

The end of UNP, JVP and SF

On 5th 7th and 10th of April in 1956 we had Parliamentary elections which reduced the UNP to 8 seats and defeated it for the first time. The UNP was then headed by John Kotelawala and the leadership had no semblance of any nationalistic interests unlike in the days of the Senanayakes. The SLFP that was established in 1951 in the model of a western liberal party, after about 1954 had become the nationalistic party of Sri Lanka, and in 1956 under the leadership of SWRD Bandaranaike formed an alliance with the VLSSP of Philip Gunawardane, and the parties of V. Dahanayake and IMRA Iriyagolla. The MEP that took a nationalistic line from the very beginning was swept into power within a few months in April 1956.

The leadership of the UNP had belonged to the alien nation though in Senanayakes it had leaders who could be identified with the nationalistic interests to a certain extent. In fact the Senanayakes were more nationalistic than Bandaranaike, and the UNP and the SLFP represented social movements that did not reflect the interests of the leaders. It should be realised around 1955 nationalistic leaders such as LH Mettananda who initiated the idea of a nationalistic political alliance had wanted Dudley Senanayake to become its leader. Apparently Dudley Senanayake who had “retired” from politics after the *hartal* in 1953 had suggested the name of Bandaranaike as the leader to the nationalistic leaders who met him. It would be interesting to speculate what course the country would have taken had Dudley Senanayake accepted the invitation to become the leader of the nationalistic movement. When Philip Gunawardane joined Dudley Senanayake in 1965 probably they were attracted to each other as nationalists defying the so called class based politics formulated in Marxism.

There is a difference between leaderships and leaders in any movement, especially in political movements. While the leadership generally represents the social forces (not necessarily class based) that give rise to the political movement there may be leaders who do not see eye to eye with the leadership in general and with the social forces. The UNP had represented the alien nation of the country from the very beginning from its Congress days and the SLFP at least from 1954 had represented the Sinhala nation in spite of some of the leaders. In the early nineties Chandrika Kumaratunga was brought from her self exile in England by interested parties in order to change the nationalistic policies of the SLFP to a Federal or Confederal policy, backed by the English and other western states. They almost succeeded and if not for the elections that brought Ranil Wickremesinghe into power as the Prime Minister Chandrika would not have been forced to form the so called probationary (*parivasa*) government with the JVP and thus listen to the nationalistic forces.

The nationalistic forces became strong and gradually rallied around Mahinda Rajapakse who was elected the President in 2005. He had to work with Chandrika's Parliament that had been elected in 2004 but he made sure that the Parliament lasted till 2010 completing the full six years. After the Parliament was dissolved WJM Lokubandara one of the nationalist leaders in the UNP finally joined the SLFP the right place he belonged to. It is no secret that the present UNP leadership and leaders such as Ranil Wickremesinghe and Ravi Karunanayake belong to the alien nation and leaders such as Tissa Attanayake are only wasting their time in the party.

The UNP which had served the English even with Senanayakes have now almost come to the end of the road. The party would not have many representatives in the new Parliament and even among them the influential emotionally Sinhallas would be very small. It cannot proceed in the present form and if the party is to survive not merely as a three wheeler party it would have to change its policies as well as the leadership. Even with the support of the west with the present leadership the party cannot move forward as we are entering a new era in politics. The present and the foreseeable future belong to nationalistic politics and if the UNP is to survive as a vibrant political entity it has to change its course and adopt nationalistic policies.

The old Marxist parties as well as new Trotskyite parties are today virtually non-existent not because the former went into coalition politics with the SLFP, but due to the fact that after the SLFP became a nationalistic party they had no role to play. If the old left went down the hill due to coalition politics then the question could be asked as to why the new Trotskyite parties could not have much influence in national politics in spite of not entering into coalitions with the SLFP. The JVP that oscillated between nationalistic politics and Marxist politics managed to make an impact in politics due to the nationalistic politics it adopted from time to time.

However, it appears that the JVP is now being used by the western forces against the nationalistic policies and that it is prohibited from changing to nationalistic policies. Fifty years after fifty six, finally in about 2006 the nationalistic policies have become dominant in politics and Marxist policies have no role to play in the country. No Marxist will be elected as an MP at the forthcoming elections as a Marxist, and there is no need to appoint members of Marxist parties as MPs from the national list as they would be representing only a virtual electorate. Those politicians such as Champika Ranawaka and Wimal Weeravansa who were with the JVP at one time or other have become members of nationalistic parties that orbit around the main nationalistic party the SLFP. It is very likely that they would be absorbed into the SLFP unless they manage to evolve nationalistic policies alternative to those of the SLFP. If the JVP is to have some influence in national politics then they have no alternative but to evolve alternative nationalistic policies.

The Tamil parties will be dealt with in a separate article and for the time being it is necessary to consider the fate of Sarath Fonseka the man who could not become a hero. As we have said number of times after his speech at Dharmashoka College on white flags he has become a prisoner in the hands of the westerners, especially of the Americans meaning those who live in USA and not the continent of America, and he is prepared to become a “crown witness” against the President and the Secretary of Defence, in order to save his neck. He is now in an alliance with the JVP, an alliance between a political party and an individual who has no experience in politics, and dances to the tune of the JVP. Going by the way the JVP members and sympathisers vote he is unlikely to get the maximum manape or preferences for him, unless some non JVPers who vote for the cup give their preferences to the general. In any event it is very unlikely that the JVP would allow him to be an MP and he would realise his folly very late. The JVP by highlighting the general’s health conditions makes people to question as to how he survived the “war conditions” in the battle field without air conditioned rooms and hot water. The JVP is presenting a poor picture of the man which would be detrimental to the image of the general as a “war veteran”. Perhaps that is what the JVP wants to do as they would be finally throwing Sarath Fonseka to

the dustbin of history as a weak person who had wanted all the comforts of life without making any sacrifices even in the “battle field”. The general would not be made into another Aung San Suu Kyi and as he has lost his nationalistic base he can only hope for the best at his various trials in the next few months.