

CPC(M-L) Delegation Visits EPLF Liberated Areas in Eritrea

Workers' Advocate, Vol. 8, No. 3, April 1, 1978

The Workers' Advocate hails the successful visit of the delegation of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) to the liberated areas of Eritrea. This visit is of historic importance not just for the Canadian proletariat, but for the proletariat of the entire North America. This visit reflects the close ties and friendship developing between the North American proletariat and the Eritrean national liberation movement, ties born and tempered in the struggle against the common enemy, world imperialism. The national liberation movement is a component part of the world proletarian socialist revolution.

A RED SALUTE TO THE ERITREAN PEOPLE'S
LIBERATION FRONT!

A RED SALUTE TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CANADA
(MARXIST-LENINIST)!

LONG LIVE THE UNITY OF THE AMERICAN, CANADIAN
AND ERITREAN PEOPLES, A UNITY IN STRUGGLE AGAINST
THE COMMON ENEMY, U.S. IMPERIALISM, SOVIET
SOCIAL-IMPERIALISM AND ALL REACTION!

The following is one of three reports by a one-man delegation of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) who visited the liberated areas of Eritrea at the invitation of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. The Workers' Advocate is reprinting this report from People's Canada Daily News, Vol. 8, No. 50.

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After centuries of colonial domination by the Turks, Egyptians, Italians, British and Ethiopians, the Eritrean people

are on the verge of completely liberating their country. The armed struggle which began in 1961, and which has made tremendous advances since the beginning of 1977, has now liberated 95 percent of the country. The Ethiopians now occupy only Asmara, Asab, Barentu, Adi Kieh and the port and naval base at Massawa (the rest of Massawa has been liberated).

The heroic victories won by the Eritrean people and their Eritrean People's Liberation Army have been against seemingly overwhelming odds. Facing the people of the small country of Eritrea who lacked a regular army was the Ethiopian army, one of the largest and best trained armies in Africa which was armed with tremendous supplies of the most sophisticated weapons of mass destruction which imperialism and reaction could supply. The Eritrean people were and are not only up against the fascist Ethiopian aggressors but also against a holy alliance of imperialism, social-imperialism and reaction, which is doing its best to support the Ethiopian fascists and crush the struggle of the Eritrean people led by the EPLF and their EPLA. For over two decades imperialism, led by U.S. imperialism was the primary supplier of arms to the reactionary Ethiopian regime which was colonizing Eritrea. While the Soviet social-imperialists gained the upper hand in its contention with U.S. imperialism to dominate Ethiopia in early 1977 and henceforth became the main supplier of arms to the Ethiopian fascists, the U.S. imperialists continued to pour their finance capital into Ethiopia to help bolster the reactionary regime and maintain their influence there. Also, while the U.S. imperialists ceased directly supplying arms (at least openly), their agents, the Israeli Zionists continued to supply arms. But the alliance of the imperialists and social-imperialists and reactionaries against the just revolutionary struggles does not end here. While in Eritrea, the CPC (M-L) delegation saw captured French amphibious armoured cars, NATO (Belgian made) automatic rifles which also fire grenades, and other weapons from East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Britain and other countries. Against the armed just struggle of the Eritrean people, the imperialists have not stopped at supplying the Ethiopian fascists. The CPC(M-L) comrade spoke with captured Ethiopian prisoners of war who had been trained by the Israeli Zionists and others who had been trained by Cubans. The POWs also spoke about Russian and Cuban military advisors and about Soviet tanks operated by South Yemenese. The CPC(M-L) delegation was in Dekemhare

on one of the occasions when it was bombed by MIGs which are clearly not flown by Ethiopians, who could not have learned to fly them so quickly after they arrived in Ethiopia. The CPC (M-L) delegation also saw the Soviet navy destroyers and witnessed their daily shelling of Massawa and the surrounding area. Nothing provides a more concrete living refutation of the nonsense promoted by the theoreticians of "three worlds" about the "third world" being a great revolutionary force in the struggle against the hegemony of the two super-powers than the revolutionary struggle of the Eritrean people against the Ethiopian fascists and the holy alliance of imperialism and reaction including Cubans and South Yemenese which is behind it.

