

**Inaugural Address by Secretary General,
Comrade Suresh Premachandran,
At The Second Congress of The Eelam People's
Revolutionary Liberation Front**



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INTRODUCTION

Dear Comrades,

The fact that the EPRLF is holding its Second Party Congress today conveys a message that is loud and clear. It is that our Party continues to stand firm and resilient amidst numerous losses, difficulties and political turmoil. Similarly, the holding of this Congress is public declaration that we shall continue stand firm, struggle and make advances into the future. This commitment was born with the Organization and remains its birth-right. This is so since our commitment and resolve did not spring-forth from a vacuum. There was a firm principle behind it. It is our adherence to that principle and policy which began to manifest itself in our resolve and explains the continued existence of the Party. It must be borne in mind that our organization is not merely the sum-total of individuals. An individual, however courageous he may be, can be destroyed since a pistol does not discriminate between the bold and the coward. But firm principles and policies cannot be destroyed.

For instance, the LTTE killed many of our Comrades on the delusion that our organization could be destroyed. Ultimately, they even assassinated Comrade Nabha in act of cowardice. But what did the LTTE achieve at the end? Were they able to destroy the EPRLF? If despite the loss of many of our leading comrades, our Organization continues to exist and declares its intentions to continue with the struggle, it is important that we understand the basis of this existence and resolve. It is that basis which continues to confound and mystify the fascists. By killing the leader of a band of thieves, that gang can be eliminated. But by killing the leader of an organization or movement that is committed to firm principles and policies, that movement cannot be destroyed. These principles and policies constitute the basis and proof of our existence as well as our life-breath.

Our Principles and Policies.

Comrades! If the principle and policy that we adhere to is so powerful so as to be the very source of our energy and existence, that is because it is intertwined with the emancipation of humanity. It manifests the continuation of the struggle by the human race. We had the perspective which made it possible to link a struggle, which emerged as a result of some fundamental problems facing a distinct populace of a given country, with the universal struggle for the emancipation of mankind. At the same time, we were able to identify the specific characteristics of our own struggle and give it its distinct form. In addition, our perspective provided us with the capacity to discern the changing international situation and the different phases of our struggle.

This was essential for providing the struggle its specific form, given the conjuncture of forces prevailing at a given time.

It was also this perspective which enabled us to introduce into a struggle that had taken the form of a nationality problem the foundation for social and economic liberation. We had to keep emphasizing on the need to avoid, on the one hand, the dangers of a dogmatic and mechanistic interpretation of social liberation, that isolated it from the struggle for national liberation. On the other hand, we had to be vigilant against the danger of a national liberation struggle assuming the form of narrow chauvinism, fanaticism and vengeance-seeking. It is our policy based on the above perspective which enabled us to avoid these two extreme tendencies.

comrades! While we are gathered here today to commence the holding of our Party Congress and while being proud of our achievements and resolve, it is important that we analyse in depth our task for the future. I am confident that all of you would engage in this collective task with the help of our accumulated experiences and knowledge and conclude this Congress successfully. Our Congress commences today with the realization that in the success of this congress depends on

the future successes of our Organization and expectations of a new era for our People. It is the fervent hope of all of us gathered here that we would conduct the deliberations in a responsible manner and bring this Congress to a successful conclusion. At the same time, it is important that we look back on the path that we have traversed so far.

As Comrade Nabha pointed out at our First Congress, in our forward march we had to face ridicule and cynicism - and most importantly the loss of numerous comrades. In the midst of these travails, it is indeed a matter of pride for all of us that EPRLF was able to advance the struggle and interests of our People. But in these achievements, I see all those comrades who attained martyrdom in carrying out their tasks. The sacrifices by each one of them is indeed overwhelming. Although it is not possible in my address to refer to the contributions and sacrifices by each one of these comrades who laid down their lives for our cause, yet I consider it necessary to at least refer to some of our Comrades who functioned as the pillars of our organization and in their martyrdom remain an ever-lasting flame. I consider their life, their contributions and their sacrifices in advancing the interests, rights and freedom of our people as invaluable lessons and the driving-force behind all of us.

Tribute to comrade Nabha

In this context, I consider it my primary duty to pay a tribute to and invoke the memory of Comrade Nabha - our Founder-Leader and the incomparable leader of our people, who through his vision, dedication and sacrifice guided us and earned our everlasting affection. When I invoke his memory, I see him along with all those who played a leading and historical role in emancipating humanity. I consider it an honor that I had the opportunity to serve and struggle for the rights of our people along with this great personality.

The contribution and the role of comrade Nabha was multi-dimensional and therefore has to be viewed from the different

angles and in their totality. An in-depth study of this personality will necessarily have to focus on his vision and role in relation to the struggle for the national liberation of the Eelam Tamils, social liberation, emancipation of the Sinhala masses and the progressive and anti-Imperialist struggles in the international sphere. Although, it is not possible for me to refer to all these aspects in my address here, I shall attempt at focusing on some of the more important ones.

Comrade Nabha saw the liberation of Eelam, not as a mere creation of an independent nation-state, but as a means of advancing social and economic liberation. He advanced the argument that at a time when the Nationality Question was the primary contradiction in Sri Lanka, it was through the resolution of this contradiction that class struggle could be advanced in Sri Lanka. Hence, he argued it was Eelam liberation that would pave the way for the class emancipation of the Sinhala masses and the resolution of the class contradictions in Sri Lanka. Thus, when he reflected on the liberation of the Eelam Tamils, he also thought about the emancipation of the Sinhala masses. But he was not prone to mere rhetoric. He played a vital role in fostering and encouraging the setting-up of progressive organizations working amongst the Sinhala People.

In relation to the Eelam struggle, Comrade Nabha emphasised – that it must transform itself into a People's struggle. In this, he stressed on the need for mass mobilization. He envisaged the formation of mass organizations as the primary task of our party. He called on the party to locate the working-class at the centre of its working programme, since he firmly believed in their role as the vanguard of the struggle. In this context, he gave primacy to working amongst the plantation proletariat. It must be mentioned here that during the early period of underground existence, he functioned mainly in the plantation areas.

