our people.

Our organization follows the strategy of people's war, i.e., "liberate the land piece by piece" and then "establish and consolidate the people's authority step by step". In accordance with this line, an extensive revolutionary base and numerous guerilla bases have been built and consolidated. In our liberated areas and guerilla bases, popular self-administration is being set up. People's power which is the foundation of the new Eritrea is gradually taking root and germinating in our revolutionary bases.

In the liberated areas, the masses, fighting alongside the liberation army, are intensifying their struggle to defend what has already been gained and to uproot Ethiopian colonialism from Eritrean soil. They work closely with the Front in resolving their daily economic, political, social and legal problems. To attain economic self-sufficiency and sustain the revolution, the masses engage in cooperative production. In order to encourage and assist the masses, particularly those facing hardships, the liberation army helps in production—ploughing, weeding, harvesting, etc. This mutual cooperation and concern is continuously strengthening the principled unity of the masses and the combatants.

The victories achieved in 1975 are considerable. The nature of the enemy, the conspiracies of imperialism and its running dogs, the detrimental effects of the civil war, and the advantages of principled unity have become crystal clear to the vast majority of our people. All these fundamental political victories scored by our revolution and our organization are the results of the extensive political work that has been skillfully and resolutely carried out by the EPLF in collaboration with the patriotic forces and the masses of the people. This, however, does not mean that the political work accomplished by the EPLF in 1975 has been enough; the greater task of mobilizing and organizing the masses has just begun.

As a result of this extensive political campaign, our entire people are now solidly behind the struggle against foreign aggression. The enemy, along with a handful of diehard traitors, is completely isolated awaiting his imminent doom. In response to the continuous principled calls of the EPLF, various sections and groups of our society who used to serve Ethiopian colonialism have joined the revolution and are now dealing decisive blows to the enemy. In particular, hundreds of Eritreans who, for reasons of economic survival, had served in the enemy's armed forces as mercenaries against their own interests and those of their own people, have heeded the EPLF's call. Former members of the enemy's

police, air force, navy, territorial army, commandoes, etc., have deserted with their weapons to join the revolution. Together with the other fighters, they are now destroying the occupation army and defending the people.

It is the masses of the Eritrean people who are waging the determined struggle against Ethiopian colonialism and its imperialist sustainers. The extent of the fascist atrocities perpetrated by Ethiopian colonialism on the Eritrean masses ascertains this fact. It is because of their resistance to Ethiopian colonialism that the Eritrean people have been mercilessly machine-gunned on the streets, in churches, mosques and other public places; their villages destroyed, their crop fields burnt and their property looted. It is because the people of Eritrea, whether in the cities or countryside, have unanimously said "NO!" to Ethiopian colonialism that they are being arbitrarily incarcerated, shot without trial, strangled by steel wire, slit with bayonets, and murdered with poison. It is because the Eritrean masses have administered heavy and telling blows to the military junta and imperialism that hundreds of thousands are languishing as refugees in the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Italy, etc. It is because the Eritrean people have refused colonial bondage and enslavement that they have been forcibly displaced from their homes and are now living in the wilderness. All this demonstrates the resolute and active resistance of the Eritrean people and heralds the inevitable downfall of colonial oppression and imperialist exploitation in our country.

The responsibility of the EPLF in these difficult and trying circumstances is to calm the people and raise their morale; to patiently educate and advise the masses to have confidence in themselves and in their revolution; to endure transient hardships and prepare for a protracted war so as to achieve the people's inevitable victory. In addition to the necessary guidelines and active encouragement, the EPLF provides, as much as its capability allows, medical and educational services as well as economic assistance in an effort to alleviate the hardships of the people. It has also sheltered in safe areas large numbers of people who have been displaced as a result of the destruction of their homes and property as well as the dispersal of their families by the brutal Ethiopian colonialists.

There is a large number of Eritreans who have been forced to emigrate as a result of colonial oppression. Our people abroad, residing scattered in Ethiopia, the Sudan, Saudi Arabi, Italy, North America, etc., have actively worked to consolidate their relations with their revolution in general and their vanguard organization in particular. They have intensified their efforts to increase their support to our national resistance. In particular, Eritreans for Liberation in North America, Eritreans for Liberation in Europe, Eritreans Student Union in the Middle East and the mass organizations in Ethiopia and the Sudan have

carried out and continue to accomplish essential and satisfactory political tasks. Following in the footsteps of the EPLF, the mass organizations abroad have been able to mobilize and organize our people, agitate for the cessation of the civil war, clarify the need for and the correct path to national unity and expose the machinations and injustices of the enemy. Establishing principled relations with other peoples and organizations, they have publicized and won friends for our revolution. In addition to providing material and moral support to the ongoing armed struggle in Eritrea, these organizations have trained and contributed a number of youth to participate in the armed struggle.

The cessation of the civil war is one of the political victories of the Eritrean revolution which, in 1975, enabled it to crush the machinations of its enemies. The political work that the EPLF carried out in 1975 among the combatants and the masses as well as the friends and supporters of the revolution, concerning the cessation of the civil war and the establishment of national unity is the continuation of the principled stand that it has espoused since its inception. The civil war ended at the close of 1974 due to the resolute effort of the EPLF and the work of the democratic forces* within the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), a force which vigorously opposed the civil war and demanded that ELF's guns be pointed at Ethiopian colonialism and not at the EPLF. Subsequently, the fighters of the two fronts, as the backbone of our revolution, began to meet and started a dialogue. Since then, they have been fighting together against the enemy, scoring brilliant victories and shedding their blood for the cause of their people. To bring about principled unity, based on the harmony of thought and action, the fighters are working with patience and caution, skillfully overcoming all obstacles caused by external and internal reactionary forces. They are moving step by step toward their goal of principled unity.

