

Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna calls for removal of Sri Lankan government

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At a party rally on July 8 in the Colombo suburb of Nugegoda, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) leader Anura Kumara Dissanayake called for the ousting of President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and the establishment of a so-called people's power regime. It was another attempt by the JVP to give itself a political face-lift and posture as a viable alternative to Sri Lanka's main capitalist parties.

The JVP's campaign occurs amid growing opposition among workers, the rural poor and youth to the government's imposition of International Monetary Fund austerity measures and deep popular disaffection with the Colombo political establishment as a whole.

The fear in ruling circles of this rising social opposition was clearly indicated in response to the ISIS-instigated terror bombings in Sri Lanka on April 21. Firstly the police and defence authorities and key political leaders, including Sirisena, Wickremesinghe and opposition leader Mahinda Rajapakse, ignored advance warnings of the attacks and allowed them to occur.

Then the government seized on the bombings to impose repressive emergency laws and deploy the military nationwide. Essential services regulations are now being used to suppress workers' struggles as the ruling elite turns towards police-state forms of rule. The media and political establishment are whipping up anti-Muslim chauvinism to divide the working class along communal lines.

The JVP participated in an all-party conference called by Sirisena and backed the authoritarian emergency laws and deployment of the military. Now the JVP is posturing as if it had nothing to do with the latest repressive measures and is trying to obscure its previous support for the parties it is denouncing.

Dissanayake, a parliamentarian himself, told the rally that the JVP had previously called on people to vote for it so it could become a "strong opposition" in parliament. This time, he declared, the JVP was appealing to "give us power" to govern the country.

The JVP leader denounced all the parties that had governed over the past seven decades for not solving the problems confronting the masses. The parties headed by Sirisena, Wickremesinghe and Rajapakse, he declared, were completely corrupted and the country needed "new politics."

The JVP's role, he continued, is "political management... and [to] prepare the targets of various sectors of the economy to be implemented within a five-year period." Professionals are backing the party, he said, and these experts will prepare the plan for those sectors. "Only the JVP can affirm the supremacy of the rule of law," Dissanayake said.

JVP General Secretary Tilwin Silva attempted to provide some radical camouflage by declaring that the JVP was building "a mass movement, not just looking for a parliamentary election, but to fight in the streets and everywhere to bring about a people's rule."

Under conditions of acute political crisis, in which the previous parties of government are widely discredited, the JVP is proposing itself as the party capable of saving the capitalist system by diverting the mounting opposition of workers and youth into safe parliamentary channels.

The political crisis in Sri Lanka is taking place amid a deepening crisis of capitalist rule internationally about which the JVP leaders said nothing. Amid rising geopolitical tensions, the imperialist powers, with the US in the lead, are once again driving towards a third world war. Confronted with an upsurge of the international working class against the attacks on its social rights, the

ruling classes everywhere are turning to towards fascism and dictatorship.

Dissanayake and de Silva spent a third of their speeches insisting that the party has not had any dealings with the ruling United National Party (UNP) administration and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe. “I certify that we have no connection with the [present] government,” he declared.

The JVP leadership is obviously hoping the population has amnesia. The party not only backed the current UNP-led administration, but has consistently supported all the Sri Lankan bourgeois parties and leaders that have come to power since the early 1990s.

In 1994, it supported Sri Lanka Freedom Party leader Chandrika Kumaratunga to win the presidency, entered her government and in 2004 accepted cabinet posts. In 2010, it formed an alliance with the UNP to support former Army Commander Sarath Fonseka’s presidential candidacy.

The JVP also backed the ousting of Rajapakse in 2015, endorsing the bogus “good governance” movement initiated by Wickremesinghe and former President Kumaratunga. Along with a host of pseudo-left groups, it supported Sirisena, knowing full well that Wickremesinghe and Kumaratunga were acting at the behest of the US and its Colombo regime-change operation in order to advance its geo-strategic moves against China.

Last October, factional warfare erupted to the surface and saw Sirisena remove Wickremesinghe as prime minister, replacing him with former President Rajapakse. The coup failed because Washington opposed Rajapakse’s return and the Supreme Court overturned Sirisena’s dissolution of the parliament. In the name of “defending democracy,” the JVP and various pseudo-left formations rallied behind the UNP-led government during the 52-day crisis.

Dissanayake also declared at the Nugegoda rally that the JVP will not support or succumb to communalism, but fight for “national unity.” This is an outright lie as the JVP’s filthy communalist record testifies.

The JVP emerged in the mid-1960s based on a toxic political mixture of Maoism, Castroism and Sinhala patriotism. It was an ardent supporter of Colombo’s brutal communal war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)—from 1983 until 2009—and fully backs the military occupation of the Sri

Lanka’s North and East, where the majority of Tamils live.

When the establishment parties and Sinhala Buddhist chauvinist groups seized on the April 21 terror attack to initiate an anti-Muslim campaign, JVP members of parliament called on Muslims to help security forces capture Islamic extremists, suggesting that the community itself was to blame for the bombings. In other words, they helped fuel the anti-Muslim campaign. So much for the JVP’s “national unity” campaign!

Dissanayake claims that the JVP has the support of an alliance of professionals which is preparing policies for the party. The formation, known as “National People’s Power,” consists of politically corrupt, upper-middle class academics and professionals. It met on July 14 in Colombo and pledged to campaign for the JVP.

Most of these “professionals” backed Sirisena’s bid for power in 2015 and, in line with US-led regime-change operation, portrayed him as a great democrat. They played a similar role in 1994, diverting the mass opposition to the 17-year autocratic rule of J.R. Jayawardene into Kumaratunga’s campaign for president.

Fearful today of the eruption of a revolutionary movement of the Sri Lankan working class, the JVP, with the assistance of this upper-middle class group, will play an even more treacherous role. The JVP, a party of the Colombo establishment, is bitterly hostile to any independent mobilisation of the working class and the fight for international socialism—the only means by which workers can defend their basic social and democratic rights.



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