Comrade Nabha worked tirelessly for the unity of the various organizations engaged in the Eelam liberation struggle. As a result of these efforts, a united front, the Eelam National

Liberation Front (ENLF), was formed in early 1984. At the same time, he strove to forge links with those organizations which were not constituent members of the united front. Although the party had made numerous compromises for the sake of unity and did face many adversities as a result, comrade Nabha was emphatic that the interest of the party should be subordinated to the people's interests. As far as the party was concerned, comrade Nabha was particular that even in the stage of an armed struggle, the gun should be subordinate to and guided by politics and not vice versa. He was serious about inner-party democracy and was vigilant that the internal killings which were rampant in other Tamil Organizations should not be emulated by our own party. Similarly, he was revolted by the drug-trafficking indulged in by other organizations, as a means of raising funds, and was determined that our party should never engage in such activities. He condemned the massacre of innocent non-combatant Sinhalese civilians by some of the Tamil organizations in order to obtain the patronage and financial support of narrow chauvinist Tamil interest groups in Sri Lanka, India and other countries. In the midst of such degenerate activities of some Tamil liberation organizations in a bid to advance themselves, Comrade Nabha steered us, under his firm leadership, along a tortuous but a principled path for the cause to which we were committed.

Comrade Nabha had a clear and consistent international perspective. In addition to extending his solidarity to progressive movements and national liberation struggles in the international sphere, he was for a short period directly involved in the Palestinian Resistance. He identified India as an anti imperialist force in the region and displayed immense interest in establishing friendly ties with it. It must be mentioned that none of the Tamil Organizations had a consistent position in relation to India. Their relationship with India was, instead, determined by opportunism and was, therefore, vacillating. But our party adopted a clear position right from the start. We were determined to safeguard our friendship with India at whatever cost. There were many reasons for this.

Firstly, India is a neighbouring country with more than 50 million Tamils residing there whose contribution is essential for our struggle. Secondly, India is a leading member of the Non-aligned movement, which meant that India's support for our struggle would also influence the member-states of the non-aligned movement. Thirdly, India is a regional power which is fast emerging as a factor to be reckoned with in the support that India extended to anti-Imperialist, anti-racist and legitimate national liberation movements all over the world. India may not have supported the secessionist demand for Eelam. But we were optimistic that the racist policies and character of the Sri Lankan state would have ultimately led to India supporting the struggle for Eelam. We were able to demonstrate to India in concrete terms the continuing practice of broken pacts and unkept promises by successive Sinhala governments and the difficulties in resolving the Tamil Question within the existing polity. Unfortunately and tragically, the anarchic and self-seeking conduct of the LTTE has only succeeded in making an enemy of India.

The reason as to why I wish to highlight this points is that we are often branded as the "puppets" and "quislings" of India and accused of being "traitors" by LTTE's support-base, narrow Tamil chauvinists as well by some Naxalite groupings in India. All that we wish to tell them is that our friendship with India is based on solid foundation. The LTTE may seek to scuttle these ties, but in the interest of our people we consider the strengthening of our friendship with India to be one of our primary tasks today. It is those who seek to ridicule our perspective on India's role who are the real traitors to our cause. It is they who bring shame to our people. The basis of our policy towards India was to a large extent shaped by Comrade Nabha's broad outlook, deep insight and fore-sightness.

Although the broad-minded, accommodative and all the embracing character of Comrade Nabha was known to some, it is during the period when our party entered the democratic

mainstream. that these attributes began to openly manifest themselves. For instance, when we contested the elections to the North-East Provincial Councils and obtained an absolute majority, including the right to form the Government, Comrade Nabha was keen that we should make it a coalition government. As a result, except for the Chief Ministership and one of the Ministerial portfolio, the other three portfolios were given to our allies. He re-gain, in order to establish the secular credentials of the EPRLF, the Party accepted Comrade Nabha's suggestion that a Muslim and a Sinhalese be given cabinet portfolios so that they may represent the interests of the Sinhalese and the Muslims in the Province. Similarly, at the General Elections, he wanted the Party to contest under a common banner along with the other Tamil parties, so as to project a unified force that would articulate the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil-speaking people. He also accommodated the Communist Party in the Party's nomination list. In this manner his primary concerns and thoughts evolved around the common interests of the people.

Although the visions and work-method of comrade Nabha was known to many, his attributes as a "person" was known only to persons like me who had the privilege of being associated with him closely and intimately. It is these personal qualities in him which laid the foundation for his multi-faceted role and contribution to the struggle. Hence, I am obliged to say a few words about Comrade Nabha - the "Person".

He never allowed his personal problems or the problems of his family to influence him. He neglected not only his health, but also his personal security. He remained so till his death. But he was extremely sensitive to the needs of our comrades as well as each citizen. Such was his compassion, that he would place a pillow beneath the head of his personal body-guard even when he slept on duty. His demeanor was serene and his speech was soft and measured. But his words conveyed a meaning that was deep and left a lasting impression. Even when issuing an order, he did not sound authoritative. Yet, no one dared disobey - such was his charisma.

It was rare to see Comrade Nabha take rest. he goes to sleep late and by early morning he would have left on some task. As much as possible, he would do his own work rather than expect others to do it for him. Similarly, he expected others to assume responsibilities rather than wait for them to be delegated. Neither fatigue, time nor distance prevented him from performing his tasks and duties. Similarly, neither funds nor the lack of it prevented him from doing his work. Hunger and ailment were likewise rendered irrelevant by him. He did not allow himself to get disheartened by losses, alarmed in dangers or overwhelmed by the tasks and challenges that lay before him. He never succumbed to threats and treated them with utmost contempt. Any problem that would have been seen by most to be insurmountable was summarily dismissed by him with his characteristic "No Problem". And then he would proceed to tackle that problem.

When we now look back on those days, it continues to amaze as to how, despite the numerous difficulties and financial problems that the Party faced, we succeeded in activating and taking forward our Party Programme. The reasons clearly is that we were bestowed by a leadership that was Comrade Nabha. "Do your Duty without expecting rewards", preached by Bhagwad Gita, was lived in practice by Comrade Nabha. He worked selflessly for the liberation of the oppressed Tamil-speaking people. He immersed himself in the struggle for the emancipation of the exploited working class and the emancipation of humanity as a whole. And he died while performing his duty.

Karl Marx, who sowed the revolutionary seed, was a Morning Star, to the working class - for he symbolized hope. But he did not live to see the product of his vision. Karl Marx, who evolved an ideology for the emancipation of the working class, lived in poverty and died impoverished. He did not compromise on his ideology for pecuniary gains. Similarly, Comrade Nabha refused to accept positions when they came his way and, instead, devoted his time and himself to the long-drawn struggle for

liberation. He, however, entrusted some of the positions that the party was able to derive, through our participation in electoral process, to other responsible comrades.

Following the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, when it was announced that the Government would be prepared to grant him amnesty, he declined the offer on the grounds that the struggle that he engaged in was neither against his conscience nor principles. Although he was soft by nature, he stood firm and uncompromising on those policies and principles that he embraced.

Comrades! Although Comrade Nabha is no longer in our midst, his memory remains ever-lasting. Our tribute to him is to make his vision a living reality. We give him our assurance that his vision will always be put into practice by the last remaining Comrade of EPRLF.