Has the present state of mutual understanding and cooperation between the fighters of the two fronts dropped from heaven? Or has it suddenly sprouted from the earth? No, absolutely not! Rather, it is the fruit, born under suitable conditions, of the principled struggle and the consistent work carried out by the EPLF vanguard organization to impart correct outlook and revolutionary education to the combatants, the masses and the friends of our revolution. The stand and practice of the EPLF have been crystal clear from the outset. It has explained to the

* Democratic forces denotes the masses of combatants of the ELF who have agitated and struggled against the liquidationist civil war ignited by the Revolutionary Council. With great efforts and sacrifices, they contributed to the cessation of the civil war. They are now struggling for principled and durable national unity from within the ELF.

masses and the combatants the correct method of resolving the secondary contradictions and called on them to shoulder their national responsibility by putting forward such slogans as, "Resolve through democratic dialogue the secondary contradiction between the two fronts", "The civil war must stop for the salvation of our people and the continuity of our revolution", "All our guns must be directed against the common enemy", etc. The EPLF has forthrightly explained to the people that the civil war was undermining the revolution, sapping the morale of the people and serving only the machinations of the enemy. Furthermore, the EPLF, time and again, called on the masses in general and the ELF combatants in particular to realize their national responsibility and put an end to the civil war which was choking our revolution. It was from their own bitter experience of three years of destructive civil war and the considerable damages it inflicted on them that our people and fighters saw the effects of the civil war and resolutely opposed it. The cessation of the civil war, which came about as a result of the efforts of the people and the sacrifice of the fighters, was the greatest victory won by our people and our revolution in 1975. It created the revolutionary condition for all the other victories scored by our revolution in the same year.

The exposure of the enemy and the unmasking of the conspiracies of imperialism and its lackies against the Eritrean revolution has been one of the significant political achievements of the EPLF in 1975. Even though the position of the Dergue on the Eritrean problem was initially camouflaged by the demagogic slogan of "peaceful solution", it was basically no different from that of the Haile Selassie regime. The difference between the policies of the Dergue and Haile Selassie is only tactical. Haile Selassie strove to deny the existence of the Eritrean struggle. The Dergue, on the contrary, engages in an open political campaign against the Eritrean revolution both at home and abroad. However, as their fundamental nature and expansionist ambitions are the same, they both have employed brute force to suppress the revolution and maintain their colonial domination of the Eritrean people.

The EPLF's political campaign in 1975 aimed at exposing the Dergue and the system it instituted, to the people of Eritrea, Ethiopia and the world at large. The objectives of the enemy's initial strategy were to weaken the revolution by inflaming the contradictions between the EPLF and ELF, to alienate the Eritrean masses from their revolution and to win them over to its side by undermining their morale and terrorizing them. To implement these machinations, the Dergue began to vigorously peddle its deceptive political slogan of "peaceful solution" on the domestic and international scenes. The real motive of the Dergue's frantic activities was to gain time to consolidate its power in Ethiopia, to make adequate military preparation, to lull the Eritrean revolution into relaxing its vigilance and to swindle the peoples of Ethiopia and the world.

In Eritrea, under the guise of "peaceful solution", the Dergue desperately tried to create a puppet third force by bringing together a band of traitors, reactionaries and opportunists. Abroad, the Dergue's conspiracies and maneuvers were aimed at imposing a resolution of the Eritrean question that would safeguard its interests as well as those of imperialism and reactionary Eritreans while trampling underfoot the basic interests of the Eritrean masses. To this end, it dispatched delegations to our friends abroad (especially the Arab countries) and tried to sell them its policy of "peaceful solution" and convince them to bring about pressure on the Eritrean revolution. However the EPLF had provided the combatants, the Eritrean masses as well as the friends of the Eritrean revolution with a detailed exposition of the designs of the enemy. It had unveiled the dangers inherent in the Dergue's "peaceful solution". Thus, the people rejected and exposed the imperialist-backed conspiracy. Likewise, the friends of our revolution, seeing through the machinations of the enemy, turned a deaf ear to its demagoguery. Thus, with our revolutionary organization, combatants and popular masses fully aware of the enemy's designs, all its attempts failed miserably. The failure of four different committees*—the 38-member committee, the 5-man committee led by Michael Imiru (then Prime Minister), the 5-man committee led by religious figures, and the last committee set up on ministerial level—signals the defeat of the Dergue and Ethiopian colonialism in Eritrea.

It is not without purpose that the Dergue has been shouting itself hoarse with its slogan of "Hibretsebawinet"*** at conferences and in its mass media. Donning a progressive garb, the Dergue declared its policy of "Hibretsebawinet" in an effort to win over one of the Eritrean organizations in the field, silence the strong opposition of progressive Ethiopians, undermine the democratic movement of Ethiopian workers and peasants, as well as, scare and put political pressure on the imperialist forces criticizing it for its executions of former officials. That the Dergue's "nationalization" was also carried out not to protect the economic interests of the Ethiopian masses but to provide it with the means to continue its war of colonial aggression in Eritrea has been exposed by our information channels and combatants.

It has been repeatedly clarified that the Dergue's mendacious propaganda of "Arab invasion" has been concocted to cover up its defeat, slander our revolution, divert the Ethiopian peoples from their

* Committees set up by the Dergue, ostensibly to bring about "peaceful solution" to the Eritrean question.

** "Hibretsebawinet" is the Amharic term for Ethiopian socialism which is a reactionary, petty-bourgeois "national socialism" of the fascist type.



