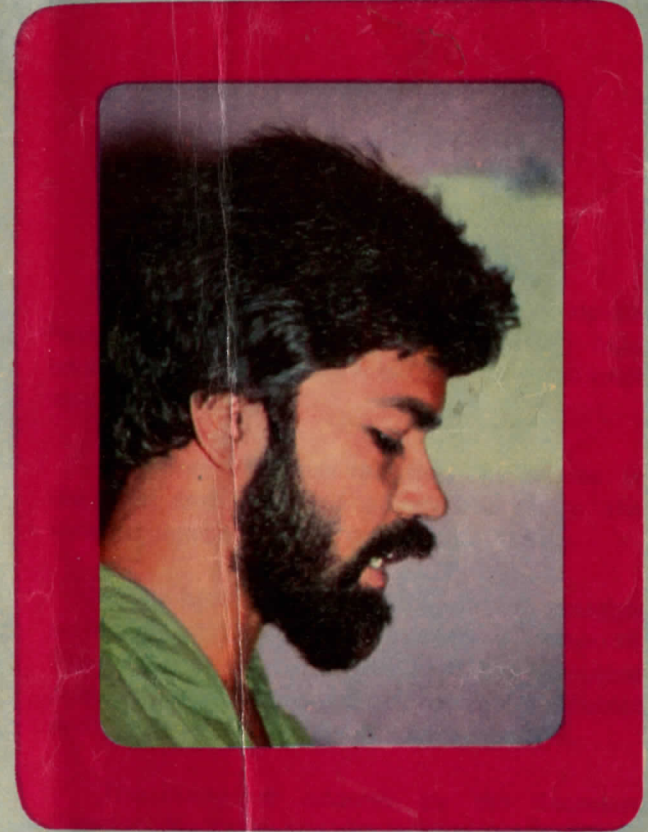


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FIRST CONGRESS OF THE EPRLF

The first congress of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) held on the 28th of June 1984 depicts a significant move in its history.

The first Congress rectified the lapses in the front and it added a new lustre to the forward march carried on by the front.

In the history of Eelam Liberation struggle no organization has so far held a congress. The fact that our front has held the congress shows that our front has put forward a efficient and viable leadership for the Eelam people.

The inaugural address by the Secretary General **K. Padmanabha** of the front reflects the bold and heroic achievements of the EPRLF and portrays the future path of our struggle. Comrade Padmanabha - a strong Marxist-Leninist ideologist - speech is one that our comrades and the people should read and cherish.

PRESIDENT'S SPEECH TO THE FIRST CONGRESS OF EPRLF

Comrade K. PATHMANABHA

**Secretary general of the Central Committee
of EPRLF, Chairman of the Politbureau of
EPRLF and the Chairman of Eelam People's
Revolutionary Military Commission.**

PUBLISHED BY

**EPRLF DEPARTMENT For
PROPAGANDA AND INFORMATION**

TEXT OF THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS
BY SECRETARY GENERAL
COMRADE K. PADMANABHA
AT THE FIRST CONGRESS OF EPRLF

My Dear comrades !

You are now engaged in performing the historical task of gaining liberation for our beloved people of Eelam. To all of you who are shouldering this burden, the trials and tribulations of our struggle, the rigours of crossing rivers and jungles replete with danger and hardship, I extend my revolutionary greetings on behalf of the Eelam people.

I am honoured to address the First Congress of our Organization which is being conducted amidst various ambiguities and uncertainties. I feel gratified and happy to stand here before the leading comrades of our Front who are assembled here to formulate our future political

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and working programmes and strengthen our Front structure. I have no doubt that by the end of this congress we will emerge with greater resolute and conviction about the vanguard role of EPRLF in taking forward the Eelam National Liberation Struggle towards the Eelam Revolution.