Much has been spoken and written about Comrade Nabha by various persons in various fora. In a souvenir put out in memory of Comrade Nabha, a couple of years ago, many political leaders, including Shri Rajiv Gandhi, intellectuals and comrades have referred to the multi-faced personality of Comrade Nabha. And, at this Congress more comrades will be speaking about the role and significance of comrade Nabha to our struggle. I shall therefore stop here and proceed to highlighting the contributions made by some of our other martyrs.

Tribute To Our Martyrs

Comrade "Aiyah", as he was affectionately referred to by all our comrades, was elected to the Central committee at our First Party Congress while he was still in prison. He had given himself to the Eelam struggle even before the EPRLF was formed. Since he felt that liberation struggle required a vanguard organization, he played a key role in forming the EPRLF and was one of its co-founders. Representative of the working people and came from their ranks. His initial work programme was centred around the pauperized sections of the Vanni People, as well as displaced Plantation Tamils.

In addition to engaging in political work and mobilization, he also actively involved himself in formulating and executing economic activities, aimed at uplifting and transforming their poverty-stricken environment. He was a guide and friend to not only our Comrades, but to also the People of the Region, and earned their love and affection. Although he was married and had children, he gave himself totally to the liberation struggle. He bore all these difficulties and set-backs with his characteristic smile. Although he faced and over-came numerous dangers, he did not live to see the functioning of the Provincial Government which our Party had established through sheer dedication and sacrifices.

What heightens the tragedy of his death is that it was not due to the actions of the Sri Lankan security forces, with whom we had engaged in armed confrontation, or that of the fascists LTTE, which had embarked on its megalomaniacal pursuit of hegemony. Comrade Aiyah's death was the result of an act of treachery by the People's Liberation Organization of the Tamil Eelam (PLOTE). It is matter of shame and degradation of the national liberation struggle that Comrade Aiyah should have been killed by PLOTE, not because of any antagonistic contradictions, but solely because of the leadership qualities and popularity that he enjoyed in the Vanni Region which was viewed with envy and as a threat by PLOTE. In addition to the treachery behind this act, it is also a moot point as to whether PLOTE was able to derive any advantage over this cowardly murder. The soil that is stained with Comrade Aiyah's blood will continue to spring-forth freedom fighters from the ranks of the Working People.

Another Comrade who we cannot forget is Comrade Kumar. He was unanimously elected into the Central Committee at our First Party Congress. As a member of our Party, from its inception, Comrade Kumar played a key role in widening and deepening our social base in the Eastern Province in the midst of intense hardships. Comrade Kumar also displayed a keen interest in the politicization of our Comrades of this region. He

was a hard worker and his sheer dedication and commitment was concealed behind a serene and a calm personality. He motivated the Comrades into a higher level of awareness and collective action through the practice of self-criticism. Comrade Kumar was also able to establish the correct relationship between our frontal organizations and the military wing, under his able and matured leadership, based on collective responsibility. He carried out his tasks in a dangerous environment and attained martyrdom in an encounter with the security forces.

In the list of Comrades who attained martyrdom while striving for the growth of the Organization is Comrade Siva. His contribution as the Batticaloa Regional Commander laid the foundation for our political work in the region. He attained martyrdom while trying to protect his Comrades.

Comrade "Sinnavan", our lion-hearted Comrade of Trincomalee, attained martyrdom while leading the attack on the Karainagar Naval Base. He played a key role in the military training of our cadres as well as in the local manufacture of our arsenal. When I think of him, I also think of Comrades Velu, Kanesh, Ranjan and Shobha who laid down their lives alongside him. Comrade Shobha, as we all know is the first woman to die in combat in the history of Eelam Struggle.

I also have to refer to Comrade "Gaffoor, our Military Commander of Jaffna, who was killed by the LTTE. His role and contribution in the growth of our Organization is particularly note-worthy. He, initially, worked in Colombo as our main conduit and was later made the Military Commander for the Jaffna Region. When I invoke his memory, I also invoke the memory of the 57 Comrades and civilians who were massacred by the LTTE, along with Comrade Gaffoor, while being held in captivity in a house in the heart of Jaffna. Of those killed, I must refer to our Comrades from the Up-Country Region, Comrades Anbarasan and Benjamin. No one can forget the role of Comrade Benjamin in providing medical service to our Comrades as well as to civilians.

In going through the list of our Comrades who attained martyrdom, I must refer to Comrades Bhaskaran and Devakumar, who were killed in the Welikade prison massacre, Comrade Kumar, a leading figure in the establishment of our People's Liberation Army in the Jaffna Region, Comrades Bala and "Thairy" of Batticaloa Region, Comrade Nadesalingam who was base in Vanni during the early phase of our Organization, Comrade Eesan of Vavunlya, Comrades Ratnam, Vimal, Viji and Bala of Mannar, Comrade Kathir of Killinochchi and Comrades Godwin, Sundhar, Jessie of Mullaitivu.

The role of Comrade George, of course, cannot be forgotten. He was primarily responsible for containing the LTTE menace in Trincomalee, so that the task of the Party as well as the Provincial Government could proceed unimpeded. He earned the respect and affection of our Comrades and the People while serving in Trincomalee during this period. I must also mention that he worked with Sandinistas of Nicaragua for two years in a prisitne act of solidarity with the Nicaraguan Revolution. Comrade George, was one of our many Comrades, who was killed by the LTTE in a cowardly ambush. I must also here pay a tribute to Comrade Ganesh, who served as the Deputy Chairman in the North-East Provincial Council and was later killed by PLOTE in an act of treachery.

Of those Comrades who attained martyrdom in recent times are the 13 Comrades who were killed by the LTTE along with Comrade Nabha. One of them was a member of our Central Committee and the Finance Minister of the North-East Provincial Government, Comrade Kiruba. When the party gave him the responsibility of formulating and activating our working programme in the Eastern Province, it was at a time when we had lost many of our Comrades in that Region. But by the time he breathed his last, the Eastern had once again been consolidated and our social base reestablishe. Comrade Kirupa also played a major role in establishing the provincial administration in the face of he LTTE menace.

Another senior member of our Party who was killed in the cowardly attack of the LTTE was Comrade Sankary - our Member of Parliament for Jaffna District and one of our key members responsible for activating our working programme in UK since in inception of our Party. His political maturity and dedication came to be known to all following our Party's entry into the political mainstream.

