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LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLLS - DEMOCRACY OR DRAMA?

The Government, after two earlier postponements, has finally announced the date for polls for the local government bodies in the North-East. Polling will now take place on March 1 for the Batticaloa Municipal Council and the Urban Councils in Amparai, Trincomalee and Vavuniya. Polling will also take place on the same day for the Pradeshiya Sabhas in the Districts of Trincomalee(10), Batticaloa(11) and Amparai(15).

The enthusiasm shown by the Government in holding the local government elections is clearly not matched by the major Tamil political parties - or for that matter the Tamil populace.

The decision by the EPRLF and TULF to boycott the polls was not determined purely by security considerations - as projected by sections of the media. On the contrary, it was a conscious political decision aimed at exposing the ploy of the Government to use the local government elections to effect the following:

- the de-merger of the North-Eastern Province
- to create an impression on the international community that the writ of the Government runs in the Eastern Province and that it is committed to the democratic process

In addition to the decision by EPRLF and TULF to boycott the local polls and the call by EPRLF and ACTC to the People to invalidate their ballots as a mark of protest and to prevent them from being misused, the most telling testimony of what the Tamil-speaking People think about the local government polls is reflected in the tactics

adopted by the pro-Government Tamil groups.

These Tamil political parties, whose dependence on State patronage also impose on them certain compulsions, have thought it more prudent to take cover behind the label "Independent Groups" in the Eastern Province - rather than contest in their own names. It appears that even these groups have correctly felt the mood of the People!

Leaving aside the ulterior motives of the Government, which is obvious and stands exposed, the pledge by the Government, that the elections shall be free and fair and that it reflects a commitment by the Government to activate

the democratic process in the North-East, borders on absurdity.

A cursory look into the manner in which the state machinery has been set in motion, in conducting the polls, makes it abundantly clear that the claims of the Government is false - and the process a total mockery of democracy. "Phantom" candidates and the conscription of candidates is the order of the day with the run-up to the polls looking more militaristic than democratic.

Irrespective of the outcome of the elections, one thing is certain. This is certainly not Democracy - or for that matter, Cricket!

"STRANGE METHOD OF FILING NOMINATION!"

— SURESH PREMACHANDRAN —

We reproduce below excerpts of a letter sent to the Election Commissioner on 11 January 1994 by Suresh Premachandran, MP and Secretary-General of EPRLF on the run-up to the local government polls:

"I have been reliably informed that some members of the armed forces, with splinter group activists who are working with the armed forces, had forced some civilians to sign papers purported to be nomination papers for the forthcoming local government election in the Batticaloa District.

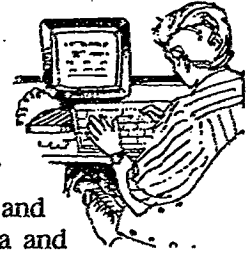
The civilians numbering 12 are said to be LTTE sympathizers who had surrendered to the security forces. They were subsequently released and were asked to report to the Batticaloa Prison Camp regularly and sign a register. When they went to the above camp as usual on 7.1.1994, a high ranking army officer, along with a splinter group member of PLOTE, had threatened and forced them to sign the nomination papers. A similar incident had taken place at the same camp on 9.1.1994, forcing another 5 members of the public to sign a document, purported to be nomination papers.

I also wish to mention that some of the civilians in question are Government servants - who are in a critical situation as they cannot go to their villages due to

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REFLECTIONS



1993 was not exactly propitious for the Peoples and Nations of our Globe.

World recession and unemployment, manifesting itself in the rise of racism and neo-nazism in Western Europe, the tragedy of "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia and holocaust in other parts of Eastern Europe and former U.S.S.R, militarization of internal conflicts in Africa, "debt traps" in Latin America, corruption in Japan, spiralling crime rate in the U.S.A and natural calamities and border tensions in South Asia mainly characterized the past year.

But, 1993 also witnessed the unexpected.

The protracted talks in South Africa, following the official abandoning of Apartheid by the racist South African regime, eventually led to a negotiated settlement with General Elections, based on universal franchise, scheduled for April 1994. These elections will certainly witness the ANC capturing State Power and the end to White Rule. The secular, progressive credentials of the ANC and Nelson Mandela augurs well for the process of nation-building in South Africa on the basis of secularism and egalitarianism.

Likewise, in the Middle-East, the agreement between Israel and the PLO, although transitory in nature, will in the long run undoubtedly secure to the Palestinian People their due National Rights.

