

Sri Lanka: Ultra left in quandary over presidential candidate

Wednesday 2 December 2009, by [KARUNARATNE Vickramabahu \("Bahu"\)](#) (Date first published: 15 November 2009).

The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna is today an important force within the working class movement. That has to be accepted, even though it cannot be classified as a proletarian party. Its origin and major association, is with the Sinhala petty bourgeoisie. Both in '71 and in '89, the JVP struggle dominated the Sinhala petty bourgeois society. In addition, in such intense campaigns the JVP always displayed its hatred towards the Tamil struggle for freedom and self-determination. Such racism is inbred in a petty bourgeoisie setup.

In the recent past, it was a partner in the chauvinist coalition of Mahinda. In fact the chauvinist hegemony within the coalition was consolidated by the presence of the JVP. Having done the dirty job of supporting the regime, during the repressive war it came out with the loss of a large part of its rural base to the NFP, or the Wimal faction. Hence at this moment the pressure of the proletariat is strong, and their workers leader Lalkantha, appears to play a bigger role. On the other hand, we see that the JVP leaders are attempting to win over a young layer of educated youth by militant actions of the Antharaya - inter university student federation and the union of unemployed graduates. Unless fresh layers of petty bourgeoisie are brought out to dominate the movement, JVP leaders know that the nature of the movement could change. It could become an urban trade union party. In fact Wimal, at the time of his departure from the JVP, warned party leaders Somawansa and Tilvin Silva, not to make the JVP a caricature of the N SSP!

Sinhala nationalist liberation

Even today, in spite of the fact that the government used the emergency and the PTA against the leading members of the student struggle and media men loyal to the party, the JVP in parliament indirectly supported the extension of emergency regulations. Also it promoted Sarath Fonseka and in fact virtually proposed him to be the common presidential candidate. Unfortunately, General Fonseka is now exposed to be a yank loyal to the right wing of the global capital, and he is to compete with Mahinda from the far right. We consistently explained, that the so-called Sinhala nationalist liberation will end up at the side of global capital. But the JVP insisted that majoritist Sinhala nationalism, has to be progressive and the main base of Lankan democratic revolution. Now JVP leaders are surprised that the patriotic general, instead of becoming the 'common candidate' of the JVP, has accepted the ticket from the brokers of global capital. So, unless some alternative political perspective is given, the benefit of the strike actions and student agitations will in the end benefit the campaign of general Fonseka.

Divert attention

However, these actions will gather momentum in the coming period. If it develops to be a general mass protest, which the government is unable to resolve, people will look for a political way out.

The government may try to divert attention. If the presidential elections are declared, then it is unlikely that the struggle will go ahead disregarding the elections. The election tradition is strong in Sri Lanka and it will need a massive uprising to bypass it. Then what is the alternative? A third

Sinhala chauvinist candidate from the JVP? I believe that already the JVP rank and file must be seriously thinking of a way out. At the same time, the Tamil and Muslim radical masses are also confused as to which Sinhala chauvinist they should select to be the president. If Ranil came forward as the opposition candidate, at least some liberal bourgeois argument can be forwarded to the Tamil speaking people as to why they should vote for Ranil and not Mahinda. Never in the history of Sri Lanka, had the liberal project gone to this level of bankruptcy.

P.S.

* From labimanews column, 15 nov 2009.