In addition to the above Comrades, who laid down their lives alongside Comrade Nabha, I also pay my tribute to Comrade Mikhilar, our Muslim Comrade who played an important role in taking the policies of our Organization amongst the Muslim People. In addition, I pay my tribute to Comrades Patturavi, Lincon, Komalaraja, Tharuman, Anbumukundhan, Ravi, Puvinathan and our women comrades Kavitha and Jesintha. I also invoke the memory of our Member of Parliament for Batticaloa District, Sam Thambimuthu and his wife Kala, who were our firm sympathizers and were assassinated by the LTTE in a cowardly attack in the heart of Colombo.

The above are only some of our Comrades who attained martyrdom by sacrificing their lives at various periods in advancing the struggle of our People and Party. While it is not possible in my address today to refer to all our Martyrs, I must emphasise here that not all were killed by the Sri Lankan security forces during the period of our armed struggle. Many were also killed by the fascist LTTE in their megalomaniacal pursuit for hegemony. Few were killed by other forces. Suffice it to say that the above deaths and the manner in which they died highlight the tortuous path of our struggle. We cannot overly exaggerate the sacrifices made by our martyrs. The most pristine tribute that we can pay to them is by achieving those objectives for which they laid down their lives and by reflecting on their sacrifices when we conduct the proceedings of our Second Congress.

Looking Back - From Our Inception To Present

Comrades! When we are about to commence our Second Party Congress, it is unavoidable that we also look back on our

First Party Congress. Many of our Comrades, including Comrade Nabha, who played a leading role in ensuring the successful completion of our First Party Congress and in laying the foundation for our Party's programme are not in our midst today. Similarly, the situation that prevailed then is a lot different from that which prevails today. Although, it may not be necessary to describe at length the path that we have traversed from then till now, yet I feel it is of paramount importance to provide at least an overview of it.

At the inception of our Organization, the Eelam liberation struggle was at its infancy. We commenced our armed struggle only after it became apparent that the earlier non-violent forms of struggle were futile and that the only path for the emancipation of the Tamil-speaking People of Sri Lanka was the liberation of Eelam. However, we were emphatic that the armed struggle should be mass-based and believed that the vanguard role should be played by the working class. This is because we saw the struggle as not purely a struggle for the retrieval of our land, but as a struggle for justice and equality. This also explains as to why we rejected individual terrorism and gave primacy to the building of mass organizations.

At our Organizers Conference of 1981, we formulated our working programme and commenced the preparatory work for the holding of our First Party Congress. We were finally able to hold our First Congress in 1984. At that time we held our Congress, we had already established our network of mass and frontal organizations, including our military wing. In addition to the General Union of Eelam Students (GUES), Eelam Youth Front (EYF), Eelam Women's Liberation Front (EWLF), Rural Workers and Peasants Front (RWPF) and Fisherman's Union, which were already in existence or in its formative stage, we also commenced work in establishing a trade union called the Plantation Proletariat Front (PPF). All of the above mass and frontal organizations were brought under the joint banner of the Eelam People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Simultaneously, we had established our military wing, the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

From the time of our Organizers Conference in 1981 and the First Party Congress in 1984, we organized numerous mass struggles through our network of mass and frontal organizations. In addition, we commenced on our armed resistance. We started politicizing our cadres by conducting political classes. It was under these circumstances and conditions that our First Party Congress was held in June 1984. In addition to the formulation of our Political and Working Programmes, the Congress elected a Central Committee and the Secretary-General to guide and implement these Programmes. It was on the basis of this firm foundation that we embarked on our struggle. The Eelam struggle, however, began to take an erratic turn and we had to adapt ourselves to changing situations by adopting innovative methods and forms of struggle.

I earlier referred to the metamorphosis of non-violent forms of struggle to armed struggle. Here again, we firmly believed that it was by transforming the armed resistance into a mass-based armed struggle that we could advance the struggle along the correct path. However, it must also be noted that despite our correct perspective, we had to face various set-backs due to the presence of reactionary forces. They were primarily engaged in promoting narrow Tamil chauvinist sentiments and military adventurism. They were insensitive to the adverse and destructive impact that their actions had on the People. In due course, these reactionary forces began to engage in anti-People and anti-social activities.

The 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom gave a fresh impetus to the liberation struggle which was then advancing gradually. Although this event, in a sense, brought about a quantum leap to the struggle, it was also the cause for some problems that were to emerge later. Although a large number of youths, boys as well as girls joined the struggle in a virtual deluge, the majority of them seemed to be motivated more by the drive for seeking vengeance and the attraction towards arms. While the struggle faced the compulsion of absorbing all these youths, who were prepared to take to arms, very few liberation organizations recognized the need to politicize them and raise their level of consciousness.

Although our own organization gave priority to the above task, it could not totally fulfill them. This short-coming was to later manifest itself in some irregularities, within our own organization, which also contributed to our reputation being smeared. However, it cannot be overly emphasised that we had the correct perspective as well as the intentions – and concretely did much more than the other Tamil Organizations in the task of politicization of the armed cadres.

Some Aberrations In Our Struggle – The LTTE Factor

But if one takes the totality of the Eelam struggle, it would be correct to say that arms subordinated political objective under its own hegemony. The demands of armed struggle imposed a severe strain on the resource base of the Organizations engaged in armed resistance. Hence, they began to engage in anti-social activities including drug-trafficking and extorting money from the People. In addition, they resorted to the needless massacre of non-combatant and innocent Sinhalese civilians in order to gain the patronage of narrow Tamil chauvinist elements living in Tamil Nadu and abroad. As a result, many of the Tamil Organizations were vulnerable to unhealthy influences from some political parties in India and also paved the way for infiltration by international reactionary forces.

In order to combat and contain these unhealthy tendencies, as well as force unity amongst the various Tamil Organization engaged in the liberation struggle, Comrade Nabha embarked on forging an united front. These attempts culminated in the formation of the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) which gave a morale boost to the Eelam struggle. The Thimpu Peace Talks, which took place around this time, where the ENLF spoke with one voice on behalf of the Tamil-speaking people, gave the Eelam Resistance its legitimacy as well as recognition in the international sphere.

The expectations that followed the above developments, however, did not last long. The LTTE, which was a constituent member of the ENLF, soon began to engage in murderous

fratricidal attacks on other Tamil Organizations. This was consistent with the fascist nature of that organization which earlier had been responsible for internal killings. The treacherous attack on TELO in mid-1986 introduced a dangerous trend within the liberation struggle. It also signified the infiltration of international reactionary forces into the struggle. The LTTE was identified as an instrument to weaken the progressive trends with the liberation struggle, as well as to engage in acts of de-stabilization in India.

This should not lead one to the wrong conclusion that the LTTE was just an instrument and, therefore, could not be held responsible for these heinous crimes. One must be clear that it was the inherent character of the LTTE, which was self-seeking and bent on the pursuit of hegemony through fascist terror, that made it possible for these international reactionary forces to strike an understanding with the LTTE and utilize it for their own ends.

