

The general mum on the Tamil national problem

Saturday 5 December 2009, by [KARUNARATNE Vickramabahu \("Bahu"\)](#) (Date first published: 29 November 2009).

The JVP put forward, a four point minimum programme for the common candidate, which includes: a) Abolition of the executive Presidency, (b) Reactivate the independent commissions, a constitutional obligation under the 17th amendment (c) Restore democracy and curb corruption, (d) A programme to expedite the resettlement of IDPs and to address their concerns. The UNP has agreed with this minimum programme. Thus the JVP's minimum programme which now becomes the basis of the programme of the common candidate deals in general with what the bourgeois identify as constitutional liberalism. The UNF argues that it is left with no other choice but to field General Sarath Fonseka who could pander into the grass roots and win their votes, in order to accomplish this common liberal agenda.

Fundamental breakdown

As typical for an underdeveloped bourgeois leadership the UNF leaders forget the most important aspect of a liberal democratic agenda. The liberal democracy arises in a national state. Unless a viable national state is formed by resolving the problem of nationalities, no liberal democracy could function. In Sri Lanka as well as many newly found ex -colonial states, the basic problem has been the continuation of bloody racial and nationality clashes that undermines the function of the civil society.

All other ills such as the lack of rule of law, corruption, etc arise due to this fundamental break down. It is strange that the democratic minimum programme of General Sarath does not say a word about a political solution to the national problem. Not even the implementation of the 13 plus. In that scenario, the Tamil national minority or any other minority group has no attraction to side with a candidate who consciously avoids the subject of a political solution.

General Sarath in his letter of resignation had soundly condemned the inability of the government to come out with a political solution. But the common programme that expects to propel the General into power does not have a word to resolve the Tamil national problem.

I believe this is the most important issue as far as the JVP is concerned. Their identity is to uncompromisingly oppose any plan of devolution.

This strong Sinhala chauvinist stand is the very trademark of the JVP; it is on that basis the JVP developed so quickly among the petty bourgeois Sinhala youth. In this presidential election, the JVP has managed to force their version of a common programme which specifically excludes the devolution issue, by the UNF. Wickremesinghe and others have become willing victims of the JVP following the foot steps of Chandrika and Mahinda. The tragedy of this country is that a small group of radical chauvinists have been able to defeat the liberal democratic project since the time of SWRD.

This time too the common candidate for liberal democracy has joined the orchestra carrying a violin with the main string broken. We can hear only a jarring noise instead of the violin concerto of

Beethoven! In fact the hegemony of the Mahinda clan was broken by the striking workers. Mahinda was reluctant to attack the striking workers with the newly consolidated chauvinist military apparatus. While the strikers advanced from the plantation hills to the petroleum centre in the Colombo suburbs, Mahinda was appeasing the opportunist trade union leaders. Emergency powers were used only after making offers to the striking workers. Obviously the bourgeoisie was dissatisfied with the political war hero, who cannot chop off the heads of the strike leaders. Hence they turned to the military war hero, General Fonseka.

The General had many grievances against the Mahinda regime, which included the step motherly treatment given to the armed forces in general. This grievance is beautifully combined with the dissatisfaction of the employers of the striking workers.

That was the political background that pushed the war hero to become the common candidate of the far right. Thus there is no democratic choice for the people between them. The only way out is a Left candidate, ready to carry out the pressing national democratic tasks.

P.S.

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