The recognition, in principle, of the right of self-determination of the Irish People by Great Britain was another breakthrough that partially lifted the pall of gloom that hung over 1993.

And the agreement reached between India and China on the Line of Actual Control and other contentious issues will go a long way in diffusing tensions along the Indo-China border and promote mutual cooperation.

The above developments are a clear indicator that pockets of reason and sanity exist and that affected Peoples and Nations, all over the Globe, yearn for a peaceful, negotiated settlements to the various conflicts that is threatening to tear their societies apart.

Unfortunately, in Sri Lanka, this realization has failed to sink into the consciousness of, both, the LTTE leadership and the Government.

On the one hand, the Head of State, President D.B. Wijetunga, simply refuses to recognize the very existence of the Ethnic Question - and has further confounded the issue by confusing national unity with the unity of the majority! To him, the national minorities are mere appendages of the majority. The notion of "Partners in Progress" and Nation-building on the basis of equity and co-existence has been and continues to be alien to the Sinhala polity and the State.

To the LTTE leadership, on the other hand, Land means more to them than People. And, where their own survival is at stake, they are prepared to sacrifice, both, Land and People. Nihilism! Thy name is LTTE!

In the midst of all this, the People continue to suffer. What is intolerable is when so-called "opinion makers" and the "intelligentsia" seek to romanticize these sufferings. Thus the Jaffna People are said to have an unlimited reserve of "inner-strength" and resilience. Such portrayals by the Jaffna elites, who continue to enjoy the patronage of the LTTE, while in Jaffna, and the patronage of the State, while in Colombo, give fatalism a good name - while at the same time giving an ideological justification to the nihilism of the LTTE. Ofcourse, they do not face the problems that the ordinary "sons and daughters of Jaffna soil" face!

Peace, that is durable, can only be Peace that is equitable. And, Peace as we have defined, will not drop from the skies - not withstanding the laudable efforts of the various church organizations and religious bodies to mediate a settlement between the LTTE and Colombo. Peace will have to be struggled for - a struggle that is broadbased with the objectives clearly defined.

Let This Be Our Agenda For 1994.

JAFFNA AT END OF 1993

- G.A.'S REPORT

There is no respite for the People of Jaffna, claimed to be the "liberated zone" of the LTTE. This is evident from the Report submitted by the Government Agent of Jaffna District,

Mr.K.Mannikavasakar, to Colombo.

By December 1993, the number of internal refugees within Jaffna had swelled to 80,522 families, comprising of 266,613 displaced persons.

Spread of diseases has also become rampant. The G.A.s Report highlights steep increases in Cholera, Dysentery, Diarrhoea, Typhoid, Hepatitis, Malaria and T.B. The inflow of patients to hospitals far exceed the capacity, further compounded by shortage of medicines and medical personnel. Other sources reveal that the general collapse of the health system, as regards preventive and curative medicine, was primarily due to the priority given to the treatment of LTTE cadres injured in combat.

As regards the security situation, the G.A.s Report confirms the bombing of St.Jame's Catholic Church and the adjoining areas on 5th December. 25 innocent civilians were killed on the spot comprising of infants and elders, both, males and females. Another 70 were severely injured, of whom 5 succumbed to their injuries a few days later.

Although bombings of this nature are not uncommon, and often casually dismissed by the authorities as a "mistake", the punitive nature of such aerial bombardments are becoming increasingly obvious.

For instance, the aerial bombardment of St.James' Church took place just two days after a peaceful procession commenced from the Church premises to protest against the bombings of places of worship.

As the G.A. pointed out in his Report, "this created a general feeling that the Security Forces were attempting to wreck vengeance on the innocent People who had peacefully demonstrated against the unjustifiable bombings that took place off and on in Jaffna".

The most telling testimony of the plight of the People of Jaffna, is

brought out in no uncertain terms in the concluding section of the G.A's Report:

"The quality of life of the people in the District is deteriorating day by day and their sufferings are increasing. They are undergoing a state of physical and mental stress. I have off and on stressed that the military option must be stopped as bombings and shellings are creating a trail of destruction. As Government Agent, I am being looked upon by the People to give them their basic needs and it is with great difficulty that I am able to do whatever possible. A state of anarchy can set in if this situation continues and the people are pushed to despair and desolation."

RELIGIOUS LEADERS CONDEMN "STATE TERRORISM"

Religious leaders from Jaffna, in a statement, lambasted the Government for the indiscriminate aerial bombings in Jaffna, Chavakachcheri, Mullaitivu and Killinochchi.