While we were vigilant to the above trends and tendencies and rejected any attempts at infiltration by the reactionary forces, it was unfortunate that the progressive forces in the international arena were either unable or unwilling to strengthen us. Similarly, the left in Sri Lanka which failed to grasp the essence and the character of the National Question and the Eelam struggle, criticized us as being extremists. The Communist Parties in India viewed us more with sympathy and humanism, rather than with conviction. Those sections of the progressive national; liberation movements in the international sphere, who extended their fraternity and solidarity, were not in a position to extend material support. It is, indeed, a matter of pride for all of us that despite these limitations and given LTTE's military and financial strength derived from their patronage with international reactionary forces, that the EPRLF was able to face LTTE fascism and advance its struggle.

When the LTTE attacked the EPRLF in December of 1986, some claimed that this was because of our criticism of the LTTE.

What we wish to tell them is that the right to criticize anti-social conduct and to take it before the People is a fundamental right. If silence, in the face of injustice, is deemed to be necessary so as not to "provoke" the perpetrator of that injustice, then why did we not remain silent in the face of oppression by the Sri Lankan State? It must be borne in mind that we criticized not only the mistakes made by the LTTE, but also the mistakes made by other Tamil Organizations. For instance, we condemned PLOTE when they tortured and killed some LTTE cadres in Sulipuram. We condemned TELO for resorting to arms to resolve their internal problems and the killing of Das in the premises of the Jaffna Hospital. We condemned EROS for the indiscriminate bombings in Colombo city, resulting in the death of hundreds of innocent civilians. Likewise, we condemned the LTTE whenever and wherever they resorted to fascistic terror in either settling differences with other organizations or in suppressing popular dissent against their policies and methods. Hence, we were consistent in raising our voices in safe guarding democracy.

As far as the LTTE is concerned, whether one is critical of them or not is irrelevant. What is relevant to them is their megalomaniacal pursuit for hegemony and the destruction of anything that impedes that bloody pursuit. Let us not forget the fate of EROS which sought to conceal the fascistic character of LTTE by calling it a Resistance Force and with whose support the LTTE managed to get some of its supporters into Parliament. Where is that EROS today? They were eventually placed in a situation of having to dissolve and merge with the LTTE.

It is important that we analyse the position that we took in relation to the LTTE in the context of its character as well as the specific conditions that prevailed at a given time. It must not be forgotten that it was due to LTTE's pursuit of hegemony, through its fascist terror, that the Eelam resistance became weakened to the extent that the Sri Lankan Forces were poised to take over the Jaffna in "Operation Liberation" in mid - 1987. It was the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord which thwarted the military

putsch by the Sri Lankan forces and prevented the total destruction of the North-East. It was under these circumstances that we accepted the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, despite many deficiencies, as an interim-solution. Even then, the LTTE did not cease its fratricidal attacks against other organizations. They killed the leaders of PLOTE in Batticaloa and many of our cadres. Ultimately, insanity once again over-took them and the LTTE began to attack the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF). And it was under these circumstances that we once again had to resort to self-defence.

The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord and our Role

In view of the actions of the LTTE to curb the basic democratic rights of the People, we took the conscious decision to struggle for their right to speak without fear. We considered this to be essential for the resuscitation of the Eelam struggle. However, the people continued to be terrorized by LTTE fascism backed by arms. As a result, our initial attempts did not succeed.

At this time, the Provincial Councils system which was derived from the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord as a means of redressing the legitimate grievances of the Tamil-speaking people began to be implemented in the rest of the Island - but not in the North-Eastern Region. We, therefore, urged on the Governments of Sri Lanka and India, the co-signatories to the Accord, to activate the political process in the Tamil area. After much persuasion this was agreed upon - but the LTTE took the decision to boycott the proposed elections. Even the TULF took the position that the time was not appropriate, in view of the LTTE-terror.

Eventually, due to a no-contest pact reached between the Tamil Parties which had agreed to context, which included the EPRLF, no elections were held in the North. In the East, polling took place which was contested by the EPRLF, ENDLF, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the ruling party at the centre, the United National Party (UNP). The EPRLF contested the elections on the slogan Peace, Democracy and Unity. Despite the

call for a boycott by LTTE, backed by fascistic terror, an average of 63% of the people voted - with the turnout exceeding 80% in the predominantly Tamil areas. The EPRLF emerged as the largest single party, with an absolute majority. However, the EPRLF claimed victory not for itself, but for democracy. With this mandate, we were in control of the North-Eastern Provincial Council and set about the task of running the Provincial Administration.

In view of these developments, we were able to demonstrate to the outside world the myth behind the claims of the LTTE that they were the "sole representatives" of the Tamil People. We also showed that the true will of the people was, hitherto, kept submerged as a result of LTTE's fascism. In addition, we also established our legitimate rights to represent and speak on behalf of Tamil People.

As regards our role in running the North-Eastern Provincial Government, we firstly established Trincomalee as the Capital city of the North-Eastern Province. This was opposed right from the beginning by the Central government and the President. But due to our persistence and firm stand, the Government had to finally accept our legitimate demand. The TULF had in their customary platform speeches always demanded that Trincomalee be made the Capital of the Tamil homeland, but they were unable to do anything in practical terms. What the TULF said as rhetoric, we achieved in reality. This was indeed a significant achievement of our party. Although, we ran the Provincial government for only one and half years, the the honour of establishing a Government for the Tamil People, after Sankiliyan and Pandara Vanniyan, belongs to EPRLF. If the LTTE had not turned collaborator like Kakkai Vanniyan, the Tamil Provincial Government would have completed its full term. It is clear that LTTE feared losing its self-assumed status of the "sole representatives" of the Tamil People, in view of the distinct eventuality of the EPRLF-led Provincial Government winning the confidence of the People and isolating the LTTE in the process. In order to prevent this from occurring, the LTTE joined hands with the

Premadasa regime, which was anti-Tamil and anti-devolution, in destabilizing the North-Eastern Provincial Government.

When the Provincial Government commenced functioning in Trincomalee, there was no place for either the Provincial Council to conduct its sittings or for the administration to function. Or to put it another way, Trincomalee lacked the basic facilities necessary for the establishment of an infrastructure necessary to run a Provincial Government. Neither did the Central Government show any interest. Despite these set-backs we created a powerful Secretariat as well as Ministries. We set in motion an administrative machinery manned by experienced personnel who were motivated by the dedication of the EPRLF-led Provincial Government. While most Provincial Governments in the rest of the Island, which started functioning before the North-Eastern Provincial Government and continue to function, have yet to fully develop their respective administrations, we accomplished all this within one year.

