

Guardian's Opportunism Exposed

Workers; Advocate, Volume 8, Number 10
November 22, 1978

(Reprinted from Eritrea in Struggle, newsletter of Eritreans for Liberation in North America, Sept.-Nov. 1978.)

In its October 25, 1978 issue, the Guardian has openly declared its all out support for the capitulationist leadership of the EPLF. Endorsing the capitulationist line of the EPLF leadership, it has stated, "the Guardian has long supported the Eritrean people's struggle and continues to support its vanguard organization the EPLF". At a time when the EPLF leadership has shamefully capitulated to the Soviet-led revisionists and betrayed the struggle of the Eritrean people against their main enemies -- U.S. imperialism, Soviet revisionism and its puppet Ethiopian occupationists, the Guardian is openly collaborating in glorifying this capitulationism, and in slandering EFLNA which is militantly upholding the revolutionary aspirations of the Eritrean people.

The Guardian printed an interview with the representative of the EPLF's capitulationist leadership, supposedly to clarify EPLF's stand on various important questions including the differences between EFLNA and the EPLF leadership. Knowing full well that our differences with the EPLF leadership hinge on the strategic question of correctly identifying the enemies and friends of the Eritrean revolution, the Guardian deliberately avoids raising this question in the interview. The Guardian knowingly collaborated with the representative of the capitulationist EPLF leadership to keep silent on the most crucial question facing the Eritrean revolution. The differences that arose between our organization and the EPLF leadership are on fundamental questions of principle and strategy. (EFLNA has laid down its position on its differences with the EPLF leadership in its special pamphlet Eritrea: Revolution or Capitulation-- October 1978.)

To correctly identify the friends and enemies of the revolution is decisive in the struggle to chart out correct strategy and tactic. It is only when we identify our real enemies from real friends that our revolution can succeed. Because the EPLF leadership has made a grave strategic error by identifying the sworn enemies of our revolution -- the Soviet-led revisionists -- as "the strategic friends of the Eritrean people", it has also departed from the revolutionary line on other major questions such as the question of peaceful solution, and on the characterization of the nature of the Ethiopian junta. EFLNA maintains that the enemies of our revolution are the fascist Ethiopian occupationists and their masters Soviet-led revisionism and U.S.-led imperialism and all reaction. The EPLF leadership, on the other hand, has shamelessly embraced the Soviet, Cuban and other revisionist countries, as the "strategic friends of the Eritrean revolution". The EPLF leadership has gone as far as denying and at times justifying the atrocious crimes of the Soviet Union and the Cuban mercenary troops against our people. This is what the EPLF leadership has to say about Soviet-led revisionist counter-revolutionary aggression in Eritrea and their role in consolidating fascism in Ethiopia.

"... basing themselves on the change that was brought about by the heroic Eritrean revolution and the popular movement of the broad Ethiopian masses, and the steps that the Dergue was forced to take, and in order to encourage an anti-imperialist Ethiopia and to oppose the intrigues and machinations of imperialism and forces of reaction in this region, they (the so-called socialist countries --ed.) have taken a wrong stand directly against our revolution by supporting the Dergue not only politically but also by supplying it with massive weapons and other military assistance", (emphasis ours) (Vanguard, Vol. 3, No. 5, June 1978).

While it is absolutely clear that the Soviet-led revisionists are sworn enemies of our revolution and have repeatedly declared their commitment to fully back the fascist junta in militarily crushing the Eritrean revolution and are also attempting to subjugate our people through political deception, the EPLF leadership maintains that, "when this question (Eritrean question) became clear to the socialist countries (read revisionist -- ed.) the stand they have taken to resolve the complicated political situation is a peaceful solution to the

question of the Eritrean revolution" (Vanguard, Vol. 3, No. 7, July 1978). This is an incorrect assessment and aims at blindfolding not only world public opinion but primarily the Eritrean people on whom the EPLF leadership is frantically attempting to impose its capitulationist line by covering for and white washing the continuing crimes of the Soviet-led revisionists against our people. It is an attempt to ideologically disarm the fighting Eritrean masses from waging an unrelenting struggle against the Soviet-led revisionists and thus prepare conditions for complete capitulation. Dismissing as a mere error the two years of counterrevolutionary role of the Soviet-led revisionists in Eritrea, the EPLF leadership warns the people through this conclusive statement "... we have never for any reason considered the Soviet Union as our enemy, as an imperialist force, as a capitalist system and as a counter-revolutionary force" and anyone who says so is "anarchist" and "adventurist". (EPLF's message to EFLNA's 9th Congress)

Thus, on such fundamental questions of principle and strategy as to who is the target of the revolution, there can be no middle road. The EPLF has clearly and unconditionally capitulated to the Soviet-led revisionists and has betrayed the interests of the Eritrean peoples national liberation struggle.

The Guardian in supporting the capitulationist leadership of EPLF -- has only further exposed its opportunist stand on the Soviet Union and objectively stands against the struggle of the Eritrean people for genuine independence and democracy.