Against seemingly overwhelming odds, the Eritrean people and the EPLA have won one victory after another, by relying on their own forces. After liberating much of the countryside, the EPLA began a concerted campaign in 1977 to liberate the cities. The small town of Karora was liberated on January 6, 1977. In April 1977, the EPLA liberated Nacfa, the capital city of Sahel province. Before the Ethiopian fascists were able to establish Afabet as the new capital city of Sahel province, the EPLA also liberated it, and thus, Sahel became the first Eritrean province to be entirely liberated. The unprecedented victories continued in the following months. On July 6, the EPLA launched simultaneous attacks against the Ethiopian occupiers in Keren, the second largest city in Eritrea and at Dekemhare, the important town located about thirty-five to forty kilometers south of Asmara. Dekemhare was liberated that same day after six hours of heavy fighting. Keren was liberated on July 8, on the third day of heavy fighting. The liberation of these two towns within a period of three days was a devastating defeat for the Ethiopian fascists. Keren was a heavily fortified city complete with a fortress on top of a hill in the center of the city and military camps on hills located at the outskirts of the city. The Ethiopians had a garrison of 4,000 to 4,500 troops stationed in Keren and considered it virtually invincible. It had taken the allies four and a half months to capture it from the Italians in the Second World War. Eighteen hundred Ethiopian troops were captured there, including a lieutenant colonel. A second lieutenant colonel who tried to escape with two armoured cars was pursued and killed. The liberation of Keren proved the invincibility of the EPLA. During its visit, the CPC(M-L)

delegation had the opportunity to visit the fortifications in Keren, and to speak directly with the lieutenant colonel captured in the battle there. The lieutenant colonel said that he was now fully aware that the propaganda of the Dergue on Eritrea was all lies and he spoke of the need to educate the Ethiopian people about the real situation in Eritrea. In an interview with a journalist, he said that he had been amazed to see how the fighters of the EPLA had assaulted their positions and that what he had first thought must be drunkenness or insanity, he now realized was the heroism of determined revolutionary fighters.

In the weeks following the liberation of Dekemhare and Keren, the EPLA liberated the towns of Segeneiti and Digsu and fought what has been one of the most decisive battles of the war to date. This battle began on August 4, when the Ethiopian fascists launched a massive two-pronged counter-attack using 10,000 troops escorted by fighter planes, tanks, armoured cars and heavy artillery with the objective of recapturing Dekemhare. The EPLA defeated one force within two days. The fighting on the other front was much heavier, but with the active support of the people's militia and the entire population, the EPLA was able to take the initiative, launching a devastating attack forcing the enemy to flee, leaving 1,200 dead behind and having suffered many more wounded. This fierce battle proved that the EPLA with the active support of the people's militia and the entire people was able to smash any force no matter how large and well-armed. It proved once again that it is people not weapons that are decisive in war. The successes of the EPLA continued throughout the rest of the year. On October 12, the EPLA annihilated an entire battalion which was trying to escort a convoy of 300 trucks heading for Asmara. Besides wiping out the battalion, the EPLA destroyed 260 trucks and captured the remaining forty. Between November 21 and December 1, the EPLA engaged and defeated the Ethiopian troops in a series of battles on the Asmara-Massawa highway during which 15,000 aggressor troops were deployed. The EPLA pursued the retreating Ethiopian forces, and on December 10, it smashed a force of between 5,000 and 8,000 aggressor troops in Dogali, just twelve kilometers from the important deep sea port of Massawa. In the battle at Dogali, the EPLA captured ten brand new Soviet T-54 tanks as well as destroying others and it gained control of the only water supply for Massawa. When travelling through this area, the delegation saw some of the tanks and

armored cars which had been destroyed in this battle. The EPLA continued its advance and on December 12 it liberated the airport, fuel depot and most of the city of Massawa. In the fighting at Massawa, the EPLA captured ten more brand new Soviet tanks and destroyed others. The EPLA now has liberated all of Massawa except for the naval base and the port.

The beginning of 1978 saw the advances of the EPLA continue. In a three-and-a-half-day period beginning on January 24, the EPLA liberated the towns of Ghinda, Dongolo, Embatkala, Nefaset, Mai Habar and Seidici. With these victories, the EPLA gained complete control over the Asmara-Massawa and Massawa-Dekemhare highways and it captured the only two naval training centers for the Ethiopian military, which were located at Embatkala and Dongolo. With the liberation of Seidici, it tightened its encirclement of Asmara, moving within sixteen kilometers of the center of the city on the eastern front. On the night of January 27, when Seidici was liberated, the Ethiopian fascists and their Russian and Cuban military advisors once again underestimated the strength of the revolutionary forces.