U.S. bombs dropped from U.S. supplied plane by the Ethiopian aggressors. The Eritrean people know who their enemies are.

basic problems and give them a distorted view of our struggle. It has become clear to all that, the Dergue is basically a stooge of U.S. imperialism and that its colonial aggression in Eritrea and its fascist injustices against the masses of the Ethiopian people cannot be wiped out without the patriotic resistance of the colonized people of Eritrea and the popular resistance of the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia.

To expose the nature of the Dergue it is essential to unmask its ties with imperialism. Although at the time it came to power, the Dergue strove to cover-up its relations with world imperialism, the intensification of our revolutionary offensive, has forced it to lay them bare. It has now become crystal clear to our people as well as to the peoples of Ethiopia and the world at large that the bombs, guns, ammunition, fighter planes, armored cars, artillery, and poison that are destroying our people come from the United States; that training is given (to Ethiopian troops) by the Americans and Israelis) that guns, fighter planes, fuel, money, etc. are provided by Iran; that West Germany provides substantial aid in a variety of forms (e.g., it has recently granted the Dergue \$36.6 million); that Tito's revisionist

Yugoslavia generously provides the Dergue with military hardware and advice; that U.S., Israeli, British, French, West German capital has merely been touched and not significantly affected by the Dergue's "nationalization". Furthermore, our organization has repeatedly attacked the U.S. military base at Kagnaw and captured two American soldiers, thereby exposing U.S. imperialist interest in Eritrea and the Dergue's client nature. This practical exposure of the Dergue's puppet nature uncovered the truth long masked by imperialist lies.

Our organization's staunch revolutionary resistance at home and its political campaign abroad have shattered the concerted efforts of the expansionist Ethiopian regime as well as imperialism and its lackeys to isolate the Eritrean revolution from the world revolutionary movement. Today, the echo of the Eritrean revolution reverberates daily in the international arena. It is to be remembered that the Eritrean case was an important topic of discussion at the O.A.U. meeting held in Kampala in July 1975. As our revolution has become better known to the world's people, more than 30 journalists from different countries and continents have visited and observed our revolution firsthand in 1975 alone.

As the Eritrean revolution is essentially opposed to imperialism and all reaction, it cannot advance in isolation from the international anti-imperialist progressive forces in general, and the popular forces in East Africa, the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf in particular. It is for this reason that it has been engaged in productive effort to consolidate its principled relations and cooperation with its basic allies.

In 1975 representatives of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman, the North Yemen Revolutionary Resistance, the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (General Command) and the Ethiopian National Liberation Front visited Eritrea to closely observe the Eritrean revolution and to express the solidarity of their organizations and peoples with our people and organization. Considering its international duty, the EPLF has strengthened its principled relations with progressive Ethiopians and has given them principled support in accordance with its capability. Captured soldiers of the expansionist Ethiopian regime who, deceived by Ethiopian colonialism, had come to perpetrate colonial aggression in Eritrea, have been set free by the EPLF and returned to resume their lives amidst the oppressed Ethiopian masses. Before their release, captured soldiers are provided with the necessary medical attention as well as political education to raise their consciousness.

In short, all this reflects the general work undertaken and the popular victories achieved by the EPLF in 1975 in consolidating itself, organizing the masses, establishing principled national unity, exposing the nature, injustices and machinations of the enemy, and establishing and consolidating its principled contacts and relations with popular governments and organizations as well as anti-imperialist revolutions.

II VICTORIES ON THE MILITARY FRONT

The Eritrean revolution, as an armed resistance of the popular masses, has dealt heavy blows to Ethiopian colonialism and U.S. imperialism and reaped victory after victory. The revolutionary resistance, waged at a higher level in 1975, has not only shaken the enemy but it has also accorded the Eritrean revolution its rightful place on the international level and earned the Eritrean people concrete victories.

In the last months of 1974, the EPLF moved to the front lines* to implement its revolutionary plan of "extending the forces to broader strategic areas in order to mobilize and organize the masses and expose the machinations of the enemy". At that time, the EPLF was shackled by a civil war that it neither wanted nor believed in. Adhering to its principled stand of "democratic dialogue to resolve secondary contradictions" and relying on the democratic movement of the popular masses as well as the ELF combatants, the EPLF was able to overcome with resolute determination and sacrifice the difficult obstacles put on its revolutionary path by the civil war.

One of the greatest victories of 1975 was the cessation of the civil war. As a result, the combatants, who had been fighting each other, and the masses of the people, whose morale had been adversely affected, united to create a sizable and solid revolutionary force. This revolutionary force has been striking at and destroying Ethiopian colonialism in the Eritrean countryside and the cities, and even in the heart of Addis Ababa. Since all our guns have been directed against our common enemy, we have been able to defend our popular masses from the enemy's injustices. Guided by a common programme of work, we have impeded the enemy's movement, carried out essential military actions in the cities and have reached the stage of fighting side by side in the same trench, shedding our blood for our people.

After the cessation of the civil war, our mobile and guerilla units concentrated on political work, especially on the mobilization and organization of the masses in the countryside and the cities and the exposure of the maneuvers and machinations of the enemy. To complement these tasks, our units carried out a number of politically significant and precisely planned military engagements. In the beginning of 1975, our organization attacked in Asmara—the City Hall

* Front line denotes the areas of operations where the liberation forces engage in frontal battles with the enemy, as opposed to the revolutionary bases from which the enemy has been driven away.