The statement, issued by Sri La Sri Somasundaram Swamigal, Nallai Atheenam, Bishop Rev. Dr.D.J.Ambalavanar of the CSI Church and the Catholic Bishop of Jaffna, in addition to documenting various instances of indiscriminate aerial attacks, took the Government to task by posing the following argument: "These events are not just sporadic occurrences but have been repeated so often in the recent past that we cannot but conclude it is part of state policy against the Tamils...When this is the case how could anyone avoid concluding that this is organised **State Terrorism**?"

While the religious leaders deserve to be congratulated for their courage in exposing state terrorism, it remains a moot point as to why religious leaders based in Jaffna choose to remain silent on **LTTE Terrorism**?

1974 INTERNATIONAL TAMIL RESEARCH CONFERENCE - MEMORIES

20 years have elapsed since the killings that took place in Jaffna on the night of 10 January, 1994 - the last day of the International Tamil Research Conference. This event constitutes a milestone in the History of oppression against the Tamil-speaking People - it also constitutes the rallying point for the emergence of the Tamil Resistance.

To those, like me, who witnessed the gory event resulting in the death of innocent civilians, it will forever remain etched in our memories. To those who did not witness it, it is an event that needs to be recounted over and over again.

Since that fateful night of 1994, many more violent deaths have taken place. But that night of 10 January 1994 symbolizes, in its most extreme form, the rise of genocidal intentions by the Sri Lankan State. Genocide, not purely as a form of mass killings - but genocide in its broadest manifestation that includes cultural genocide.

What really transpired? The Government of the day was insistent that the International Tamil Research Conference should not take place in Jaffna. However, since the Conveners of the Conference stood by the decision, Colombo refused to extend its co-operation and did all that it could to sabotage it.

This was taken as a challenge by the People of Jaffna. The response was overwhelming and collective. The example set by an individual, was emulated by another individual - a household, by another household - a street, by another street - a village, by another village - a town, by another town. Till, the whole of

Jaffna became one with the International Tamil Research Conference.

Wherever one looked, there were banners, decorations, exhibitions and dramas, music festivals and other art forms depicting Tamil culture. The People of Jaffna did not perceive the Conference as a



mere research forum - but as a grand festival to be celebrated in each and every household.

The Conference which was inaugurated by the world famous Tamil linguist and scholar, the late Rev. Father Thaninayagam on 3rd January concluded on 9th January.

The 10th of January, was set aside for a cultural pageant to be concluded by a Public Meeting at the Veerasingham Hall, adjoining the Jaffna Esplanade. The Public Meeting was to be addressed mainly by Tamil scholars who had come from all corners of the globe.

Soon after the Public Meeting commenced, the crowd started to spill-over from the Veerasingham Hall into the open grounds. The organizers were, hence, left with no

option but to conduct the meeting out in the open. The orations delivered by the Tamil scholars had an electrifying effect on the mass audience who listened with absolute rapture.

Dusk turned into night. And then it happened. The Police, under instructions from the authorities who could not digest the manifestations of Tamil linguistic consciousness and nationalism, waded into the crowd and began to disperse it through force. In the resulting stampede, 11 innocent civilians were needlessly killed following the shooting down of a live electrical wire on the crowd.

I still remember the services rendered by the Volunteer Corp headed by Sivakumaran and assisted by Pathmanabha (Comrade "Nabha") and other youths who later were to play a prominent role in the Tamil Resistance.

Many of them subsequently attained martyrdom.

Let January 10, 1974 and the events that subsequently unfolded be a reminder to all of us - including the powers that be!

Readers and Well-wishers of Tamil Guardian!

Articles, Comments and Contribution may be sent to the following EPIC Centres:-

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“NO DEVOLUTION POSSIBLE WITHOUT A CONSTITUTION THAT IS SECULAR AND DEMOCRATIC” - Kethees

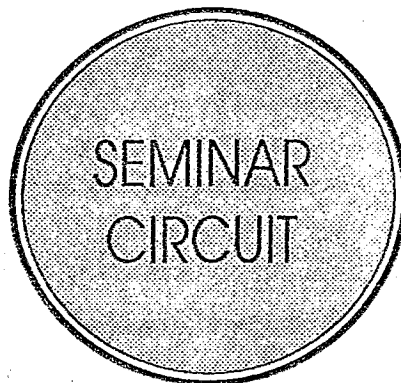
This argument was placed by Ketheeswaran, Politburo Member and Official Spokesman of EPRLF, at a National Conference on the “Devolution Experience”, jointly sponsored by the Centre for Regional Development (CRD) and the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute (SLFI) and held on the 22nd and 23rd of January at the SLFI Auditorium. The Paper presented by him was entitled Devolution and the Ethnic Question - The Sri Lankan Experience and Some Futuristic Perspectives.

