

Speech made by Bahu at the 28th anniversary of the NSSP

Thursday 19 January 2006, by [KARUNARATNE Vickramabahu \("Bahu"\)](#) (Date first published: 30 December 2005).

I like to start my speech with an announcement. We have been using New Left Front as our public name in the recent past. Some left groups and a party have questioned this on ethical grounds. New Left Front was formed as a front of several groups and they say that it is not correct to keep the name as others have left. We do not agree with this argument. But on the other hand it is useless to make that an obstacle to any collaboration among left groups. There are more important things to consider. I have explained these to the PB and CC for quite some time. When we started as a tendency within the Lanka Sama Samaja Party we called our selves the Left Tendency. We can trace our history back to 1965 when we started the first group at the Peradeniya campus. Some of us are still with the party. Comrade Paul in London is a prominent figure. Kodikara, of Kurunegala is still with us, though not active. We were referred to as "Vama people"(Left People). Later we published papers "Vama Sama Samajaya", "Left Sama Samajist" and "Idathasari", in all three languages. In all these "Vama", "Left" was the symbol. The epithet "New" was forced on us in 1979, as a compromise by the old Left parties. "New" or "Neo" has no real significance to us. We are not for Post Modernism, nor do we have any connections to New Democracy and certainly not with Neo Liberalism. So the Central Committee agreed to drop "New" and to use "Left Front" as our public name. We have sent our decision to the Election Commissioner. He has accepted and we will be referred to as "Vamansika Peramuna" or "Left Front", here after.

In the recent past we have used the common slogan "empower the left for a free society". A question may arise whether we have abandoned Socialism which is definitely a world perspective. All our teachers Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky stood for socialism as a world perspective. Today more than ever there cannot be socialism is one country .We were told that Russia achieved socialism. But it was an undemocratic authoritarian state with a nationalized economy. There cannot be any socialism without democratic participation of people. What Trotsky said about Russia came true. It could not go through a democratic political revolution and hence took the alternative course towards capitalist restoration. China has no other way out. Cuba can benefit from the new wave of social uprisings, taking place through out the world and in particular in Latin America .We have come a long way from the collapse of the Berlin wall. New left tendencies are coming out through out the world. In India the Left Front led a one day general strike in October which shooked the capitalist order. In Venezuela we are marching forward. In Brazil the struggle is continuing in spite of Lula. After 20 years, even American workers took a radical step. In Hong Kong massive protests surrounded the WTO negotiators .Out come may not be satisfactory, but the message was very clear. The Fourth International participated in all these events. It is in this international back ground, that we have to look at our political situation.

While keeping our eyes on the possibility of world socialism we have to look at the immediate tasks of Sri Lankan revolution. Our Society has to liberate from several oppressions. Firstly, we have to liberate ourselves from the enslavement of Global Capital. The MNC system led by WB, IMF and WTO is in a ruthless control of our destiny. We have to brake their hold. Secondly, we must free the country of national and religious oppression. We advocated since 1974, a solution based on equality, autonomy and the right of self- determination, for the Tamil national problem. Major capitalist

parties who then imprisoned and harassed us have accepted at least devolution as a necessity. But chauvinists have raised their heads again and the struggle for national unity is certainly not yet over.

Thirdly, we have to achieve people's participation in administration defeating absolutism. We must defeat the hold of authoritarian bureaucracy. Democracy means in particular empowerment of women and equality for handicapped. Also, liberty for Lesbian and Gay people. Finally, we have to rescue the village society from disintegration and backwardness. We must create a real local power that can direct the rural development. In this Manner, we accept that the revolutionary task before us is the struggle for freedom against four kinds of oppressions that continue to exist in our society. Naturally, this struggle for national freedom is directly connected to the struggle to end the domination of Global Capital.

President Mahinda has gained only a dubious victory. Just after he was elected, Dr.Kumar Rupasinghe telephoned me and said that two things Vasu said have come true. Firstly, that Mahinda will win, secondly that Mahinda will snub JVP and Hela Utumaya to move towards peace. I told him he has got it all wrong. In the first place, Mahinda would have been defeated in spite of the Tamil boycott, if not for the systematic removal of anti Mahinda voters from voters' lists. In fact, in my own household list, comrade Tairu's name has been removed. If that can happen to an ex MMC in my own list, I am sure that over 200,000 voters whose names were deleted is a systematic conspiracy. This apart, when we compare votes of 2004 with 2005, clearly Mahinda's camp has lost over half a million votes to the opposition. A massive wave has gone against Sinhala chauvinism of JVP - JHU. Secondly, Hela Urumaya has now virtually taken control of the defense ministry. Sarath Fonseka will gear the whole military apparatus for aggression. Mahinda will find it difficult to brake away from unitary chauvinism. The result will be the escalation of violence with the entire Tamil speaking people moving in to a general rebellion. Kumar said we have to wait and see. Only yesterday he telephoned again to agree with me and to discuss the possibility of a joint peace campaign.