Today our people find themselves displaced and dislocated. Their family life has been disrupted and their day-to-day existence is replete with immense misery. There is agony in both life and death. Our land is littered with the burnt corpses of our beloved people. U. S. Imperialism and Zionism, which historically have proven to excel in acts of barbarism against the peace-loving people all over the world, are now directly engaged in assisting the neo-fascist Sri Lankan state in unleashing State Terrorism and acts of genocide against our People.

But we do not remain as orphans. Sections of international working class movement and national liberation movements, although not being able to provide direct material support yet, have extended their collective ideological and moral support to our struggle.

These expressions of solidarity have further strengthened our resolve to mobilise our people under the leadership of the working class, so as to fulfill our twin historical tasks of liberating the Eelam People from national oppression and emancipating

the toiling masses of Eelam from class exploitation and other forms of subjugation, through an Eelam Revolution.

Comrades! It is essential that we know how and when to utilise the support that is being mobilized in the international arena. The people of Tamil Nadu with whom we share an ethnic, cultural and linguistic affinity are standing shoulder to shoulder with us in our struggle.

We should not forget that if the Indian Central Government and the Tamil Nadu State Government are today extending their good wishes to our People,

It also needs to be mentioned that in addition to general support to the heroic struggle of our people by sections of the International Working Class Movements, EPRLF has also succeeded in establishing fraternal links with many progressive forces all over the world.

Some of you may feel frustrated that these acts of solidarity to our struggle are purely verbal and not material. To this, I wish to say that while we would gratefully accept material support from our fraternal links, the lack of it should not demoralize us. We should not forget that genuine solidarity to our struggle, whatever the form it takes, will ultimately strengthen us and weaken our enemy. Such is its force.

Further, we should bear in mind that genuine solidarity can only emerge through a process of reciprocity. It is not enough for us to merely expect support; we should likewise be able to extend our support and solidarity, if not materially, then morally to all struggles for National Liberation and emancipation. We should consider this to be our prime task in the global struggle against the world capitalist order.

ON THE ORIGINS OF EPRLF

My Dear Comrades !

Let us now reflect on the genesis of EPRLF and its role within the Eelam National Liberation Struggle. On the 4th of October 1981 the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front was proclaimed. However, it would be incorrect if anyone were to conclude that we plunged ourselves spontaneously into the struggle only on that day. It should be noted that EPRLF is the higher stage of an historical metamorphosis within the Eelam National Liberation struggle. The manifestations of the earlier phases were the Tamil Student Federation, the Tamil Youth League, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization and the Eelam Revolutionary Organizers.

* The Movement referred to here is not the existing Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization.

When we first proclaimed the EPRLF we had to put up with ridicule and scorn by those who viewed us as mere "boys" incapable of performing any historical task. In particular, I am reminded of those who expressed their commitments and later withdraw from the scene. Today I look back at them, not with anger, not with ridicule, not with scorn-but with pity. Their understanding of History is only so much-nothing more.

At the time of forming the Front, we were without a financial base and without any widespread support. We starved for days and walked many miles. It is true that we were lacking in 'intellectual' capacity; it is true that we were virtual paupers and it is true that we were isolated. I do not deny any of these. But we possessed something which far outweighed the above.

We possessed an inner strength stemming from a high degree of conviction and commitment; our hearts were pure and our shoulders strong; and most important we had a clear understanding of history and an unshakable faith in Marxist - Leninist Ideology. With these assets my comrades and I walked shoulder to shoulder and we walked tall.

We work tirelessly among the people at a time when petty-bourgeois mentality was dominant and where adventurism, by gun-toting

youths without political awareness, was admired by the people. Today we have emerged into a major politico-military force with our faith in the masses and their ideological weapon, Marxism-Leninism, unshakable as before.

We have succeeded in creating an awareness among other groups within the Liberation Movement on the need for forming a United Front with us. We have demonstrated that a correct leadership was emerging and was being accepted by the Eelam people. We have proven our political maturity, by formulating and adopting correct strategies and tactics.