(twice), the American Library (twice), the Synagogue, the airport and the Kagnew Military Base (twice). Our organization also destroyed enemy installations of economic importance, such as the Commercial Bank, the Post Office, the Agip oil depot at Bet Giorgis, the Telecommunications building, the electric generator at Beleza, the railroad running from Asmara to Massawa and from Asmara to Keren, the Melotti Beer factory, etc. Members and lackeys of the Dergue as well as spies, notorious for their counter-revolutionary activities, were mercilessly eliminated. The attacks on Bar Gondar, the International Bar, etc., have no meaning other than the liquidation of notorious thugs. To execute revolutionary missions, our front has, at the level of Forces* alone, entered Asmara more than six times and completely destroyed the camp of the 35th battalion, the general headquarters of the army, the headquarters of the navy, the newly constructed military camp near the Kagnew base, etc. In addition, the EPLF urban guerillas executed more than 60 big and important military missions in the heart of Asmara in 1975.

In the beginning, the strategy of the enemy was aimed at inflaming the contradiction between the two organizations and undermining the morale of the people. The Dergue attempted to alienate the people from their revolution through its strategem of "peaceful solution" so as to strangle the revolution and keep the Eritrean people under colonial domination. However, this was defeated by the coordinated political and military steps taken by our organization, the democratic forces in the ELF and the masses of the people. The enemy was badly bruised in its first large-scale encounter. The victory scored by the Eritrean revolution broke through the walls of isolation erected by Ethiopian colonialism and imperialism and its echoes began to reverberate on the international arena. This sounded the death knell of the Dergue. To extricate itself from its impending doom, the Dergue devised the strategy of driving away the revolutionary forces from around Asmara at any cost. To do this, it withdrew its troops from their rural camps and deployed them for the defense of the city of Asmara. Thousands of troops and newly arrived U.S.-supplied military hardware were heaped up in Asmara and its vicinity.

Relying on numbers and weapons, the Dergue made several abortive attempts to push away the forces of the revolution from around Asmara. However, our vanguard organization, the masses of the people and the democratic forces, paying great sacrifices, blocked the enemy's movement from the city to the countryside. Breaking through enemy fortifications our combatants struck at will in the center of Asmara. All this crazed the enemy. It retaliated by attacking our people in the urban

and rural areas. The planes, artillery, mortar, etc., of the enemy completely destroyed over 110 villages. Enemy bullets, wires, bayonets and poison killed more than 25,000 of our civilian population on the streets of our cities, in the countryside, in their places of worship, and inside Ethiopia itself. As a result of the fascist atrocities of the enemy, 500,000-750,000 of our people residing in both Eritrea and Ethiopia have been displaced. With their livelihood completely destroyed, they are now leading wretched and miserable lives. Because of the atrocities of Ethiopian colonialism another 50,000 of our people have become refugees in the Sudan where they are languishing in deplorable conditions. All this is the outcome of the atrocities of Ethiopian colonialism in 1975.

Colonial Ethiopia's atrocities will not save it from its inevitable defeat. The brutality of Ethiopian colonialism only strengthens the revolutionary determination of the masses of the Eritrean people. This has been the living experience of the Eritrean revolution. The Eritrean masses are consolidating their principled relations and cooperation with their revolution in general and the EPLF vanguard in particular. Undaunted by the destruction of their villages, the looting of their property, the dispersal of their families, etc., the masses, participating in combat side by side with the fighters, are dealing heavy blows to the enemy, taking care of the wounded and transporting supplies and ammunition.

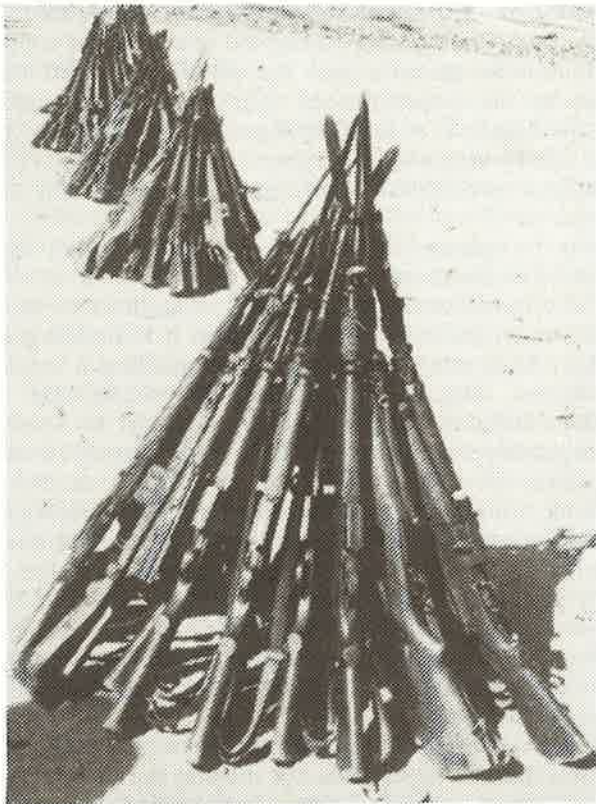
Guided by the strategy of "liberating the countryside piece by piece", which is based on the theory of people's war, the EPLF in 1975 extended its forces into broad strategic areas and brought more of the Eritrean countryside under its revolutionary control. It is building an extensive revolutionary base and developing and expanding a large number of guerrilla bases. The sacrifices made to reach this stage were considerable. Difficult battles have been fought to sweep away the enemy camps from the rural areas. EPLF mobile forces, accompanied by artillery units, have turned the enemy bases at Ad Takelezan, Habrengoqua, Shegrini, etc. into ashes. Furthermore, they have launched strong attacks and inflicted heavy losses and damage on the enemy camps at Sheika Wedi Besrat, Segeneiti, Afaabet, Nacfa, etc. The enemy's communication lines have been cut off. EPLF combatants have, on several occasions, blocked trains on the Massawa-Asmara-Keren railroad, captured 2026 quintals of sesame and burnt 14 wagons with their freight of lentils. Two fuel trucks, along with their trailers, have also been burnt.