Ketheeswaran drew the attention of the audience to one of the objectives of the Conference, as elaborated during the inaugural session, namely to “take stock” and “assess” the working of the Provincial Councils in the “First Phase” of the PCs. His Paper was aimed at placing before the Conference the experience of the now defunct North-East Provincial Government with “devolution” and the manner in which the devolution process came to be aborted.

In proceeding to the main theme of his presentation, Ketheeswaran posited the following argument: “Today we find ourselves in a situation where the processes of nation-building in Sri Lanka is not only far from complete, but the parochial and sectarian manner in which it is being pursued has in turn only served to intensify the Tamil Question - rather than resolve it. In my opinion this then constitutes the essence of the crisis in Sri Lanka.”

In elaborating this, he spelt out in detail as to how the Tamil minor-

ity nationality in Sri Lanka was consciously excluded from the sphere of land, language, employment and education - components that comprise the very mode of existence of a People. This in turn compelled the Tamil-speaking People to exclude themselves from the process of nation-building in Sri Lanka and to commit themselves to



a process of their own - hence the cry for “EELAM”.

Ketheeswaran, in explaining as to why he had to labour over this problematic of exclusivism, said that this was primarily due to the repeated claim of the Head of state that there was no Ethnic Question in Sri Lanka. Incidentally, the National Congress was inaugurated by none other than the President himself!

In proceeding with his presentation, he disclaimed the argument that the reasons for the failure of the 13th Amendment was because it was an “external document” and alien to the “political culture” of Sri Lanka. On the contrary, he argued that if the 13th Amendment failed to deliver the goods, it was because of a lack of political will and sincerity on the part of the political leadership.

In addition to the overloading of the concurrent list and the ambiguities enabling the centre to interpret the concurrent list to its own advantage, he also highlighted the chicanery manifest in the Appendices to the 13th Amendment. He argued that under the guise of giving explanatory notes, the Appendices on subjects pertaining to Land, Law and Order etc directly eroded into the Provincial list and effectively arrogated to the Centre what had been devolved to the Provinces.

He also highlighted acts of bad faith by the Centre in abusing the “blank cheque” provided under “National Policy” and in a manner that arrogated to the Centre what was intended to the Provinces.

In addition to the structural defects in the 13th Amendment, Ketheeswaran referred to the element of subversion and extra-legal methods that led to the undermining of the devolution process.

He explained that this element of subversion, which witnessed an adventurist and opportunistic alliance between the Premadasa Government and the LTTE, was central to the experience of the North-East Provincial Government and could not be ignored in any analysis.

He also disputed the arguments by some academics that the reason for the failure in the implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution was the adventurism of the EPRLF-led Provincial Government, culminating in what is termed the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI).

He posited the counter-argument that “it was precisely because of the decision by the EPRLF-led North-East Provincial Government to take the devolution process seriously and to pursue it with firmness and resolve which ultimately led to the destabilization of the North-East Provincial Government by the Centre.”

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MEDIA FOCUS

Excerpts From Interview Given To The Sinhala Weekly, Lankadeepa, By Suresh Premachandran, M.P., Secretary-General Of EPRLF.

Q: How do you look at the manner in which the Government is approaching the ethnic problem? Can you explain?

A: I do not see the Government having the political will or the courage to solve the ethnic problem. The Government, if it is serious about solving the problem, must demonstrate that will and courage.

Although, the Government had initiated certain processes and institutions such as the All Party Conference (APC), the Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC), the Language Commission etc, these measures have been more ad hoc in nature, lacking in sincerity and seriousness in paving the way for a long-lasting solution.

In addition, the Government and the Sinhala political leadership have resorted to the ploy of putting the blame on the Sinhala People for their unwillingness to redress the legitimate grievances of the Tamil People.

As I see it, the Sinhala masses are prepared to concede substantial autonomy to the Tamil People and their Region in return for long-lasting Peace.

Despite the existence of conditions favourable to seeking a just and a long-lasting solution to the ethnic problem, the Government has failed to seize the opportunity.

This is a matter of serious concern. They will do anything to stay in power. This is the only conclusion that I can arrive at based on my experience and observations as a parliamentarian.

