

A tragic end for a hero

It is still not known definitely that General (Retired) Sarath Fonseka would be a candidate at the forthcoming Presidential elections. This article is written with the hope that he would not contest the Presidential elections either as the so called common candidate or as a candidate of the JVP though under a different political party. However, it could end up as only a hope and if that were the case it would be disastrous for General (Retired) Sarath Fonseka and for the nationalist forces.

Already there are two groups of people trying to make use of the situation created by the rift that has arisen between the government and the former army commander. One set of people who want to defeat the government at the Parliamentary elections and at the Presidential elections are promoting the candidature of the General at the Presidential elections. They imagine that he would be able to attract votes at the elections and give Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse a tough fight. Though General (retired) Sarath Fonseka would poll more votes than Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe he will not be able to come closer to the former nor would be able to prevent Mr. Rajapakse getting the necessary fifty percent of the votes plus one to be elected as the President in the first round itself.

The other group of people would “support” the government and sling mud at the former Army commander. Recently an article written by a Tamil racist was circulated by e mail, which was very critical of the General. The author apparently had information on the General he had obtained from somebody or some organisation and was demeaning (Retired) General Sarath Fonseka.

What is remarkable is that both groups, that is the group that supports the General as well as the group that seem to be supporting the government had been Tamil racists or supporters of Tamil racism until very recently or at least who had been enemies of Sinhala Buddhist culture. One does not need to hide the fact that not only Mano Ganeshan but even people like Ranil Wickremesinghe had been enemies of Sinhala Buddhism as practised in the country.

The question had been already asked as to whether General (Retired) Sarath Fonseka could be on the same platform with people such as Mano Ganeshan, Mangala Samaraweera, the *sudu nelum kattadiya* and the sole member of the SLFP (M for Mangala wing) who were critical, to say the least, of the attitude of the former army commander. Could one think of General (Retired) Sarath Fonseka negotiating with Mano Ganeshan just a few weeks ago.

Of course we still do not know whether the General would be the so called common candidate of the UNP led alliance. It is possible that Ranil Wickremesinghe would opt to become the leader who lost for the fifteenth or sixteenth time and establish a Guinness record for the most number of consecutive loses. But if the General stands at the elections with the Cousins of Prabhakaran at the next Presidential elections he would be subject to humiliation by the supporters of the government.

The campaign against him also would be led by Tamil racists. They would be supported again ironically by people who were with not only Chandrika but with Premadasa. There will be stories and stories on how the General conducted the “war”. One section especially the Tamil racists would charge him with “war crimes”. Another section would go to the other extreme and claim that the General did absolutely minimal work when it came to “war”. They will claim that he was not at the war front but in some other places. They will try to praise the government of Mr. Rajapakse and especially the President for giving the much needed political leadership.

Who should take the bigger share of the credit for defeating the LTTE would be the question that would be asked at the beginning of the election campaign. However later on it would be a mud slinging match with various catchy slogans coming from the politicians of both side. Already a minister who crossed over from the UNP to the government benches has played the cast card and it is only the beginning.

Those who support the General against the government will come out with all the “war crimes” against Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse and Mr. Gotabhaya Rajapakse and both sides will give “information” to the various NGOs locally operating as well as to so called international community and once the elections are over neither Mr. Rajapakse nor General (Retired) Sarath Fonseka would be the winner but that anti national forces. Though Mr. Rajapakse will win the presidential elections and be the next president as well, after the elections he would be forced to acquire more and more powers to him.

The henchmen of the government who control state media, especially the electronic media would try to defeat each other to win the award for the most mud slung at the General (Retired) Sarath Fonseka. Some of them who had been with Mr. Premadasa who gave arms to the LTTE and ordered the police officers to surrender to the terrorists would now come out with “crimes” committed by the General, which would not amount to “war crimes”.

At the end of the elections the winner would be the non national forces with the national forces losing whatever they had gained during the last two and half decades, if General (Retired) Sarath Fonseka were to contest either as the so called common candidate or as the candidate of the JVP though on a different party ticket. In the name of the national forces which the General has served with more than distinction he should forget everything and support the candidature of Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse. It is true that he has not been given his due share of credit but at the same time it is also clear that he has been asking more than what he deserves. The government on the other hand forgetting his claims should give him his due share and take him to their fold. It may be too late to work out an amicable solution to the problem but if the contest awaited by the non national forces take place it would be a tragic end for a hero and a moral defeat for the President and the nationalist forces.