Despite threats and acts of sabotage and terrorism by the LTTE, we were able to accomplish many things-and a lot more could have been accomplished under conditions of normalcy. But, this was not to be. However, suffice it to say, we were able to prove that we were not mere militants, but also ones with the maturity and capacity to run governments.

It was after we contested the elections to the North-Eastern Provincial Councils and boldly set about establishing and running the Provincial administration that those who had earlier felt that that the time was not appropriate, or that the conditions were not congenial, began to fall over each other in their haste to contest the General Elections. More than 10 political parties contested in the North-East. Threats and intimidations from the LTTE did continue unabated and many candidates were killed. But the fact still remains that we were primarily responsible for creating the conditions which made it possible for so many political parties to contest. And in the process many of our members were killed by the blood - thirsty LTTE.

At the same time, we had to exert pressure on Colombo to devolve powers to the Provincial Council and to fully implement the 13th Amendment to the constitution. Thus, on the one hand, here was resistance from Colombo to devolve powers while, on the other, there was a concerted campaign by the LTTE to sabotage the activities of the Provincial Government. It is in the face of this twin problem that we had to establish civil administration and ensure that the people had access to it.

In addition to the above problems, the Premadasa regime which was committed to expelling the IPKF as well as being basically anti devolution, began to hatch a conspiracy with the LTTE. Following the covert arming of the LTTE, the Premadasa regime also succeeded in bringing about a cease-fire between the IPKF and the LTTE. In view of this favourable situation, the Sri Lankan security forces and the LTTE thereafter systematically set about attacking the provincial police, the Citizens Volunteer Force (CVF) and the Additional Citizens Volunteer Force (ACVF), which was set up to ensure ethnic representation in the forces. In these attacks, more than hundred cadres of the CVF were killed. In view of these dastardly attacks in which we were unable to provide security for our party members, as well as the duly elected members of the Provincial Council, we took the decision to withdraw and go into exile.

In all this, the Government of India conducted itself in a deplorable manner. In spite of India's role as the co-signatory and guarantor of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord and despite the Agreement of September 18, 1989 pertaining to the security of the North-Eastern Provincial Government, the Government of India took the decision to prematurely withdraw the IPKF prior to the full implementation of the Accord. Had India stood firm on its commitments, the on-going war could have been averted and the experiment of provincial autonomy made a reality.

During the tenure of our Provincial Government, illegal Sinhala settlements in Trincomalee was brought to a halt. The Tamil people, who had earlier been displaced, were now able to reside

in their houses without fear. We had also envisaged the construction of a high way, along the sea coast, linking Jaffna with Pottuvil. The Provincial Government also prepared blueprints for the construction of a thermal power plant in Muthur, which would have supplied electricity for the Eastern Province, and an Industrial Estate to be located in Trincomalee. All these plans proposals, however, were effectively sabotaged by the collaboration between the LTTE and Colombo. The funds that were allocated by foreign countries and international agencies for rehabilitation and reconstruction now lie unspent, in view of the war situation, and have been channeled to cover expenditures incurred in resettling the Sinhalese and in relief work.

In all this, one thing is very clear. The LTTE, by its connivance with Colombo in destabilizing the Tamil Provincial Government, has proven in no uncertain terms that their sole pursuit is hegemony and that they would not hesitate to subordinate the interests of the Tamil People to their own narrow ends.

Our Role In the South And Parliament-related Activities

In addition to the efforts taken by us in relation to the establishment of the Provincial Government and the problems that we had to face, I think it is pertinent here to refer to another matter. That is the equal importance that we attached to our working programme in the areas outside the North-Eastern Province which was made possible by the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord. We strengthened our unity with the left forces and joined hands with the Parliamentary Opposition in the agitations against the Government. In Parliament, we gave priority to raising matters pertaining to devolution of powers to the North-Eastern Province. While many Tamil Organizations began to function along with the Sri Lankan security forces, we maintained our independence and identity by exposing, both, the fascism of the LTTE as well as the unjustifiable excesses by the forces. As a result, some of our cadres were abducted by the security personnel in Colombo. In some cases, we are still not in a position to ascertain as to whether they are dead or alive.

The Sri Lankan Government, through the security establishment made numerous requests to us to join them in the military campaign against the LTTE. Since we were not responsive, these requests became pressures and intimidations. We could have joined the forces against the LTTE in order to seek vengeance, as they did against us. But we did not do that, since we were clear that in the absence of a political solution, a military solution against the LTTE was neither feasible nor desirable. It is also clear that the Government has no clear vision of a political solution. Their tactics is purely one of co-option of some Tamil groups into the military sphere, in pursuance of their military solution. As a matter of fact, it was the LTTE which had earlier set an example.

We are often posed with the question that if we could have cooperated with the IPKF, what then was difficulty in cooperating with the Sri Lankan forces. Our answer to that is that although the IPKF was pursuing a military option against the anarchism and fascism of the LTTE, there was also in existence a political package based on devolution of powers to the Tamil areas through the Provincial Council System. Serious efforts were also taken to enhance the democratic mainstream. But no such intentions are evident today. The All Party Conference (APC) and the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) were just a ruse adopted by the Government to delay the formulation and implementing of a political solution. The simple truth is that they do not have any such intentions or the political will.

As I had mentioned earlier, in the interest of forging a Tamil consensus, we agreed to contest the general elections under the banner of the TULF. In addition, we brought into our list of candidates, a nominee of the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPSL) and the United socialists Alliance (USA). We succeeded in having 7 of our candidates elected to Parliament, two of whom were later killed by the LTTE. Even these vacancies were later filled by the TULF by exploiting the technicality that we had contested under their banner. what they deliberately failed to take into consideration was that all of their candidates were

defeated at the General Elections. Despite our bitter experiences with such unprincipled conduct of our "allies", we continue to give primacy to the forging of a Tamil consensus on crucial issues. In these efforts, we have succeeded in getting the other Tamil Parties to, atleast, speak with one voice on matters of common concern to the Tamil People.

In this context, we must recognize our correct approach in adopting an accommodating attitude. Despite numerous difficulties, we are still persisting with dialogue with the Muslim Parties. Similarly, although the leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC), Mr. Thondaman, publicly referred to the LTTE as the only relevant factor and others as being irrelevant, we did not view his stand with antagonism. Instead, we persisted in putting our views and opinions across to him and eventually succeeded in getting him to support the collective stand taken by the non-LTTE Tamil parties on the Question of merger and scheme of devolution.

In addition to the above efforts taken by us, we have opened our Party offices in places like Vavunia, Batticaloa and Mannar. Our Members of Parliament have also intensified their work in their respective constituencies. We propose to expand our work into Trincomalee and other areas. We are doing this, despite not enjoying the patronage of the Government or the security forces a situation that involves risk and danger.

