

# Power to the Left - For a new era

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**Presidential elections are taking place in Sri Lanka on 17 November. We publish here a first political statements from the left: the Manifesto of the New Left Front. Chamil Jayaneththi, a leading member of the NSSP (Sri Lanka section of the Fourth International) is the New Left Front's Presidential candidate. (*International Viewpoint*).**

## Contents

- [What are our problems?](#)
  - [Mahinda - JVP economic plans](#)
  - [Left is rising world over](#)
- 

## What are our problems?

We are discussing the political economic and social problems faced by our society. People are suffering from poverty, unemployment and war. This crisis is based on the inability of our society to enter the path of development. Though they do talk about these problems, both Mahinda and Ranil are responsible for this situation. They sling mud at each other without giving solutions. It is left to the NLF to come out with a clear way out. What are the obstructions faced by our society?

Firstly, we are under the pressure of Global capital. We are tied down in a debt trap. If the projects given to us were successful then we should have paid back the loans. This has not happened. Are we responsible for these endless repayments? Pressure exerted by the MNC system has crippled the internal market, suppressed local production and imprisoned our economy. We must press to cancel debts for which we are not responsible. We must use imports & exports, foreign exchange regulations, and customs to protect our market and the local forces of production. We have to renationalize, at least those enterprises which were run efficiently or which played a very useful role in our economy. We must abandon the so-called open economy of Global capitalism. We must join the Global Populist movement expressed by the World Social Forum. It is not necessary to pray to the MNCs for science and technology. We have to link up with the International Labour movement, in particular with that of Indian sub continent.

Secondly, the war has pushed the society to barbarism. The economy and the market are divided between the State and the Tiger regime. There is anarchy in a no man's land. Prime land and coast in the North are occupied by the security forces. Army deserters, numbering over 30,000, have created an underworld power that affects all aspects of economy. War has become an industry with over 300,000 personnel in government forces and over 20,000 in Tamil Liberation Army. Supplies to these forces also employ thousands of people. Expenditure on arms and ammunition, equipment, transport etc. run into billions of rupees. Country has lost large number of Professionals to the

developed world. Therefore, peace on the basis of a solution to the Tamil national question is a must. We always proposed, since 1974, a solution based on equality, autonomy and right of self-determination. Now it is clear that there is no other way out. A ferocious movement such as the LTTE is the result of repression made instead of giving a solution to the Tamil National problem.

Thirdly, the absolutist nature of the State and undemocratic nature of the Constitution is a serious obstruction to any development programme. State still exists as an instrument above the villagers and the urban poor. It is there to safeguard public property and State revenue. Even the social services are done with a condescending attitude. Development is reserved for political leaders. State officials are unable to place themselves as facilitators for development. Kachcheri and courthouses operate without regard to time and money of those who seek relief. Often it is women who are neglected. Even the large number of elected representatives has not reduced this alienated nature of the State. Executive Presidency and the present Constitution on the basis of proportional representation have only aggravated the problem. It is necessary to change this to create a participatory democracy based on workplace profession and worksite representation that strengthens all aspects of human rights. In particular environment laws, Trade Union rights and women rights should be defended.

Fourthly, the stagnation of the village structure is a clear obstruction to development. Market has not really penetrated the village economy. Hence development based on market does not filter into village areas. Divisions of land holdings, absentee landlordism and other kind of absentee ownership of production instruments, lack of security to the produce, lack of preservation, rural usury, reactionary traditions, all these keep the village production at a minimum level. Agrarian reforms, extensive in nature are necessary to overcome this. A village development authority, which integrates the power of Divisional Secretarial, Pradesiya Sabha, Agrarian Services, Engineering Services, etc., is a must. While changing dictatorial constitution and bureaucracy with a democratic State structure, it is necessary to get the people out of reactionary conservative rural system to direct them into the path of development.

### **Ranil's solutions**

Both capitalist camps have totally failed to address these issues in a rational manner. From time to time slogans are put forward in the name of national democracy. But nothing happened. Things have gone from bad to worse. Ranil has insisted on the validity of "Regaining Sri Lanka" and the open economy that started in 1977. Clearly, he is a conservative broker speaking on behalf of global capitalists powers. On Tamil national question he is prepared to go forward to the extent Global capitalist leaders agree. Already LTTE is forced to enter the camp of Open Economy. Tamil youth are expected to hand over the hard won resources of their motherland to the MNC system. There is no programme to change the State or the Constitution. If at all, he wants to stabilize the Presidential system. Except the rhetoric about the new golden era of Parakramabahu, there is nothing said about the changes necessary in the village power structure.

### **Mahinda - JVP economic plans**

In spite of the shouting of "Marxist" JVP and claims to protect State enterprises, Mahinda led the Cabinet to the agreements signed in Kandy on May 16/17 with the WB and the donor countries. This is an agreement to privatize CEB, Bank, Water Management, Health, Airports, Harbours and major State Enterprises under the pretext of restructuring. Already phosphate deposit at Eppawala has been sold to a Chinese company. JVP and JHU too participated in this event but failed to make any protest, except on concessions to Tamil and other minorities. JVP's letter dated 25.4.05 to US Under

Secretary of State, Christina Rocca, shows that they are prepared to make any sacrifice in order to get help to suppress Tamil people. To cover their betrayal of free education on 16/17 May 2005, they talk about an agreement made by Tara De Mel. Mahinda for repression.

By this agreement Mahinda accepted the way forward given in Ranil's "Regaining Sri Lanka". Mahinda has not rejected this agreement though he openly renounced Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS) and devolution. It is not clear how he is going to have discussions with Prabakaran sans federalism, sans devolution and sans Tamil identity. His shouts about discipline and law and order, with the above programme to bring him close to extremism that attacked the working class and the minority groups. He plans to deal with both urban and national unrests, not by discussions and concessions, but by military and police actions.

### **Left is rising world over**

These two leaders give us two options. Either to become vassals of Global capital with poverty and displacement or to drift in to barbarism of a chauvinist dictatorship with the division of the country. World over people are challenging both these ends. In all continents new movements have developed that reject dictates of the global capital and dissociate from chauvinism and religions fundamentalism. People have come out of the setback felt at the time of the collapse of Berlin wall. There is a new interest in Marxism. There are victories in Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, etc. It is possible to put forward a third way out. Walden Bello says "what we are all about is demystifying economics, what we are all about is people grasping production and consumption and putting that into comprehensive national non alienated development". This takes us back to discussions on development that took place in 70/75. We see that the left leaders then made two mistakes. On the one hand, they thought that with a coalition under chauvinist capitalists they could carry out national democratic tasks. On the other hand they attempted to implement isolated socialist projects in this backward surrounding. Hence while corrupt and bureaucratic elements thrived, people lost their democratic power to intervene. Chauvinist discrimination raised its ugly head. At the same time local industrialist and producers were harassed and intimidated. Finally, capitalists threw out left leaders and pushed the government towards open economy even before JR came to power. We must correct these mistakes and move forward with the Global populist movement. We can start at this point and move on until serious victories are made by the working masses in the developed world. Hence, we have to struggle on the basis of this programme to build a mass movement. Such a movement will be able to resist the regime, irrespective of who wins. There will be fights of working masses combined with national liberation struggles. We must use this election to make people aware and to bring them together into a left movement to fight back and give leadership to struggles of all oppressed.

Please cast your vote and give your support to build the left that is committed to a new era of people's struggles.

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**P.S.**

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