In 1975 alone, the EPLF engaged the enemy in over 110 major and small battles. This number does not include the daily military actions taken by our urban guerrilla fighters in the cities. In coordination with the combatants of the ELF, over 15 battles were fought. Our forces laid over 30 ambushes of the enemy. Occupation troops sent from the cities to the countryside to commit brutal atrocities were confronted by our

* In the EPLF, a "Force" is made up of 150 combatants.

forces in over 50 battles and forced to beat their retreat, leaving behind their dead and wounded. Our forces also mounted over 20 offensive operations to destroy enemy camps.

In 1975, the enemy suffered enormous losses. Even though it is difficult to give complete statistics, we have been able to confirm the following enemy losses: 3000 killed, over 3000 wounded, 85 taken prisoner; 91 vehicles (maag, armored cars, mercedes etc.), 4 tanks and 5 fighter planes were turned into ashes; 17 Bren automatic weapons, 253 M-14, 62 M-1, 73 (Uzi, Carbine, Guandie), 402 Mass, 7 wireless radios, 1 75-mm artillery, 1 60-mm mortar, 1 M-79, and 3 57-mm artillery with binocular sets were captured. This report accounts for only half of the battles fought in 1975. Upholding its correct slogan: "Hit the enemy with its own bullets and guns", the EPLF has used the Dergue's forcibly snatched materiel to defend the popular masses, consolidate the revolutionary organization and bury the oppressive system.



Weapons captured from the Ethiopian occupation army. The EPLF has raised the slogan: "Hit the enemy with his own guns and bullets".

These are the blows dealt the enemy in 1975 only on the part of the EPLF. The coordinated revolutionary resistance of the two fronts has reaped the decline of the colonialists and exploiters. In general, the enemy's economy has declined, its military capability weakened, its morale sapped and its armed forces are discordant. Swept away from the countryside, its troops are now concentrated in a few cities, and even there, it is being dealt deadly blows. Its strength is limited to its bomber planes and superior weaponry and even this is only temporary. The EPLF, in cooperation with the masses, is fighting to alleviate—and eventually eliminate—the temporary difficulties imposed by the enemy's fighter bombers and heavy weaponry.

In order to safeguard and consolidate the popular victories achieved in 1975 as well as to continue the revolutionary struggle on a higher level in the coming years, the EPLF has made a tremendous effort to consolidate its military structure. In the first place, it provided lengthy political and military training to the thousands of new fighters, among whom are found a sizable number of women and Fitewerari. After the necessary training, it has armed them, assigned them to various tasks and enabled them to consciously fulfill their duties. To raise the combatants' grasp of military science, a program of practical training and theoretical education has been extensively carried out. Special education has been provided to upgrade the administrative and leadership skills of comrades in positions of responsibility. To safeguard our organization and revolution, strengthen our unity and develop our fighting capability, we have strengthened our military discipline and revolutionary vigilance.

The army which the EPLF has built gives primacy to the interests of the popular masses and the goals of the revolutionary organization. Practice has shown that our people's army is fully conscious of what it fights for and does not shrink from paying the necessary sacrifice. This is why, with all the difficulties encountered, it has been able to corner the enemy. It is precisely because our people's army operates on the basis of careful study rather than emotion that it has forced the enemy to switch its strategy from the offensive to the defensive. It is on the basis of the sacrifices of our people's army that our struggle has made a strategic transition to one of a sustained offensive, decimating and burying the enemy and advancing toward inevitable victory. Our people's revolutionary army has opened new operational zones and brought a large territory under its control where it is carrying out extensive political, military, economic and cultural work. Learning from its own experiences and organizing itself on a higher level, consistent with the requirements of the revolution, our people's army is undergoing qualitative transformation.

VICTORIES ACHIEVED IN OTHER FIELDS

1. INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND CULTURE

With the advance of the revolution, our work in the field of propaganda and information has become broader and more demanding. In spite of the technical problems that make it difficult to fully satisfy the needs of the people and fighters, our Information Department has been producing and distributing various pamphlets and journals. In 1975, our propaganda and information work concentrated on unmasking the Dergue and its fascist practices, exposing the conspiracy of the imperialists and their puppets, raising the morale of the people and promoting the principled unity of the fighters of the two fronts. Pamphlets of a theoretical nature have also been produced and distributed so as to raise the level of consciousness of the combatants and the masses.

Since our work in the fields of education and culture is in its embryonic stage, it cannot be said that large-scale activities have been carried out as yet. Nevertheless, it is evident that educational and cultural activities have begun on a sound basis and are proceeding relatively well. In the field of education, appropriate texts have been prepared and classes have already started in certain areas. On the cultural front, revolutionary songs have been composed and widely



Classes being held in the liberated areas.

disseminated. The fundamental aim of the department of education and culture is to educate the masses of our people, whom the colonial and exploitative system has long deprived of all educational opportunities. It also fights to eradicate the backward feudal sentiments and tendencies so that the masses can broaden their outlook and relate to each other in a revolutionary manner.

2. ECONOMY

All the supplies, money and other daily requirements necessary for our organization come from our people and our friends as well as materials captured from the enemy. To meet the growing economic demands created by the advance of our revolution as well as to overcome the enemy's economic pressure, it became necessary to adopt a new economic plan. The systematic allocation of all the economic resources in the service of the revolution is a primary aspect of the plan. Likewise, economic self-reliance is absolutely essential for the continuity and victory of our revolution. To resolve these basic economic questions, a body capable of properly expediting these functions has been formed and assigned to different fields.

a) **Handicrafts:** This section, formerly the department of repairs, has existed since the formation of our organization. It used to move about with our forces and do repair work under trees and in caves. Currently,



In the carpentry subdivision of the handicrafts section. New wooden handles are fitted into weapons of various makes.

however, with improved capacity and expanded functions, it is rendering greater services. At its present stage, the handicrafts division, made up of six sub-divisions (carpentry, metal work and welding, radio and watch repairs, weapons maintenance, tailoring and hides sewing), is providing extensive services.