What or who constituted the basis of our achievements? The answer is a universal truth the masses. We learnt from our people. When we had to teach them we did so not as a teacher, but as one among the taught. We constantly reminded ourselves that the people constituted our base and that we had to depend on them. We adopted the ideological weapon of the working class, Marxism-Leninism as our ideology and its philosophical base, historical and dialectical materialism; as our philosophy. However, we were careful in the handling of Marxist-Leninist terminology and did not in any way abuse them, or use them to create confusion in the minds of the people. We have been strict adherents of Marxism-Leninism in the past and are so in the present. We are confident that we will continue to be so in the future. But

at the same time we have consciously avoided falling into the trap of vulgarism and dogmatism and we do not intend doing so in the future.

The contribution of Marxism-Leninism to our struggle lies in the fact that it paved the way to scientifically study and correctly understand the history of our land and our people. In the final analysis, our beloved people was the reason for our adopting Marxism-Leninism. It is true that in the early 70s Tamil Nationalism constituted our main driving force. This is understandable, particularly when the oppression against our people assumed the character of racial discrimination and racism. However, when we intensified our mass work we began to be exposed to Marxist-Leninist thinking. Thereafter, we began to concentrate on reading more and writing more on Marxism-Leninism. It is true that at the early stages of our induction into Marxism-Leninism, we made many mistakes. However, we were able to rectify these lapses and prevent them from assuming massive proportions through the process of criticisms and self-criticisms. It was through this we were able to build our organization to the present level.

The main stream of the Eelam National Liberation Struggle witnessed the participation of numerous individuals as individuals or as members of an organization. Few left the struggle altogether and went into seclusion while others returned to participate in the struggle after a period of time.

This is common in the history of all struggles. But history itself does not cease.

It continues to move forward. However, it is equally important that we should evaluate the roles played by individuals, groups or organizations in our struggle. Let it be any individual, any group, any organization - it is basic human tendency for mistakes to be made or to withdraw from the struggle in the face of unbearable sufferings and adversities. At the same time there are those who continue and persevere with their struggle with immense courage and tact. It is these individuals who ultimately emerge as the heroes of history.

ON THE PAST PERFORMANCE AND THE FUTURE ROLE OF EPRLF

Comrades! We are assembled here to evaluate our past performance, identify the concrete objective conditions in which we find ourselves and to formulate our political and working programmes, so as to take forward our struggle for National Liberation. As the Secretary General of EPRLF, I wish to take this opportunity to place before you what I consider to be some crucial elements in the formulation of EPRLF's political and work-

ing programmes and the building of its organizational structure.

Firstly, it is inevitable that during this Congress there will emerge differences of opinion pertaining to our organizational structure, and diverse and often, conflicting perspectives of our future programme. There will also emerge critical opinions and suspicions amongst us in relation to our personal conduct as well as political work. It is essential that all of the above be resolved through criticisms and self-criticism, exchange of views, flexibility and the acceptance of majority opinion. It is also the fundamental duty of all members to adhere to the decisions arrived at in this Congress through this democratic process and to co-ordinate and carry it out thereafter with utmost conviction and discipline.

Right from the inception of our Organization, our comrades have been carrying out the various tasks that had been assigned to them. However, we must realise that since we have been working as an underground organization there is bound to arise diversities in the work-style of our comrades and improvisations in our organizational structure. Not only is this inevitable, but also necessary for the functioning of our organization. Further, it might not be possible for a comrade engaged in a particular task to fully grasp the work-style of another comrade assigned to another task; similarly a comrade assigned to a particular province will have to adopt to the concrete conditions over there

which could be quite different from the conditions prevailing in another province. It is therefore, important that the comrades bear this in mind when evaluating each others work.

In relation to the diversities between tasks and provinces, I have been able to discern an undesirable tendency prevailing among some of our comrades. This is the tendency to over-value ones own work and devalue the contributions made by others. In this context I wish to state emphatically here that all our comrades have performed their tasks with utmost commitment and to the best of their ability. If each one of us understands the respective working programme of our organization, if each one of our comrades views their fellow comrades with trust and understanding, we could avoid some of these problems or prevent them from emerging into serious contradictions. If these tendencies persist we will expose them, criticise them, reform them and reform ourselves.