Mahinda in power knows that workers did not whole heartedly vote for him. He should know, because he worked closely with workers in the past. Hence he came out with a populist budget promising every thing to everybody. He even proposed wage hikes link to the rise of cost of living. This clearly indicates two things. Firstly, Mahinda accepts that there will be a huge inflation in the coming period. Secondly, he concedes that the TU movement is powerful. The minister Nimal siripala silva revealed this fact further, when he said that the TU's have become a bigger danger than the Tamil liberation struggle. He should know better, as he was the leading organizer of Colombo proletariat on behalf of the SLFP, before he shifted to the Plantation sector! It is true that the left did not fare well in the Presidential election. But that is not the sole indicator of workers power. Why is Mr. Silva scared of the TU movement? He was certainly not thinking of Lal Kantha or any other JVP trade union leader that supports the government. Nor about the old opportunist Left, when they are in the cabinet while Vasu is the monitor appointed by the president to supervise all government actions! No, he was thinking of the real left trade union leaders in the state sector, Corporation sector and the private sector. They are more dangerous than the LTTE.

One of the first acts of president Mahinda is to pay homage to Indian rulers at Indraprasasthi (Delhi), Rama Raj of this millennium. He has to, as he was installed in power by the grace of Rama Raj. So he has become the Vibishana of today, backed by "Monkey battalions" to use the yesterday's words of the JVP!. But today, it is hardly necessary for Rama to send Hanuma's "monkey battalions" to install this Vibishana in power. Because such battalions were ready locally. Hanuma No.1 is Wimal Weerawansa of the JVP, who heads the chauvinist campaign against the Tamils. Hanuma No.2 is champika, the Hela Urumaya leader who defends Sinhala Buddhist Unitary state as an organ of oppression, mainly of course against the proletariat. Sadly, Hanuma No.3 is Vasu, the Presidential Monitor for all activities of Sinhala Buddhist state. These Aryan Monkey battalions are to be used against the rising Yaksha. Yaksha No.1 is the proletariat; Yaksha No.2 is the rising nationally and

religiously oppressed. Mahinda wants Rama Raj's help to stabilize his regime against these Yaksha forces. Of course, in the end Rama Raj represents the Global Capital in disguise! So, Mahinda's Way is in the end the path of the Global capital. I do not believe that there is any confusion in Mahinda's head about whose warrants he is implementing. Because even before he went to India he had close discussions with Ranil, the leader of the UNP. Mahinda seeks his advice as to how to start the peace process and to get help from the West. This unity has become a classic case of the lame leading the blind. Ranil is under criticism from his party radicals about his failure to face tactics and conspiracies of the Mahinda camp. They want campaigns against the regime, which Ranil avoids. Hence they are pressing him to resign from the leadership. In that scenario when Mahinda wants his advice, Ranil must embrace him. This must be the advice of the world capitalist powers too. Ranil, the true representative of the brokering class, has to be pragmatic. His class interest tells him that to influence Mahinda, to break away from Sinhala chauvinism and to follow the path of Global capitalist, is the most important duty. On the other hand it can stabilize his leadership in the UNP. Because it amounts to a power sharing. May be he could be the Priminister. So, Maninda has two options. One is to get help of the Indian Leaders, to stabilise his regime and also to come an agreement with the Global capital. The other is to be the blind carrying the lame for Ranil., and to seek direct help from the West. May be he could do both. Can he achieve stability and progress? His Mega projects include International Airports, New Tourist Cities, Super High Ways, Mega Power Stations etc. very much similar to the "Regaining Sri Lanka" of Ranil. Mahinda believes in infrastructure developments compared to that of the initial period of J.R.Jayawardene. Can all these be true?

Strengthening of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism with Mahinda's arrival pushed the Tamil masses into despair and to general rebellion. On the other hand Mahinda-Ranil friendship angered Sinhala chauvinists entrenched in Mahinda regime. Results are the intensification of attacks and counter attacks between the Tamil masses and the regime. Though LTTE plays a leading role, there is room to believe that many actions are spontaneous and without direct involvement of the LTTE. Also it is said that LTTE has distributed arms and ammunitions liberally and given military training to all those seek such training. The killing of Pararajasingham is a decisive point. When Wimal Weerawansa says that Kadiragamar was killed by the LTTE there was some sense in his argument. Because the Minister Kadiragamar campaigned vehemently against the LTTE and opposed ISGA proposals of the LTTE totally. In fact he became so much the blue eyed boy of Sinhala chauvinists, both the JVP and the JHU proposed him as the prime minister, against Mahinda, in 2004. Failure of the P.TOMS also a factor and Kadiragamar most certainly fell a victim to the LTTE. However it is ridiculous for the JVP to come out and say that Pararajasingham was Killed by the LTTE. With that argument all killings could be attributed to the LTTE. Vijaya, Deva Bandara, Premathilake, etc. Even the near fatal shot that went through my belly was from the LTTE! They cannot get away with such nonsense so easily. Unless Mahinda finds the terrorist who killed Pararajasingham, the blame will hang around his neck. It is a terrorist group, Sinhala or Tamil that supports his regime that killed Pararajasingham in order to pull Mahinda away from the path of peace.