Furthermore, in the interview mentioned above the Guardian asks the representative of the capitulationist EPLF leadership to clarify EPLF's characterization of the Dergue (the military junta in Ethiopia). Despite his "sophisticated" attempt to avoid answering the basic question, the EPLF representative further exposed that EPLF leadership has in fact reversed the correct verdict on the Dergue as a fascist puppet regime in the service of imperialism. Because the EPLF leadership has capitulated to the pressures of Soviet-led revisionists, they had to tone down their attacks on the fascist Ethiopian occupationists, not only that, but they are portraying the fascist junta as an anti-imperialist regime. In the official organ Vanguard, the EPLF's Vice-Secretary General presented the EPLF leadership's analysis of the Dergue -- which is a totally

revisionist characterization of the nature of the fascist Ethiopian regime. He characterized it as a regime of the petty bourgeoisie, as a vacillating force that under the pressure of the Ethiopian masses has finally cut-off its ties with imperialism, Zionism and reaction and strengthened its relations with the "socialist" countries.

Similarly, in the Guardian interview the representative of the capitulationist EPLF leadership who does not use the term fascist to characterize the Dergue, evades the correct class analysis of the fascist junta. The EPLF representative rumbles about how the Dergue came to power as a result of the Eritrean people's national liberation struggle and the Ethiopian masses democratic movement, which in itself is an utterly incorrect and misleading answer. The fascist Dergue came to power and consolidated its rule through the full backing of the U.S. imperialists and Israeli Zionists and later the Soviet-led revisionists in order to crush the Eritrean people's national liberation struggle and the democratic movement of the Ethiopian people which taken together had thoroughly shaken the foundations of Haile Selassie's feudal regime. The EPLF leadership who wants to deny the fact that the Dergue is a fascist dictatorship of the comprador and bureaucrat bourgeoisie presents the Dergue as a regime that is making certain reforms like nationalization of banks and land reform. While the objective facts in Ethiopia show that the very existence of the fascist regime and its continued occupation of Eritrea has been made possible primarily through the massive military, economic and political support of Soviet-led revisionism and also the backing of U.S. led imperialism, the EPLF leadership maintains that the fascist Dergue has cut off its ties with imperialism. Even if the Dergue broke its ties with U.S. led imperialism, its continued dependence on Soviet-led revisionists negates the so-called anti-imperialism of the Dergue. In the Guardian interview the EPLF representative makes a futile attempt to discuss the nature of the Dergue without mentioning the fascist and puppet nature of the Ethiopian regime and whose interest it is serving in Ethiopia, Eritrea and the region.

It's clear that the, EPLF leadership is resorting to such maneuvers in order to facilitate its capitulation. The Guardian's present glorification of this capitulation only reaffirms that the Guardian always had an opportunist and vacillating position

on the fascist junta and its revisionist Soviet, Cuban masters. (Articles by Jack Smith -- Guardian, March 8, 15, 22, 1978.)

Continuing with the interview, on the question of peaceful negotiation with the Ethiopian occupationists the EPLF representative attempts to gloss over its capitulationist line. The EPLF-ELF June 29, 1978 joint press release which stated, "the continuation and intensification of the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia does not serve the interests of the two peoples and their victories," which is in itself a defeatist line and called for peaceful negotiation with the junta without any preconditions. What this means is that the Eritrean revolution will withdraw its demand for independence. This is totally against the interests of the Eritrean people who have shed their blood for the past 17 years for the uncompromisable demand for national independence. Any negotiation without the precondition that the Ethiopian occupationists should recognize unconditionally the Eritrean people's right to independence -- the struggle of the Eritrean people -- would be in vain. This is why we say that when the leadership of EPLF and ELF declare that they are ready to negotiate without preconditions it is sheer betrayal.

In the Guardian interview the EPLF representative hides the fact that the EPLF leadership has already held three secret negotiations with the fascist Dergue. Even the Guardian who now shamelessly covers for the EPLF leadership's betrayal of this principle, correctly said in its August 16, 1978 issue -- "The only basis for peace in Eritrea ... outside of a clearcut military victory for the liberation forces is recognition of Eritrea's right to self-determination and independence. Once this is recognized we have no doubt a people's government in Eritrea would be willing to enter into negotiations with the Ethiopian government to settle outstanding matters. Recognition of the right of self-determination and independence is essential, however, before any negotiation can begin or any 'political solution' can be worked out. Indeed Ethiopia itself says it is interested in negotiations leading to a political solution -- but unless these fundamental rights are granted, the only thing the Eritreans are being asked to negotiate is their freedom. Ethiopia has so far scoffed at these rights" (our emphasis). Today, Ethiopia still "scoffs at these rights"; it is only the EPLF leadership who has betrayed these principles and has chosen to negotiate away the Eritrean people's freedom. The EPLF leadership has already

held three secret meetings with the fascist Dergue, without the Dergue's recognition of Eritrean independence and at a time when the fascist junta and its revisionist masters are stubbornly insisting that the only "Marxist" solution to the Eritrean question is regional autonomy, (admitted by EPLF in its Vanguard special issue July 1978). How is it then that the Guardian has within a matter of less than two months reversed its stand on this question to support the capitulationist line of EPLF leadership?

