

Sri Lanka: Autocracy preferred to autonomy

Thursday 22 October 2009, by [KARUNARATNE Vickramabahu \("Bahu"\)](#) (Date first published: 18 October 2009).

The victory in the south further consolidated the chauvinist Mahinda regime. There is no doubt about that; but underneath this calamity one could see a silver lining that should not be neglected. It is nothing very much to talk about; nevertheless the shift in the voting is significant. Firstly, though the Left Front did not mobilize more than a hundred votes in Galle, the candidates from the government list who appeared to support the 13 plus devolution and also those belonging to the opportunist old Left parties, have done well, as opposed to the candidates of chauvinist Wimal Weerawansa. The slap on the face of the diabolical racist campaigner is very much in evidence.

Not only that all of his candidates have lost, but they have also been placed at the bottom of the preference list. Out of seven opportunist Left candidates, five have won, including anti chauvinist campaigner Rev Samitha Sadu. The latter, even though he supported the genocidal war efforts of the regime, always stood for the autonomy of the Tamil people. Samitha Sadu came into politics as a member of the Nava Sama Samaja party, after accepting the right of self determination of the Tamil speaking people. Later, he joined the SLFP led coalition, and left the NSSP. Nevertheless, he consistently campaigned for a political solution based on devolution. His victory, as against Weerawansa's poor show, is indeed a sign of encouragement. The masses are moving away from chauvinist killers.

Chauvinist Sinhala party

At the same time the JVP also benefited by their recent campaigns. They are still a chauvinist Sinhala party that supports the oppressive war of the government. They support the emergency rule and the application of the Prevention of Terrorism Act to repress the struggles of the oppressed masses. But recently, they made a noise about the misery of the displaced Tamils. They condemned the violation of human rights of people by keeping Tamil and Muslim refugees in captivity. They also, participated in workers' protests and students campaigns. Thus they stand vindicated among the youth who are angry with the government. The result is shown in the over 5 % vote they have obtained.

Clearly the bourgeoisie is with the government. The UNP has lost its appeal even among the plantation segment. In a sense, it has become a liberal party based among professionals, doctors, lawyers etc. Minority groups still consider it as the lesser evil of the two capitalist parties. Hence it may have got the vote of the Muslim and Tamil traders, in the region.

As I said before, their tragedy is, that they are not against the major policies of the government. They support the war efforts of the regime; and they push the government to be with the global capitalist agenda, which the Mahinda regime is following loyally in any case. Of course while supporting the war and the emergency rule, the UNP makes protests about the other repressive measures such as media repression and attacks on activities of the opposition.

Main campaign

However, their main campaign was against building "palaces" using public funds. Certainly it is a valid point, but during their rule too such corrupt acts took place, and accusations were directed at

some high level leaders of the UNP.

In such a scenario, the 'palace' issue did not strike a chord among the plebeian masses, locked up among the tea and rubber plantations. Elections will certainly become not very significant for the suffering masses, in the near future.

The struggle that could develop in the future will be led by a wave of strikes that will incorporate the plantation sector too. What happened in the recent past is a rehearsal of the coming struggle. Mahinda will be interested in keeping the election momentum, and may announce the dates of the presidential and parliamentary elections. That is the only way left, for him to confuse and misdirect the masses.

P.S.

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