It is necessary to cite some of the works accomplished by the handicrafts division in 1975. Using locally available raw materials, it has been able to produce various spare parts for a variety of light and heavy weapons. It has skillfully manufactured various cases (for ammunition and battery storage), carriages, desks, chairs, doors, wooden beds for medical operations, different kinds of wooden bails, oil lamps for use by the people and combatants, various measuring devices for liquids as well as rain-gauges. In addition to this, it repaired and recycled a variety of watches and radios. It has also sewed clothes, hides and tents. The handicraft division is the nucleus of the industries to be built in the new Eritrea.

b) **Transportation:** It is well known that, until the first quarter (3rd month) of 1975, transportation had been entirely dependent on people and pack animals. Today, however, several trucks captured by the heroic combatants of the EPLF are used for transportation. The transportation division encompasses the management and maintenance of trucks, buildings (storage, garage, etc.), pack animals, etc. The major functions of this division are the provision of transportation services, the building of roads and the construction of buildings and storages. Within a very short period of time it has constructed and repaired over 300 kms. of roads and put them at the service of the revolution. It has also established several garages. The transportation branch has created special sections for electricity, body work, radiators, tires, etc., and is meeting the demands of our organization,

c) **Trade:** Exchange is a vital economic activity. The prevalent colonial exchange system, however, perpetuates untold exploitation of our people. To abolish the exploitation resulting from capitalist exchange, to provide the people with the basic necessities at reasonable prices, to control the market conditions and to assure markets for the produce of our people are among the major tasks presently undertaken by our organization. Further, our trade division is striving to secure foreign markets for produce that cannot be sold domestically. It has also undertaken the importation, storage and distribution of goods essential to our revolution and the people. The trade and retail division protects the people from the abuses of contraband traders as well as from the economic pressure of the enemy. It also consciously fights the exploitation and manipulations of greedy merchants. Opening several storage facilities and people's stores in northern Sahel and at the front-lines, the division is rendering essential services to the people. It vigilantly controls the market that has developed in our revolutionary base areas in order to ensure that it serves the masses.

d) **Agriculture:** Agriculture is the economic base of our society. To improve the living conditions of our people, to develop the rural economy, agriculture must necessarily be given primary consideration. Hence, the economic policy of the EPLF is: "Develop agriculture to activate the other elements of production". To accomplish this national task, our agriculture division has begun its work with careful study and diligence. The strategy of self-reliance rather than dependence on foreign sources for food is the underlying basis for the proper execution of our political tasks. Today, agricultural production is extensively carried out in many areas, with priority given to the alleviation of the shortage of food for the combatants. We have also begun rendering the necessary assistance and education to the masses to enable them to become self-sufficient. The agricultural division is conducting studies in different places by testing types of seeds, vegetables, and fruits in experimental projects. Besides, it is carrying out essential studies to protect the health of animals, to prevent soil erosion, to better conserve water, forestry and wildlife, etc.

3. MEDICINE

The services rendered by the Department of Medicine in 1974 were relatively limited. In 1975, however, because our revolution had



A wounded fighter is treated in the EPLF hospital in Sahel province. Except for extremely complicated and serious cases, all the combatants are treated in one of the two EPLF hospitals in the liberated areas.

advanced and the majority of our people had come to rely on it for medical care, our services were multiplied hundreds of times over those of 1974.

One of the basic functions of the Medical Department is to treat wounded fighters, cure and control the various diseases afflicting our forces and provide rest for exhausted fighters. To expedite these functions, the Medical Department allocates medicine to the various forces and departments. In our revolutionary base areas, two medium-sized hospitals (each with a capacity of 300 "beds") are at work caring for sick and wounded fighters. In addition, each battalion has its own mobile clinics.

The provision of medical treatment to the people and the prevention of contagious diseases is also one of the tasks of the Medical Department. It cannot be said that adequate medical services have been provided, because the resources of our revolution are not commensurate with our people's needs. Nevertheless, the Medical Department has exerted tremendous effort to serve the masses. Our people are provided with free medical care in our two hospitals. The six clinics (4 for the fighters and the people and 2 exclusively for the people) that have been established are rendering unreserved services and assistance. The medics in our forces are also providing essential first aid treatment to the masses. In addition, special medical teams have been formed to educate the masses on health care. These special mobile teams are studying and following up on the health conditions of the people and their livestock.

In 1975 alone, more than 5,000 wounded or sick combatants and civilians have been treated in the hospitals of the revolution. In the same year, over 300,000 of our people have been diagnosed and given medical attention by our Medical Department. In 1975 alone, the following preventive vaccinations have been administered in various areas to control contagious diseases: vaccination of 3,000 fighters against typhoid fever; administration of B.C.G. (T.B.) vaccines to 40,000 fighters and people; and vaccination of 20,000 people against smallpox.

The Medical Department has a pharmaceutical section to help it carry out its responsibilities. This section collects from abroad, either through purchases or grants from friends, medicines essential for the fighters and the people and distributes them according to needs. In accordance with its capacity, it has established several pharmacies for the distribution of medicine. The pharmaceutical division, hindered by unfavorable conditions in the past, is now preparing to conduct appropriate scientific study of traditional medicines in our country.