The EPLF representative states conclusively "while in the field we are making efforts to organize the Eritrean people and to prepare them for a long and protracted war, on the international level we will adopt tactics as we see fit in order to gain support for our just cause". The representative of the capitulationist EPLF leadership vainly tries to present the changes in EPLF's line as mere "tactics on the international level". However, EPLF's leadership is not merely following a bankrupt foreign policy but is desperately attempting to step by step impose its capitulation to Soviet-led revisionism on the Eritrean people by gradually disarming them ideologically. Amongst the Eritrean masses -- it's disseminating the defeatist line of "the continuation and intensification of the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia is not in the interests of both peoples", "we cannot continue the armed struggle without outside support", "we cannot fight against everybody", etc. The EPLF leadership may try to deceive certain people that its policy to refer to the Soviet-led revisionists as socialist countries and as strategic allies of the Eritrean revolution, and the change it has made in its characterization of the fascist Ethiopian junta as a diplomatic tactic in the international level, but it cannot deceive us and the progressive forces of the world.

In the Guardian interview, the representative of the capitulationist leadership of the EPLF, of course, could not go into all these basic differences we hold with the EPLF leadership for that would be exposing its own opportunism and capitulation. Nevertheless, the Guardian who knows very well what the position of our organization is, has purposely endorsed the shallow and evasive reply of the EPLF representative in order to confuse public opinion. The Guardian, if it had any sense of principle should have at least printed the views of our organization as presented to them by our representative. But

the Guardian has further exposed itself by actually resorting to outright lies and fabrications in order to pursue its opportunist collaboration with the capitulationist leadership of EPLF.

In another article of the same issue (October 25,1978) entitled "Eritrean Students Firmly Support EPLF", the Guardian attacks our organization by fabricating reports that claim "that the majority of the members now reject and criticize the AESNA leadership and the recent resolution" and that "they call the EPLF the sole vanguard" of the Eritrean independence struggle. The Guardian cites names of various chapters in which the entire or majority of the membership allegedly "have repudiated the anti-EPLF position". We had no illusion about the fact that careerist and opportunist elements would jump out after the conclusion of our historic 9th Congress. Those who left the organization recently are a conglomerate of various elements among which are a number of opportunists and careerists who have used this opportune time to forward their interests by collaborating with the EPLF capitulationist leadership. However, by providing a baseless "factual data" the Guardian tries to give the impression that the EPLF leadership has a strong following among EFLNA members. For example, the Guardian claims that in New York City "30 out of 40 members are behind the EPLF". This is an outright fabrication. The number given by the Guardian doesn't correspond with the actual number of our New York chapter membership. The Guardian says that "all but two in San Francisco and 23 of 30 in Seattle are behind the EPLF". This is also an outright lie. Just to show how low the tactics of the Guardian are -- they extremely exaggerated the number of members in the Seattle chapter in order to say that a large number have left EFLNA. "In Jefferson, Norman, Oklahoma and small mid-western chapters" the Guardian says, "the entire membership have repudiated the 'anti-EPLF position". This also is complete fabrication. In these above named midwestern cities and elsewhere although some elements among whom are pro-EPLF leadership opportunists have left, EFLNA study groups and chapters are militantly carrying out their organizational tasks. That the majority of EFLNA's members are vigorously implementing the revolutionary resolutions passed at our historic 9th Congress is a fact. The Guardian cannot change it through lies and fabrications.

Here, we have factually refuted the Guardian's outright lies that "the majority of members now reject and criticize the AESNA leadership and the recent resolution". However, we also would like to make the point that the most important measurement of whether an organization is revolutionary or not is not the number of its members but its political strength. EFLNA is a politically mature mass organization, and this is being and will be proven by the correct line it is following as well as by its daily practical activities.

The Guardian has degenerated too low for words, for we see no excuse for their fabrication of these so-called facts which they claim to have obtained from sources "within the organization". However, on the other hand we are not surprised. It was to be expected that, if at all the EPLF capitulationist leadership could solicit the support of some organization in the U.S. the most likely is the Guardian. The Guardian is itself a defender and apologist of the Soviet and Cuban aggression against the Eritrean people. Ever since the Cuban mercenary troops intervened in Eritrea to back the fascist Ethiopian junta in its genocidal campaign against the Eritrean people, the Guardian has either kept silent or a number of times tried to apologize for the presence of Cuban mercenaries in Eritrea and Ethiopia. It has even suppressed actual reports of Cuban atrocities in Eritrea. Thus it is no wonder that on October 25 it can openly hail the capitulationist leadership of EPLF and launch a campaign against EFLNA and its revolutionary position.