Another tendency among some of our comrades which needs to be overcome is the view that all comrades should have an identical perspective of a given problem and approach it in the same identical manner. Although all of us should work towards this goal, it is naive to expect total identity between individuals. The thought processes and views of individuals is bound to be diverse. What we should all strive to do is to separate

differences or conflicts of opinion from contradictions and resolve the conflicts accordingly. Conflicts of opinion should never be confused with contradictions.

If we loose sight of a class perspective and adopt an individualistic stands in analysing problems, we cease to be Marxist-Leninist and degenerate into petty bourgeois forms of mentality. If we are true Marxist-Leninists, then our ideological belief would reveal itself in our thinking and in our conduct. This is not to suggest that our organization should reject all forms of individualism. What I wish to highlight, instead, is how to approach a problem that is individualised or pertaining to a comrade as an individual.

As far as our Organization Structure, political and working programmes and practical work are concerned there are bound to be certain defects. However, these could be resolved through an open and uninhibited exchange of views.

Due to shortage of funds our Front is facing various problems. Our arms build-up has as a result, been adversely affected. At the same time all the objective conditions are present for EPRLF to assume the leadership role in the national liberation struggle. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), the traditional leadership and the party of the bourgeoisie, is now a spent force.

It is now the task of the EPRLF, which is led by the radical intelligentsia from the ranks of the workers and peasants of Eelam, to perform its historical role and take the struggle forward. None of the other groupings within the liberation movement, are capable of providing the leadership to our struggle. This is due to the intrinsic character of the petty bourgeoisie which they represent. In short, the objective conditions are favourable to the further growth of the EPRLF. What we should strive to do in this congress is to work towards satisfying some of the subjective conditions. We should concentrate on strengthening our organizational structure which is essential for the delivery of direct and practical leadership. I hope that this congress will fulfill this need.

Comrades! we have not fully accomplished some of the tasks that we assumed at our last *Organizers Conference in 1981. In particular, it was decided that EPRLF should also concentrate on mobilizing government servants, private sector employees and teachers. This we have failed to do. Further, we have also failed in one of our prime task-namely the mobilization of the plantation proletariat. It is essential that we identify the causes and take effective measures to remedy these lapses in our working programme.

*The first conference of the EPRLF was held on 4th October 1981.

The gains that we have made in mobilizing other sections of the Eelam people should give us the confidence to forge ahead with the above tasks. For instance, we organized the Eelam students, who had earlier remained fragmented and unorganized, under the umbrella of the General Union of Eelam Students. We mobilized the women of Eelam and inducted them into revolutionary struggles through the Eelam Women's Liberation Front. Our Rural Workers and Peasants Front has made a substantial impact in the mobilization and politization of agricultural workers who are subject to class exploitation as well as caste-based oppression. The RWPF has also made impressive gains through the mobilization of poor peasants, including the most downtrodden sections of the urban working class - the stone breakers and those engaged in the manual transportation of heavy load.

Our Eelam Fishermen's Front is also active in mobilizing this important section of the Eelam Working Class. It is important that we evaluate the activities of all our frontal organizations, not for our own satisfaction, but for the purpose of further widening and deepening our mass base.

Subsequent to the Genocidal pogrom of July '83, we had to take steps to expand our People's Liberation Army. A selected committee within the Congress will go into the details of the PLA and formulate a plan for its future activities.

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Some of the difficulties that EPRLF encountered during the period under review was to a large extent due to the arrests of some of our leading comrades in April 1981 and April 1983. As a result, some of our activities suffered a temporary set back. However, all our Comrades, except for two who died in the Welikade Jail massacre, are now with us due to the courageous Batticaloa Jail-break which was planned and executed by our PLA. I wish to take this opportunity to reflect on the bloody anti-Tamil riots of July '83. When we first received news of the massacre of political prisoners at the Welikade prison, we felt the iron blows on our chests. But when we later received the list of those who had survived, we were able to experience some joy amidst the sufferings.

