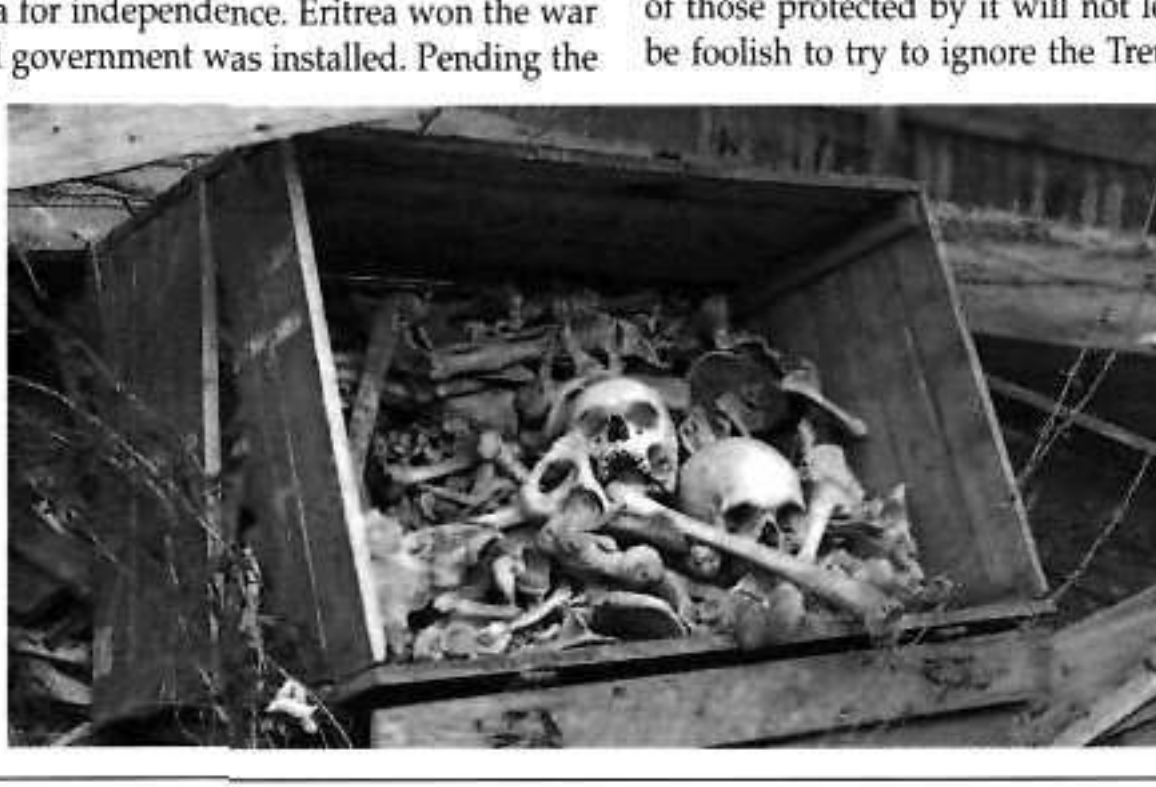
What lessons to be lea

BITTER ethnic fighting in east Africa might have been avoided through the establishment of a strong civil society guarding human rights and democratic processes. In this respect the Eritrean situation is of special interest to us, especially against the background of our constitutional debate.

Eritrea, the northernmost province of Ethiopia, waged a 30-year war against Ethiopia for independence. Eritrea won the war in 1991 and a provisional government was installed. Pending the outcome of a referendum next April, Eritrea will become fully independent in 1993. The parallel between Eritrea and South Africa is illustrated by a heap of ammunition cases under a tree just outside the destroyed city of Massawa. These are filled with the rotten corpses and skeletons of Ethiopian soldiers left there when from Massawa. When confront couldn't help wondering how ma filled by all the people who hav apartheid and in the current mind

After so many years of ethnic p of those protected by it will not l be foolish to try to ignore the Tre



this case the process continued unabated without really expanding the productive base of the economy. In the absence of any meaningful opposition this situation remained unchallenged and stifled the Kenyan economy.

In Ethiopia, the monarchy of Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown in 1974 and eventually replaced by an extremely oppressive military regime, followed by a devastating nationalisation programme and destructive ethnic wars. In both these cases oppression was met with violent resistance and eventually the overthrow of the regime.

It seems that the armed struggle against

show a preference for the military method of dealing with issues related to normalisation and democratisation.

Government must accept that as a senior partner, its actions will influence this issue more decisively than any of the other parties. Secondly, if military options are contained then there is space for the development of a process of peaceful opposition where the competition for power does not eventually destroy the whole society.

This, however, does not guarantee democracy and the full participation of a broad base of society in policy making.

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