Pararajasingham participated in an international conference on the Tamil National problem organized by a pro.LTTE Tamil group in Canada, with Kumar Ponnambalam, Prof.Jayalath Jayawardane, and my self. Pararajasingham explained the nature of the Tamil Liberation struggle and the problems. So did Kumar from a diffrent angle. I explained it from the Maxist position. Jayalath explained the health problems in Tamil homeland. Out of four of us, now both Tamils are killed. Kumar was killed in Colombo just after Chandrika came to power for the second time. At that time the finger was directed at her by all concerned parties. Still no real answer is given by the regime as to who killed him. Killing of Pararajasingham will be a bigger problem for the Mahinda regime.

Already the JVP has taken critical stands on social issues. They can see the shift within the working class since 2004 elections. Both the JVP and the JHU have refrained from accepting port folios. They do not want to subscribe to any failures of the Mahinda regime. At the same time they are both pressing for a chauvinist military strategy. On the other side the Tamil struggle increasingly takes the shape of a fight for separation. Tamil parties with influence among the Estate workers and the Tamils living in Colombo suburbs are also seeking an alliance with the Tamil liberation struggle. They all want to come to a common Tamil front. That of course will be a check on separation, though military actions could spread to the estate sector too. Regime is in fear of any action in Colombo and has started special oppressive actions against Tamils in Colombo area. Mahinda wants to implement High Power stations in Kothmale and in Norochcholai areas. Both those are minority based areas with Tamils, Christians and Muslims. The power Minister has said that all opposition will be suppressed and the projects will go ahead regardless of any mass action. All these government measures cannot be stopped by Tamil capitalist leaders making a common front.

It is clear that a very serious situation can develop and the UNP has no way out either. It is in crisis as to what to do next. Only the intervention of the Working class can save the situation. It is incorrect to underestimate the left forces and limit ourselves to mere criticism. We must remember that the next door Left forces in India made a magnificent display of power against Sonia government. It has affected our workers movement. Already the Trade Union Center for the Right of Rebuilding the Country has come out in protests against WTO meeting. They are supported by the movement to protect human rights and national resources. These alliances can bring all struggles, through out the country, in to some coordination. This is where the left should start working. We invite all left parties who want to fight Mahinda regime to participate in these common struggles. Vasu asked me the other day whether they can use the name United Socialist Alliance. I said they can, provided they indicate clearly that we are not in it. Old left wants to use Vijaya's name and preserve an identity. We request them to leave the unholy alliance of Mahinda, before they disappear within racist pro Global capitalist policies.

While we struggle together we can debate about the way out for the left. We have never avoided criticism and debate. In fact we appreciate that. But we must intervene to build a proletarian center for mass actions. Let us bring all those unions, who oppose the regime for its economic and social policies, to come together in a common front to struggle. While the struggle develops we can debate about the way forward for the left.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1. Lanka Sama Samaja Party - Lanka same society party - Old section of FI.
2. President Mahinda , Recently elected with the support of Sinhala chauvinists.
3. Dr. Kumar Rupasinghe - Leading peace campaigner - Anti War Front.
4. JVP - Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna - Sinhala chauvinist radical party.
5. JHU- Jathika Hela Urumaya - Sinhala Buddhist party.
6. MMC - Member of Municipal council.
7. Sarath Fonseka - Recently appointed military commander.
8. Nimal Siripala Silva - Health Minister.
9. Lal Kantha - MP. JVP Trade Union leader.

10. Vasu - ex Trotskyist, Presently Chairmen of the Monitoring committee of the government.
11. Rama - Indian Mythological Aryan Hero, who invaded Lanka of non Aryan Yaksha people.
12. Vibhishana - Brother of Ravana the king of Lanka- joined Rama against king Ravana.
13. Hanuma - "Ape" general of Rama, led an "Ape" army supporting Rama.
14. Champika Ranawaka - Founder of "Hela Urumaya".
15. Yaksha - Non Aryan original inhabitants of India.
16. UNP - United National Party - Conservative Party, Leader Ranil Wickramasinghe son of ex Trotskyist Desmond.
17. J.R.Jayawardane - ex president - Former leader of the UNP, Uncle of Ranil - dead.
18. LTTE - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam - Led by Piribaharan.
19. Vimal Weerawansa - MP - Popular leader of the JVP.
20. Kadiragamer - Tamil Minister in Chandrika's regime.
21. Chandrika - Former President - Leader of the SLFP.
22. Pararajasingham - MP - TNA Leading Member - dead.
23. Kumar Ponnambalam - Former leader of Tamil Congress - dead.
24. Prof. Jaylath Jajawardane - MP - UNP.
25. ISGA - Interim Self Government Authority - LTTE proposal.
26. P.TOMS - Post Tsunami Relief Authority- Chandrika Proposal.