Q: In which case, in your opinion what are the requirements to find a proper solution?

A: Political honesty and willingness. What we see instead is dilatory tactics and opportunism.

When a problem is confronted without political honesty and willingness, it becomes distorted and is reduced to just one equation - fear of losing power. The past became wasted as a result of this fear.

In addition, when the Government became painfully aware of its military's incapacity, compounded by the problem of dwindling human resources, it began to cheat the People. You are no doubt aware of the debacles in Mankulam, Kokkavil, Janakapuram, Kattaikadu, Killali and Pooneryn. This has been the situation since June 1990.

The military has openly stated its incapacity to change the military equation in the Northern Province. This incapacity is also reflected in indiscriminate aerial bombardment in the North and, in particular, in Jaffna peninsula resulting in civilian casualties.

What all this amounts to then is a form of collective punishment meted out against the People under the guise of punitive action against the LTTE.

If the Government is serious about eradicating the LTTE menace, it is important that it places before the Tamil People and their political representatives, like the EPRLF and TULF, an acceptable political package. It is only then that the LTTE can be isolated from the Tamil People.

It is also clear that this country desperately needs a change of Government. The present Ruling Party which has held power for the last 17 years has failed to find a political solution to the ethnic problem. If any one else comes forward to solve the problem, then that must be taken into consideration. I do not know whether the SLFP can solve this problem. However, I firmly believe that the problem can certainly be solved by those who approach it with honesty and integrity.

Both, the Tamil People and the Sinhala People yearn for peace and want the problem to be solved peacefully.

WHO IS A QUISLING?

The LTTE Newspaper, "Network", published by its frontal organization, International Federation of Tamils, appears to have compiled a list of "quislings" - as evidenced by the column Quisling Quotes.

It is reliably understood that the Editor of Network is none other than the infamous N. Satyendra. Who exactly is this Satyendra?

He was during his heyday, a quisling of Gamini Dissanayake. He remained in this position even after the burning of the Jaffna Library. As to why we mention this would be obvious to him.

Following the anti-Tamil pogrom of 1983, he fled to U.K. and resurfaced as

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"SURIYAKANDA - ANOTHER THAMBILUVIL CEMETERY?"

The discovery of mass graves at Suriyakanda in Southern Sri Lanka has, once again, revived memories of the Sinhalese victims of a vicious counter-terrorism that was launched by the State in the name of combating JVP terrorism. What is disconcerting is that despite international media coverage and public protests by political parties and human rights organizations in Sri Lanka, the State remains unmoved.

"Suriyakanda" has also revived memories of other cases of "disappearances" in the Tamil areas of the North-East. The Civil Rights Movement (CRM), in a communique dated 7th January, highlighted this aspect: "This is not the first discovery of a mass grave suspected to contain the bodies of "disappeared" persons. There is an ominous precedent."

The CRM was referring to the arrests of several youths by the Special task Force (STF) in the village of Naipattimunai in the Eastern Province in 1985. A few months later, Mr. Paul Nallanayagam, President of the Kalmunai Citizens Committee, on the basis of reliable information, initiated the exhumation of a particular spot at a cemetery in Thambilivil. A body was found with a blood-stained shirt and a sarong and was identified by relatives as one of the youths arrested by the STF.

Typically further exhumation was stopped and, ironically, Paul Nallanayagam was taken into custody under emergency regulations for spreading false rumours! Although, Nallanayagam was eventually released after a trial lasting 49 days, nothing further was heard about the "disappeared youths". Will History repeat itself?

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...NOMINATION

fear of the LTTE. On the other hand, if they did not sign the nomination paper, they would have to face the consequences vis a vis the armed forces.

If this is the method adopted by Government personnel, to bolster their own Party, one can imagine as to what dirty tricks will be adopted by the security forces up to the date of polling.

This sort of activity indicates that the People are not at all interested in the local government elections given the prevailing situation in the Eastern Province and Vavuniya. The simple truth is that the Government is attempting to hold the elections against the wishes

of the People, merely to show the world and the donor countries that the civil administration is functioning in these areas.

If members of the public are forced to sign nomination papers, in this manner, what is the guarantee that the voters will not be forced to cast their votes for a particular party on the polling date?

It is my view that this type of illegal activity on the part of the armed forces and the ruling party would simply make a mockery of the elections. It is the Government and the Government alone which will be held responsible for any consequences that will arise out of this situation."