Looking Ahead

Comrades! I have so far narrated at length the path that we had traversed and the situation that we are presently in. Further, I expect the Reports, that would be submitted and discussed at this Congress, to further elaborate on the above. However, there are a few more matters, related to the present situation, which I feel should be discussed at length.

The situation prevailing today is different from that which existed at the time of our First Congress. Similarly, the international situation has changed fundamentally. At our First

Party Congress we had an assessment of our common enemy - the Sri Lankan State. Today, we are facing a situation of having to reflect on two enemies-the Sri Lankan State and the LTTE. Then we were a politico-military organization engaged in an armed struggle. Today, we are a part of the democratic mainstream in Sri Lanka. Where once the Tamils and Muslims of the North-East as well as the Up-Country Tamils perceived their problems to be common, now they are perceived to be distinct and separate.

Hence, it is important that we take into serious consideration, at this Congress, the changing situations and evolve our programme for the future accordingly.

As I had mentioned earlier, the Sri Lankan Government is not serious about a political solution that ensures to the Tamil-speaking People their legitimate aspirations. On the contrary, their approach is to weaken the LTTE militarily and, thereafter, strike a "deal" with them. One cannot also rule out the LTTE to agree to such a "deal" in order to extricate themselves from a situation that affects their very survival. It can also be assumed that the Premadasa regime would like to keep alive the LTTE, because of its anti-Indian character, which suits their own purpose. It also suits the ends of the western allies of Premadasa. Given the above, one cannot expect the Premadasa regime to totally disarm or annihilate the LTTE.

On the other hand, it also cannot be denied that the protracted military solution has imposed a severe strain on the economy. The policy measures adopted by the Government to overcome this has only led to the further pauperisation of the broad masses and indebtedness leading to the virtual mortgaging of the future generation to international agencies like their IMF and the World bank. In view of the absolute dependence on these international agencies, policies are being formulated and implemented on the basis of the "economic philosophy" of these "twin sisters". The commanding heights of the economy, such as the plantation sector, Telecommunication, Public

Transport, Insurance etc have been privatized, thus, giving primacy to private accumulation at the expense of social welfare. The working class have no security. In order to mitigate some of these adverse impact on the broad masses, which can have repercussions to the Government politically, populist programmes like "Janasaviya" and "Gam Udawa" were launched with much fan-fare, involving massive expenditures. As a result, the poverty-debt cycle has only intensified and Sri Lanka has been decisively absorbed into the debt trap.

In order to curb the growing discontent amongs the people, the Government has restored to draconian measures which curb basic democratic rights, including the freedom of the press. These policies are subtle, but deadly, and are invariably carried out through extra-legal and extra-constitutional measures.

Given the deteriorating politico-economic and human rights situation, what has been the role of the opposition? Unfortunately, very little. The ruling party and the opposition are more intent on waiting for the other side to make mistakes, rather than take the initiative in shaping events in the interests of the people. The same attitude prevails in relation to the handling of the Ethnic Question. If either the ruling party or the Opposition take an initiative in resolving the ethnic problem in a manner that addresses the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil People, it is immediately condemned by the other as a betrayal of the Sinhala people.

On the other hand, we have the LTTE, with all its fascistic and self-seeking character. Its image, or portrayal, as a liberation movement and freedom fighters, conceals their real nature which is to impose its hegemony over a people and a territory so as to enjoy power and material benefits that accrue from it. The real character of the LTTE stands exposed in the face of simple questions as regards their activities and conduct. But this myth continuous regardless of concrete realities. The Eelam struggle is primarily one of securing for the Tamil-speak-

ing People their national as well as democratic rights. But the LTTE is bent on denying to the People, that it claims to "solely" represent, these rights. How could any one view such an organization as being committed to a struggle to restore the rights of the People?

The LTTE, in effect, betrayed the Tamil cause by making three historical mistakes. The first was creating disunity within the Eelam Resistance by launching fratricidal and bloody attacks on other liberation organizations in its megalomaniacal pursuit for hegemony. In addition to the weakening of the Eelam Resistance, such attacks led to the demoralizing of the people and the weakening of their resolve. Further, since the LTTE could never succeed in completely annihilating the other Tamil organizations, what was left behind was anger and the thirst for revenge which made the LTTE even more insecure - and therefore even more repressive. This cycle of violence within the Eelam resistance, took it along the path of degeneration and self destruction for which the LTTE is solely responsible.

The second historical mistake made by the LTTE was to confront and alienate India, which was seen by the Tamil people as an ally. When the LTTE was on the run during the Vadamarachy operation, it was the intervention by India which prevented the military option being pursued to its logical end by the Sri Lankan Government. Further, the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord and the political package derived from it, despite certain deficiencies, was certainly the maximum that the Tamil-speaking People have been able to secure since Independence. In addition, the presence of the IPKF gave the Tamil-speaking People a sense of physical and Psychological security, which the LTTE failed to offer. Despite these developments, as well as the policy of the Indian Government to give the LTTE "Pride of policy" in the proposed Interim Administration, which could have utilized by the LTTE to advance the interests of our People, the LTTE decided to sabotage the Accord. To further compound the problem, the LTTE decided to attack the IPKF, resulting in the People being once again thrown into a war-situation with all its destructions and deprivations.

Having failed to take full advantage of a rare opportunity that was given to them to advance the Tamil cause, the LTTE went further and brutally assassinated Shri Rajiv Gandhi on the Indian soil. This act, in addition to alienating the Central Government, the Tamil Nadu State Government and the People of India, led to adverse repercussions in the international community which began to turn a blind eye to the problems of the Tamil-speaking People of Sri Lanka. One manifestation of the adverse consequences of LTTE's conduct to the Tamil People was the decision by the Government of India to send back the refugees – an example which is now being emulated by other countries in Europe.

The decision of the LTTE to extend its operations into Indian soil, whether be it drug-trafficking or the arming and training of anti-national forces in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere and political assassinations, has justifiably made India sensitive to threats against its national interests emanating from the LTTE. The role of the LTTE in destabilizing India created the situation where a friendly and neighbourly country which played a key role in extending moral support for the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka, has now turned a blind eye to the sufferings of our People. This was the second historical blunder and the betrayal of the Tamil People by the LTTE.