Until the past few years, medical work has been performed by daring and persistent combatants trained through experience in the struggle. With the advance of the revolution, however, (especially since 1975), a considerable number of doctors, health officers, pharmacists and nurses have joined the ranks of our revolution. This has, to a large extent, alleviated our medical difficulties and facilitated our work. In an effort to

properly expedite its ever expanding services, the Medical Department has, in 1975 alone, given 350 fighters adequate first aid training and assigned them to medical work. Fifty-nine of these have been trained to perform light surgical operations. In addition, 4 fighters have been trained to conduct laboratory tests and are now rendering their services to the combatants and the masses.

The diseases prevalent in our society are those generally found in the Third World. The most common ones are contagious diseases (like T.B., fever, typhoid, etc.), intestinal infections (tape worm, amoeba, etc.), malnutrition, vitamin deficiency, ulcer, rheumatism, etc.

The Medical Department made considerable progress in 1975. Yet, it could not fully satisfy the needs of the people due to the shortage of medicines, equipment, medical experts and lack of transportation. Despite all these problems, our Medical Department, conscious of its revolutionary mission, is working day and night treating the masses and the combatants.

4. SAFEGUARDING THE REVOLUTION

The Department of Security in 1975 continued its customary task of safeguarding the revolution. To cope with the flow of a large number of newcomers and increased number of spies, however, the department tightened its security and expanded its surveillance. In order to safeguard the continuity of the revolution, it has tracked down and brought to revolutionary justice those counter-revolutionary groups sent by a variety of enemy spy networks to infiltrate our organization and attempt to spy on and harm our forces. After thorough investigation, it punished those who consciously committed serious crimes; the others, it set free after giving them appropriate political education, so they could either fulfill their national obligations as revolutionary fighters or resume their normal livelihood. These spies were not only numerous, but they also came from a variety of networks. For instance, the agents caught in 1975 were working for the spy networks of expansionist Ethiopia, West Germany, Italy, U.S.A. (C.I.A.) and certain neighboring countries. Three-fourths of the agents caught in 1975 were sent by Ethiopia.

The spies sent to infiltrate our organization did not come only from the above-mentioned networks. In 1975 alone, we apprehended over 50 spies who were sent by reactionary and opportunist individuals and groups in the ELF to infiltrate our front. These spies were sent to commit assassinations, stir up divisions among our fighters by fanning backward religious, tribal, and regional sentiments and to instigate anarchist tendencies and actions. The majority of these were innocent victims who, lacking the necessary consciousness and experience in struggle, were deceived by fanciful promises of "... so much money, ... such and such office, ... scholarship to such and such country, . . . , etc., upon your return". However, as the EPLF exists

to serve the masses, it explains the truth as well as what ought to be done to these oppressed citizens and, after raising their political consciousness, sets them free. Already, 35 of them have been released after receiving the necessary political education.

In general, the people apprehended by the Security Department are: spies, enemy stooges whose lies lead to the imprisonment and intimidation of our people, criminals who abuse the masses for the sake of their personal interests, and opportunists and reactionaries who violate our organizational rules to destroy our front and, for the sake of personal interest, sow division among the masses and combatants.

Among those detained by the Security Department are numerous soldiers, "netch-lebash"* and occasionally, peasants who, duped by the enemy, had worked against and harmed the people and the revolution. While in detention, these groups are attended to with due respect and concern. The principal reason for their detention is to make them realize and seriously repent of their crimes and to win them over to the revolution so they can stop being instruments of their enemy and struggle for the interests of the masses. In this respect, our Security Department has registered concrete victories. Hundreds of our citizens released in this manner have joined our organization and are heroically performing their national duties.

Ours is an organization of the popular masses. Its political line is distinct; the steps it takes in various fields are well planned and coordinated. It is precisely because our organization struggles with revolutionary honesty and commitment that it has been able to achieve so many popular victories within such a short time. Nevertheless, it has also faced a number of obstacles from reactionary groups infested with feudal sentiments and selfish pseudo-revolutionary opportunists. To safeguard our organization and ensure the continuity of our revolution, our Security Department, after finding concrete evidence, puts under detention those people who are out to break our revolutionary laws, split our fighters, destroy our organization, and, above all, liquidate our revolution. While in detention, the Security Department mercilessly exposes, explains and clarifies all errors committed so that the culprits can genuinely grasp and correct their errors. In the end, it releases those who repent and resolve to change, cautions others to correct themselves and continues to detain as well as punishes those who committed serious crimes.

One of the greatest victories scored by the Security Department in 1975 is the breaking up and destruction of enemy spy networks. Eritrean traitors who, aspiring for position and wealth, had for many years served the enemy by recruiting beguiled Eritrean youth (men and women) for \$5-\$15 into the enemy's spy network, have been liquidated along with the networks they established.

The Security Department performs its tasks by relying on the alertness of the masses of combatants and the people. To safeguard the

security of the revolution, it sharpens this popular vigilance through political education. It clarifies to them the machinations and tactics of the enemy. By way of example, agents from different spy networks are, from time to time, made to speak to assembled combatants, explaining in detail the objectives and tactics of their missions. All this is to arm the masses of combatants who, conscious of their responsibilities, educated and tempered by past experience and present conditions, are resolutely safeguarding and consolidating our organization.



Self-reliance. EPLF combatants threshing grain.

IV. CONCLUSION

The year 1975 marked a new chapter in the history of our people. It was the year when the detestable civil war was brought to an end by the efforts and sacrifices of our people and combatants, when all the guns of the Eritrean freedom fighters were directed against the common enemy, when the combatants of the two fronts fought side by side and shed their blood to defend the masses from the enemy's atrocities. It was in 1975 that the foundation for the upcoming durable and principled unity of our combatants and people was laid and the erection of a solid wall of unity begun. With self-confidence, our people and fighters are exposing and overcoming the machinations of the enemy as well as of Eritrean opportunists. They are taking concrete measures to bring about their ideological and practical unity. Victory is **certainly** theirs.