Contd from p. 6...SATYENDRA

a quisling of Chandrachud at the Thimpu Peace Talks. He managed to weasel into the TELO delegation and arrived at Thimpu armed with a tape-recorder. He has the distinction of being the only member of the Tamil delegation to tape his own voice!

Satyendra, today, claims to be the voice of his supremo - Velupillai Prabhakaran. Little does he realise that Prabhakaran views Satyendra as a mere Quisling! Quisling! Thy name is Satyendra!

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...DEVOLUTION

In presenting some futuristic perspectives, Ketheeswaran argued that while a federal polity should comprise the basis for a just and a durable solution to the Ethnic Question, the primary concern, however, should be the content rather than form.

"Devolution as a solution to the Ethnic Question should not be confused with decentralization. What the Tamil-speaking People seek primarily is not proximity and accessibility to the Central Government through administrative decentralization, but devolution along the lines of regional autonomy that would ensure to them their security, identity and socio-economic advancement."

In Conclusion, Ketheeswaran observed that he was personally convinced that the Tamil and the Sinhala broad masses are prepared to concede and reciprocate to each other's legitimate demands and aspirations, provided that they were also convinced that the resulting peace would be durable and just.

Others who presented Papers or participated as discussants in the Conference included Prof. Suriyakumaran, Godfrey Ginatilleke, Dr. Selvakumar, Mr. Thangathurai and Dr. Saravanamuthu.

PRESIDENT ADVOCATES

UNITY IN DISUNITY !!?

President D.B. Wijetunga, in recent public function as well as other official functions, has REPEATEDLY taken the position that "if the majority race is divided and if it seeks the assistance of minority races for power, no fruitful activity could take place. Therefore, the major race should be united".

This is a classic instance of exclusivism that characterized the process of nation-building in post-colonial Sri Lanka. The search for a collective identity was also exclusivist in form and content - namely, a Sinhala-Buddhist identity that sought to exclude from the processes of nation-building other forms of identities.

What needs to be emphasised here is that the search for a collective identity, which was at the same time parochial and non-secular, was perversely given legitimacy through political, administrative and constitutional changes.

Hence the citizenship laws sought to exclude the plantation Tamils from their soil; the Sinhala Only Act sought to exclude the Tamil middle class and professionals from the state bureaucracy; the state-aided colonization sought to exclude the Tamil peasantry from their own lands; the media-wise "standardization" sought to exclude the Tamil students from higher education and the Constitution sought to exclude all religions other than Buddhism as State religion.

It was at this juncture that the Tamil-speaking People decided to exclude themselves from the process of nation-building of Sri Lanka and commit themselves, instead, to

the process of nation-building of Eelam. It required the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord and the promise of devolution, not to mention the thirst for peace, to convince the Eelam Tamils that yet another opportunity must be given to the State and the political actors to resolve the Ethnic Question within a united Sri Lanka - but in a manner that was

just and equitable.

But now we have the present Head of State, President D.B. Wijetunga, consistently and persistently denying the very existence of an ethnic problem - and rejecting the very notion of "partners in nation-building". It certainly does not augur well for the unity of this country, if this exclusivist attitude gets entrenched as state policy.

As History has painfully instructed us, the protracted exclusion of a People from the process of nation-building will inevitably push them to forge their own destiny. Let those who wield power reflect on this.

KUMAR ON THE RAMPAGE!

Kumar Ponnambalam, leader of ACTC, fired off two letters to the President recently, challenging him on matters pertaining to the Head of State's vision (or the lack of it!) on the Ethnic Question.

In his letter of 14th January, which is a response to an interview given by the President to *The Sunday Times*, Mr. G.G. Ponnambalam (Jr) had this to say:

"Your Excellency's utterances during the last few months certainly shows us Tamils that your Excellency has failed to appreciate the very basic fact that, atleast upto now, Sri Lanka has been a plural polity. If the President of a country acts in such total disregard of that fact, then surely such a President loses all credibility and has no right to govern the Tamils, who are part of that plural society.

In this political scenario, therefore, any Tamil who supports Your Excellency or the Government or lends himself to be a part of such an ill-conceived establishment must surely be a traitor of the Tamils."

In a subsequent letter, which is a direct response to the infamous Anuradhapura Speech of the President on the "vines that twine around the tree" syndrome, Kumar Ponnambalam stated: "Please do not make the mistake of classifying the Tamils as some parasitic vine. We are a proud nation. We wish to stand on our own feet. You seem to be judging all Tamils by the standards of the 'lingams' whom you say are working in your Ministry and whom you and your predecessor always held out as some propaganda piece."

Bravo!