

The EPLF's mission is the realization of the Eritrean people's right to self determination and independence. This was reaffirmed in clear terms in its national democratic program adopted at its first congress. But the struggle to emancipate the Eritrean people from the colonial yoke of oppression requires not only waging a war of liberation against the colonial army but entails a comprehensive political struggle and all-round nation building tasks. Shouldering this responsibility and recognizing its importance, the EPLF accomplished many tasks in various fields, gaining in the process a rich experience and bringing about tangible changes. In the following the changes will be discussed in accordance with their importance. **Political work among the masses**

Ever since Eritrea emerged as a nation especially over the past 40 years, the task of raising the national consciousness of the Eritrean people so it would be on par with the process of nation building has remained fundamental. This task includes the fostering of a common national consciousness by eliminating sectarian sentiments emanating from the backward social and economic structure of the Eritrean society; the development of a nationwide political organization by discarding the narrow and backward organizational forms thrown up by the backward social formation; and the guaranteeing of the broad and democratic participation of the masses in the liberation struggle and national re-construction.

In order to realize these political objectives stage by stage, the EPLF strove to raise the political consciousness of the Eritrean people so that a common nationalism would subsume religious, provincial, tribal and ethnic sentiments. It also worked to enable the people to organize themselves in national associations based on social standing, set up popular institutions on democratic bases to replace those serving traditional leaders and arm themselves to protect their democratic gains.

To raise the political consciousness of the people, regular political education was introduced. Topics such as history of the Eritrean people and their struggle, the correct national line and methods of struggle, basic political concepts, forms of colonialism, its collaborators and their tactics, developments of the international political scene, rights and obligations of the masses, democratic organizational principles, perseverance, etc., were discussed. These discussions were not limited to EPLF members, but public meetings and seminars were organized so the population at large could participate and help in broadening and deepening understanding of the issues. Towards the same end, books were translated, journals and other publications widely disseminated. A radio station-The Voice of the Masses-was also set up to assist in the politicization of the masses, particularly those who live in inaccessible areas. Research was carried out in the economic, social and cultural life and the folklore of the Eritrean people so political work would be based on Eritrean reality.

## Assessment of EPLF's experience in the period between its 1st and 2nd Congress (Part I)

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The second aspect of EPLF's political work pertains to mass organizations. Here its fundamental policy to organize the Eritrean masses on the basis of their social status into associations of workers, peasants, women, students as well as professionals. The political work was effective and the associations held their founding congress, declared their programs, elected their leadership and have been actively broadening and consolidating their ranks. Parallel with this and on the basis of the Front's policy of setting up democratic political and administrative bodies inside the country, people's assemblies were formed at village and district levels in the liberated and semi-liberated areas and were functioning properly. To simplify their administrative work, committees responsible for cooperatives, economic life, justice, etc, were elected and as a result the people's role in self-administration improved.