

The end of the road for SF and JVP

Even before the nominations for the Presidential elections it is easy to conclude that the so called SF operation has failed. In fact as we have already mentioned SF stands for Sarath Failed using the jargon of the western pundits on Social Sciences. As a third rate sociologist in Sri Lanka continues to remind me I do not know the jargon of the western social sciences, and I would add that I do not bother to learn that jargon. In fact I have no regard for either the jargon or the so called methodology of any other western Science or Mathematics, and it is funny that I have survived in this system. However, one cannot help but keep on reading and listening to their stuff, and so called concepts such as failed states simply get into the mind (the non existing in spite of the hard work of a Professor of Dental Sciences) and operations such as SF give us an opportunity to use their jargon against them.

Sarath Fonseka is not the glamorous common candidate any more and he is the candidate of the United National Front (UNF) after the (annual) sessions of the UNP that ratified his candidature for the Presidential elections. The parties that represent the UNF were all there with their traditional greetings to the UNP, and SF sporting the UNP colours was seated next to the leader who would not lead and lose this time for the first time in about fifteen years. The constituent parties of the UNF endorsed the candidature of Sarath Failed but the national organiser of the UNP S. B. Dissanayake was conspicuous by his absence.

Now SB has left the UNP and is supporting the President, having being betrayed by the UNP. I would not consider him to be the “vote machine” that he was called while he was in the SLFP before he left the party to join the UNP seeking green pasture but his defection would certainly damage the morale of the UNF. People such as Johnston Fernando are not happy with the decision to field SF as the Presidential candidate and they are likely to follow SB.

While it is clear that the UNP would not spend lavishly during the campaign of SF, as they know the outcome already, it is the JVP that will have to campaign for SF at the Presidential elections, which most probably will be reduced to a name board after the elections. The Presidential elections would be the Nandikadal of the JVP that managed to survive even after two unsuccessful attempts to capture state power. Whether SF would appear on the same stage with the JVP leaders is not clear at the moment but the party has no choice but to campaign for the candidate of the UNF (the party that signs the nomination papers of SF is immaterial here) against the candidate of the SLFP led UPFA. It is clearly the wrong choice and any semblance of nationalism that the JVP had has been washed out with the decision to support the UNF candidate SF at the Presidential elections.

It is true that the JVP cannot contest at a Presidential election and win as a party. Realising this fact ever since Rohana Wijeweera lost at the Presidential elections held in 1982, they have attempted to keep away from the elections to the most powerful position in the country by resorting to support the SLFP or SLFP led coalition candidates under

the guise of extracting a so called promise to abolish the Presidency. However, unfortunately for the JVP everybody knows that this is only another election promise and however much the JVP try to convince the public this time the Presidency would be abolished, people know that it is nothing but rhetoric.

Until now after “extracting” this false promise the JVP had supported the SLFP or SLFP led coalition candidate and had an understanding of the policies of the leader of the SLFP whenever possible. However, this time the JVP is in the disgusting position of supporting the UNF candidate who comes under some other party. In order to get away from this situation, the JVP now says that they support the so called common candidate and not the candidate of a particular party.

However, at the press conference that was held on the previous Sunday to introduce SF to the public as the “common candidate” the JVP was not present. In fact it was revealed later that Anura Kumara Disanayake who had gone to participate at the press conference had not been allowed even to enter the hall where the interview was held. The leader of the JVP parliamentary group had to walk along the corridors with his mobile phone, probably trying to complain of the situation to his party comrades.

The JVP may be given a presence here and there by the UNF only to give credence to the JVP claim that SF is the so called common candidate, but it is clear that the JVP is fighting a losing battle to convince the rank and file that they are only supporting the common candidate SF. Very soon SF will emerge as the UNF candidate though without sufficient funds to campaign at an election of such magnitude but supported by the JVP. The JVP will never accept that the policies of SF are finally determined by the UNF and hence by the UNP, and will go on talking of abolishing the Presidency of caretaker government without Prime Ministers where only equal ministers function without the first or Prime or where there is not even a Primus inter pares even in the sense of the classical interpretation of the post. However, what the UNF wants is not even a primus inter pares but a so called Prime Minister with executive powers.

There are contradictions in what the UNF and the JVP say not only on this matter but on many others as well. The thirteenth amendment, economic policies are two important areas where the two parties do not see eye to eye unless the JVP under the effective leadership of Anura Kumara Disanayake has changed its policies. In any event even if SF comes to power there is no provision to appoint a Prime Minister with executive power and whatever the JVP has to say Ranil will be appointed as the Prime Minister. Now if SF dies after becoming the President and appointing Ranil as the Prime Minister even without executive powers, who would be authorised to function as the President. In spite of the statements made by Ranil, the constitution demands that in such situation Ranil has to be appointed as the President of the country.

Thus Ranil is thinking of a situation where if SF loses he does not lose and where if SF wins he has a chance of becoming the President of the country. However, things would not work out the way Ranil thinks and SF has no alternative but to lose. SF cannot argue that he is the common candidate as talks had begun at least five months ago between the

UNP, the JVP and the SF on an election strategy. We do not know who initiated the discussions between these three but SF cannot be the common candidate as he is being sponsored by the UNF with the support of the JVP. The JVP may talk big by saying that there would not be a Prime Minister but how can they impose their will on the UNF that is not even prepared to allow a representative of the JVP at the press conference to introduce the so called common candidate. The JVP will have the satisfaction of not losing at the Presidential election without realising that their vote bank disappearing into thin air. The two percent vote bank of the JVP consists among others some of the supporters of the nationalists and they would not vote for SF as they have better parties to vote. On the other hand some of the traditional UNP voters resent the idea of JVP supporting the UNF and they would either abstain or vote for Mahinda Rajapakse. In spite of Mano Ganeshan not many Tamils would vote for SF and Hakeem is not in a position to win the Muslim vote for the candidate of the UNF. The net result would be the defeat of SF. The JVP would lose most of their traditional vote by supporting the UNF candidate and unless they decide to change their policies and support the SLFP at a future election Anura Kumara Disanayake would be reduced to another “vame apekshakaya” such as Vickremabahu Karunaratne, Siritunga Jayasuriya and Wijie Dias or a stooge of the UNP. Anura Disanayake not being a Trotskyite would most probably end up in the second category.