It is vividly clear that the enemy has employed various methods—political conspiracies, deceitful propaganda, economic

bribery, brute destruction and terrorism—in its futile attempts to alienate the masses from their revolution and thereby prolong its colonial domination. However, our colonized people, whether in the cities or the countryside, at home or abroad, are fighting side by side with the combatants. Undaunted by the atrocities of the enemy, resolutely enduring temporary hardships, they are dealing the enemy heavy blows in many fields, putting it to shame and reaping victories. The mobilization and organization of the masses and their proper participation in the national democratic struggle has become the task to which our organization has devoted the greatest attention. Our work so far has brought concrete results. In our revolutionary base areas, people's power in all its aspects has taken deep roots and is rapidly growing.

Self-reliance in all fields is the solid guarantee for the continuation of our struggle and the ultimate victory of our revolution. To attain self-reliance, that is, to alleviate the temporary hardships and to improve the general livelihood of our people, is the responsibility of our revolution in general and of our organization in particular. To this end, our organization is not only providing assistance and relief to the people in accordance with its capabilities, but it has also formulated short and long term programmes of work aimed at solving the problem at its roots. To realize this goal, it has set up a number of organs which are working in different fields and have already achieved preliminary victories.

The basic nature of the Dergue, its intimate ties with imperialism and the conspiracies of the imperialists and their lackeys against the Eritrean revolution have been exposed to the Eritrean people as well as to the peoples of Ethiopia and the world. Despite its progressive pretensions, the Dergue has been isolated from the people it had attempted to dupe into becoming its stooges as well as from the peace-and-justice-loving peoples of the world.

In order to properly carry out our tasks, which are continually expanding with the advance of our revolution, and make the necessary preparations for our protracted struggle, the EPLF has striven to consolidate its internal organization. It has provided with proper political and military training and assigned to various revolutionary fields those youth (men and women) from all social classes and walks of life, who joined our revolution in 1975. Our organization is also training and assigning cadres. Our previously existing departments—establishing new divisions and working with clear guidelines to accomplish extensive tasks—as well as our newly formed departments are contributing their share and registering victories in the various fields of revolutionary struggle.

In the international arena, the Eritrean revolution as a national democratic revolution, distinguishes its basic friends from its basic enemies and establishes principled relations with the former. It has been consolidating its relationship and principled cooperation with the

revolutionary struggles throughout the world and, in particular, with the popular revolutions and governments in the Middle East, the Arabian Gulf and East Africa. By strengthening its relationship with popular movements and by dealing merciless blows to imperialist, colonialist and reactionary forces in Eritrea, the Eritrean revolution is consolidating the world anti-imperialist front and shouldering its internationalist duty. Abroad, the EPLF is working to achieve its clearly planned goals by conducting its activities and establishing relations not in haste but based on a carefully worked out strategy.

On the military front, our forces are learning from their revolutionary experience to enable them to carry their revolutionary resistance to a higher level, to strengthen the unity of the combatants, to deepen their fighting spirit and to raise their combat ability. Our forces have been organized in such a way as to facilitate revolutionary work. Following the strategy of people's war, our forces have been able to sweep the enemy out of the countryside and build extensive revolutionary bases and a considerable number of guerilla bases. In our revolutionary bases, our forces are defending the popular victories by mobilizing and organizing the masses and participating in production. Thanks to the resolute struggle and sacrifices of the people and combatants, the enemy is now confined to only a few cities. If it tries to move to the countryside, it is ambushed by our forces; it suffers heavy human and material losses and beats its retreat to the cities. Even in the cities, the enemy is demoralized and terrorized by the people's political resistance during the day and the attacks of our forces and urban guerillas at night.

Through the sacrifices of the people and combatants, our revolution, having switched from a defensive to an offensive strategy, is defending the liberated areas, building people's power, attacking the enemy in its trenches and destroying its camps step by step. The enemy has been rendered immobile by our forces' total control of its communication lines. With its mobility blocked, its fighter planes and artillery facing strong resistance and its morale sapped, the enemy has generally been forced into a defensive strategy.

As the Eritrean revolution is essentially anti-imperialist and against all reaction, it is an integral part of the world anti-imperialist popular revolutionary movement. By defeating imperialism and colonialism in Eritrea, it contributes to world peace, justice and independence. The victory of the Eritrean revolution in 1975 over Ethiopian colonialism and imperialist exploitation is a continuation of the victories of the oppressed peoples in Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, etc. It is the verdict of history that, just as the popular revolutions in Viet Nam, Cambodia, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Laos were crowned with popular victories, so also will the popular struggles in Eritrea, Oman, Palestine, Namibia, Azania, Zimbabwe, etc., be crowned with the victories of the colonized and oppressed masses. It is only that such victories demand protracted struggle and popular sacrifices.

The overall victories won by our organization in 1975 represent positive development for our revolution. This development represents the fruit of the sacrifices of our people and combatants. Our organization, combatants and people are resolutely fighting on all fronts, at home and abroad, to consolidate the victories gained and to push the revolutionary struggle to a higher level. We are relentlessly waging a protracted people's war to further expose, isolate, annihilate and bury the enemy. Our final popular victory is based on the justness of our struggle, our correct revolutionary political line, our strategy of people's war, our firm aspirations for independence and liberation, and our preparedness for the necessary popular sacrifices.



Eritrean women actively participate in the liberation struggle.

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* "Netch lebash" are semi-peasant informers paid and armed to supplement the tasks of the regular army in containing and suppressing the discontent and resistance of the peasant.