The third historical mistake of the LTTE was to identify the Muslim People as an enemy and to engage in acts of terrorism against them resulting in an irreparable damage to Tamil-Muslim relations. Where they once tried to conceal their role in the massacre of innocent Muslims, as in the case of the Kahankuddy Mosque massacre, the LTTE subsequently even dropped the pretense of innocence and openly began to justify these dastardly killings. They ordered an estimated 50,000 Muslims, who had been resident in Jaffna Peninsula for generations and had extended their support for the Eelam struggle, to leave Jaffna within 24 hours with only the clothes they were wearing. Likewise they chased away the Muslims of Mannar. Attacks were launched against Muslim Villages in Batticaloa and Amparai, in addition to terrorist attacks on buses carrying Muslim passengers.

As a reaction to these insane and bloody attacks on innocent Muslims, Muslim home guards were mobilized and trained. But, like the LTTE, they launched savage attacks on Tamil Villages, burning and looting them. Hundreds were killed. In this manner, the third historical mistake made by the LTTE, resulted in another cycle of violence and the antagonistic alienation of the Tamils and Muslims.

A major political problem that we are facing today is the ongoing move to de-link the presently merged North-Eastern Province. Even in the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord the question of merger was not resolved permanently and remains a serious lacuna. The provision for the holding of a referendum for the Eastern Province, to enable the People of that Province to decide whether they wish to be part of a merged North-East or have a separate provincial Council, is a challenge that we have to face. And this can be done only by winning over the trust and confidence of the Muslim People of the Eastern Province. The fanatic obsession for power by the LTTE, on the contrary, has contributed to the very opposite and has only strengthened the hands of those forces which are committed to the de-linking of the Northern-Eastern Province.

The policy of the LTTE, in relation to the Muslims, has also benefitted the moves of the Sri Lankan government to create a permanent Tamil-Muslim divide. On the other hand, the LTTE which only has a limited support base in Eastern province, is seeking to emerge as the "sole" protectors of the Tamil People by instigating a Tamil-Muslim military confrontation in the East. In all this, one cannot ignore the possibility of external forces being involved.

Hence, as a result of these three historical mistakes by the LTTE, not only has the LTTE isolated themselves from other Tamil Organizations, the Tamil People, India and the international community, but they have also imposed the burden of their historical mistakes on the Tamil-speaking people. Today, the LTTE, is using the people as mere fodder in their war. Young

boys and girls, are being prevented from leaving Jaffna and are being forcibly conscripted to augment their depleted fighting force. In addition, it has siphoned away food and other commodities which were sent to Jaffna as relief for the besieged people. Further, heavy taxes have been imposed on traders dealing with essential commodities as well as on producers, adding to the spiralling inflation in Jaffna. In fact, the LTTE is thriving on the blackmarket situation for augmenting its resource base, while the people suffer. Extortion and seizure of private property is rampant, regardless of the capacity of their victims. On the other hand, those who enjoy the patronage of the LTTE are spared and given preferential treatment. Under these conditions, our people find themselves caught between the devil and the deep sea-the LTTE, on the one hand, and the Sri Lankan forces on the other.

As I mentioned earlier, we need to review at length certain aspects given the changed situation. For instance, at the time of our First Congress in 1984, we adopted some position in relation to the Muslim people and the Plantation Tamils. But the political and working programmes that we evolved to mobilize the Muslims and the plantation Tamils was on the basis of our objective - the creation of an independent state of Eelam. Today we need to take a clear position on these matters given the framework of a united Sri Lanka. The visions that we then had of socialist Eelam and the conclusion we arrived at then, needs to be adapted to concrete realities which prevail today - that is the struggle against the Capitalist Sri Lankan State for a socialist transformation in a united Sri Lanka.

At the same time, we should not have the misconception that our struggle at the present and in the future would be determined solely by this. We need to envisage interim situations and interim forms of struggle, while having a clear perspective and vision of our long-term objective. It is my expectation that you will take up these fundamental issues for deliberations at this Congress.

The Changing International Situation

Next, we also need to take into consideration the prevailing international situation. The most significant and major change is the collapse of the USSR - the bastion of socialism and the prop behind revolutionary struggles all over the world. Today it stands fragmented into many nation-states, with the Communist Party losing power in most of them. The bipolar world, with the Socialist camp led by the USSR and the Capitalist camp led by the U.S.A, is no more. What we do have now is a uni-polar world, dominated by the United States, with its satellites, giving the facade of multi-polarity. Even the United Nations is dominated by a selected and a privilege few. International relations and diplomacy are being shaped by these power-brokers.

In addition to the breaking-up of the USSR, the former socialist state of Yugoslavia has broken up as well, shaken by intense ethnic conflicts. The same fate has befallen other Eastern European countries. In addition, the former socialist states have abandoned socialism and have, instead, adopted market economies and liberalization. On the other hand, the two Germany's have united into a powerful economic combine. The European Economic Community, under the leadership of united Germany, is trying to revitalize the recession-ridden economies in western Europe.

The situation in the Middle East and South Africa are also undergoing some fundamental changes. The talks between the representatives of the Palestinian people and Israel, despite some set-backs, has given wider legitimacy to, both, the PLO and Israel. Many countries which had severed links with Israel have re-established them - including India. In South Africa, due to the firm leadership and diplomacy of Nelson Mandela, the racist Pretoria regime have been compelled to initiate some constitutional reforms aimed at dismantling apartheid and ensuring majority rule.

While all this is happening, our neighbouring India is also undergoing some changes which we need to understand and take into our consideration. Some in the these noticeable

changes include rapid improvement of relations with the USA, balanced by improvement of relations with neighboring China, restoration of full diplomatic relations with Israel and economic liberalization along the lines advocated by the IMF/World Bank. At the same time, the stand taken by India in demanding reforms in the United Nations appears to be aimed at containing the hegemonistic designs of the United States. India also firmly remains a regional power in South Asia. It is, therefore, important that we analyse and interpret these developments in the international sphere objectively and not dogmatically - a task that must be carried out at this Congress.

Conclusion

Comrades! It must now be clear to you the significance and relevance of this, our Second Party Congress, for which we have gathered today. The contributions made by the EPRLF till now are significant. But what is now important to all of us are the tasks that lie before us. Along the path of the struggle we have traversed so far, the EPRLF has stood firm and dedicated in struggling for the rights of our people. We have continuously fought for democracy. We took efforts to create the attitudes and conditions necessary for unity. We strove to repair the damage done to Tamil-Muslim relations by the LTTE's. We have persisted in fostering and safeguarding the friendly ties between our people and India, which suffered a set-back due to LTTE's anti Indian actions. At the same time, we sought to win the good-will of the progressive sections in the International Community, while extending our solidarity to the legitimate struggles abroad.

Hence, recalling the confidence with which we performed our historical tasks with courage, clarity and conviction, let us commence this our Second Party Congress, with the objective of charting out our future course with that same courage, clarity and conviction that has guided us so far.

Long Live the Second Congress !

Long Live EPRLF !