While the EPLA had major forces committed to liberating towns on the Asmara-Massawa road, the Ethiopian fascists launched an attack with the objective of recapturing all of Massawa. But the EPLA was not caught unprepared. Steeled in the flames of people's war, the EPLA allowed the enemy to approach near their lines before opening fire. The Ethiopians were routed, hundreds of their troops were killed and four of their tanks destroyed before they retreated to the naval base and port where they were holed up.

The EPLA has now wiped out most of the Ethiopian regular army in Eritrea. More and more it is fighting the zematch, the supposedly "volunteer" peasants' militia which the Ethiopian fascist junta also cynically calls the "red army". But the crimes of the Ethiopian fascists against not only the Eritrean people but also against the Ethiopian people were fully revealed in discussions which the CPC(M-L) representative had with captured prisoners of the "volunteer" peasants' militia. During its visit, the CPC(M-L) delegation had the opportunity to speak with large numbers of captured prisoners of war, both those from the regular Ethiopian army and those from the peasants'

militia. Most of the POWs from the regular army spoke about the propaganda in the mass media in Ethiopia that the Eritreans were fighting the Ethiopians so that they could sell their country for Arab petrodollars or that it was Arabs who were fighting in Eritrea. They also all explained that from their own experience in Eritrea and after the political education which they had received from the EPLF, they knew that these were lies and that it was the oppressed people in Eritrea who were waging a just struggle to liberate their country. However, discussions with the POWs from the peasants' militia almost all of whom come from poor peasant families of a minority nationality from the south of Ethiopia, and who were almost illiterate, revealed that they knew absolutely nothing about Eritrea before they came there. They didn't even know the lying fascist propaganda of the Dergue; they simply didn't know anything about Eritrea, including that they were going to be sent there. They had been told that after they received two months of training, they would return to their villages with their weapons, where they would act as a militia if the need arose. That the imperialists and Ethiopian fascists just used these poor peasants as cannon fodder was further proven by the fact that many of them were suffering from malnutrition when they were captured, a problem which the EPLF with its very limited resources is doing its best to eliminate. The humane treatment which the EPLF provides to the prisoners of war is in stark contrast to the barbarous crimes being committed daily by the Ethiopian fascists, imperialists and other reactionaries against the Eritrean people. The POWs are given food, clothing and medical treatment on a par with that given to the fighters of the EPLA. They are also given political education and taught to read and write in their own languages (which is only limited by the fact that the EPLF is not familiar with the languages of some of the Ethiopian minority nationalities). The EPLF has released some of the POWs after they have finished the political education program and have been taught how to read and write. The stand of the Ethiopian Dergue towards approximately 6,000 of its soldiers who have been captured by the EPLA further reveals its completely fascist nature -- it denies that there are any POWs.

The Eritrean revolution reveals another feature of imperialism and reaction, that is, that even on their deathbed the imperialists and reactionaries are capable of committing the most heinous crimes against the people. While the Ethiopian

fascists, their imperialist masters and reactionary allies have suffered one defeat after another, they still are trying to hold on to the few places they control in Eritrea and to recapture liberated areas. The Ethiopians regularly bomb the liberated areas. The CPC(M-L) delegation visited Afabet the day after it was bombed and it was in Dekemhare during one of the numerous bombing raids against it. Soviet naval ships daily shell Massawa, doing no damage to the EPLA but destroying large portions of the city and forcing the entire civilian population to leave the city. The CPC(M-L) delegation saw the Russian ships and the extensive damage done to the city by them and by the planes which also regularly bomb there. The CPC(M-L) comrade saw shells exploding in the surrounding hills and heard shells exploding nearby. When the bombardment of Massawa and the surrounding area (the Soviet social-imperialists have shelled Dogali from their ships) began early in the morning, one of the EPLA fighters commented that this was breakfast time in Massawa. He also commented that the task of the revolutionary was to build the new as well as to destroy the old and that the Eritrean people would reconstruct a better Massawa in the future.

The Eritrean people have not been intimidated by these fascist crimes. Every attack only further heightens their resolve to rid their country of the fascist vermin and to build a new and independent society. The Eritrean people are solidly united under the leadership of the EPLF and with their steeled and conscious EPLA, are sure to defeat all the aggressors no matter how well armed. They are prepared to continue and they have proven their ability to successfully wage a protracted people's war to liberate their country. Their victory is certain!