Although the bloody pogrom of July '83 subjected broad sections of the Tamil People to immense misery, the demand for "Eelam" began to gain international acceptance. We cannot forget the assistance given to our people by the Central Government of India and the State Government of Tamil Nadu. Furthermore, sections of the International Working Class Movement, and National Liberation Movements began to inquire into the Eelam National Question. There are definite indications that these inquiries could be translated into active support for our struggle. It is, therefore, crucial that we formulate an effective working programme to further strengthen our existing fraternal links and establish new ones.

The neo-fascist Sri Lankan State steeped in chauvinism and utterly degenerate, are being backed economically and militarily, by the forces of Imperialism and Zionism. In this context, the plans to convert the Trincomalee Harbour into a U.S. Naval Base and the stationing of Mossad in Colombo for the purpose of training the Sri Lankan security forces in intelligence gathering and anti-guerrilla warfare is now a crucial international issue. The Sri Lankan compradore bourgeoisie, the semi-feudal ruling classes and their neo-fascist state tottering in the brink of an economic and political crisis, have become the loyal puppets of Imperialism and Zionism. However, the heroic struggles being waged by the people of Central America, the Palestinian People and other anti-Imperialist Forces, are now beginning to challenge the hegemony of U.S. Imperialism and Zionism. Further, the deepening international economic crisis and inter-Imperialist rivalries will further weaken the forces of reaction on a global scale. In this context, the Sri Lankan State will not be able to withstand the advances made by our struggle with the assistance of the international working class and national liberation movements. Further, the repulsive and degenerate J.R. Regime is already being challenged by progressive sections among the Sinhala people which, if it develops, would definitely weaken the Sri Lankan State.

Dear Comrades! Given the present conjuncture of forces, it is important that we give our utmost attention to the formation of a United Front. Today there are five major Organizations within the Eelam

National Liberation Movement. Of which a United Front has already been formed among EPRLF, EROS (Eelam Revolutionary Organization) and TELO (Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization). Our prime task now is to strengthen the already existing United Front and formulate correct tactics for the incorporation of PLOTE (People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam) and LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) into the United Front. Differences between organizations arising out of personality conflicts are of no concern to us. What concerns us is the formation of a United Front based on a correct understanding of the Eelam social and class formations. Emphasis on personalities, as I mentioned earlier, is a petty bourgeois tendency. What we need to emphasise on is the relationship between class conflicts and class unity in the context of a national liberation struggle. What we are speaking of, then, is a United Front of Classes, not of individuals.

Comrades! Numerous tasks and burdens have now been placed on our shoulders. This is the duty that we have to perform, not only for the sake of our beloved people but also for the sake of proletarian internationalism and anti-Imperialist struggles. When one comrade shows signs of weakening, another should lend him his shoulders. When one comrade suffers from grief another should console him. Our revolutionary path is neither an evening party nor a carnival. In our path, joy and sorrow, victory and defeat go hand in hand. It is not enough to call each other "Comrade"; real comradeship lies in its content, not in form. The tasks that lie before

us cannot be accomplished by individuals or groups. It is only when our beloved people mobilize themselves into an armed struggle that there can be victory. We should be able to demonstrate in practice the sheer force behind a people's war.

Marxism - Leninism is our ideology and we shall apply it in accordance with a correct understanding of concrete realities prevailing in our land. Let us resolve to work towards the building of EPRLF as the vanguard of the Eelam National Liberation Struggle by mobilizing the workers, peasants, the radical intelligentsia and all working people and by forming a United Front with other Organizations within the liberation movement. With the mobilization of these internal forces and the support of progressive external forces we shall take our struggle forward.

I extend my revolutionary salute to all of you.

Victory to the Eelam Liberation Struggle!

Long Live EPRLF!



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Contact :

EPIC Post Bag 5551, Madras-600 094

London Branch: BM Box 1738,

London WC1N 3 XX, UK.



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தோழர் க. பத்மநாபா

