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THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS OF MAY 11TH, 1991

- A Preliminary Analysis
by Tissa Pieris

What is presented here is only the beginning of an analysis based on the official results and a few verbal reports and impressions. A detailed report should be obtained from all Party groups to complete the analysis. Thus on the face of it the Communist Party won the Matara U.C., but the real position was that one C.P. candidate won and the balance were SLFP. The same holds to some extent for the LSSP and BNP lists where the SLFP did not contest separately. On the other hand there were Left Party candidates in several SLFP lists. What about the nature and composition of independent groups, e.g. Beruwela?

The following points can however be made, in a broad sense:-

1. The manner in which the elections were conducted and the relative freedom to campaign and the voter turn out have contributed positively towards the return of democracy in the country, and reducing peoples sense of fear, at least in these 17 districts.
2. The UNP has won 190 of the 237 councils and claims a "landslide" victory. But in 33 that they won they received less than 50% of the vote and they were able to take control in most of these 33 because of the two bonus seats given to the party that got most votes.
3. The UNP obtained 50.7% of the votes and together with the CWC and a UNP Independent Group 52.43%. This is certainly not a landslide vote. It is well below the 57.48% it received at the 1989 General Elections in these 17 districts..

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4. Further this percentage has been worked out from the total valid votrs cast. It excludes the spoilt votes which amount to 586,913. If this is added to the total vote cast the UNP got only 46.5%.
5. Further we know that many who were opposed to the UNP did not vote as they felt that it would serve no useful purpose. This in terms of the total number of eligibile voters the UNP only got 33.2%.
6. The UNP had the only effective campaign - media support, personnel for canvassing, money for propaganda material, and an extensive impersonation machinery. This was backed by misuse of governmental power hand-outs to selected critical groups e.g. salary increases to teachers etc. as well as, threats - that Janasaviya hand-outs would stop if the UNP lost etc. Though physical intimidation was much less other forms were judiciously used.
7. In 5 districts (out of the 17) that were most populous and politically advanced the UNP failed to get 50% of the valid votes - they were Colombo 47.7%, Kalutara 46.8% Galle 48.3%, Hambantota 48.4% and Ratnapura 48.8%. If the total polled is considered, the UNP failed to get 50% in addition for Kegalle 49.7%, Moneragala 49.3%, Pollonnaruwa 47.5%, Kurnegala 47.4%, Gampaha 46.4% i.e. for 6 more districts. This would have tremendous significance from the point of view of a general election.
8. The higher number of rejected votes 586,913 (9.5%) is being dismissed as of no consequence. These rejections related to the Party vote and all voters in the past have handled this well. Several Counting Officers estimate that from 20 to over 50% of them were deliberately spoilt. Some had actually written that none of the parties and/or candidates were suitable. Are these JVP voters or are these voters losing faith in the electoral process itself as a consequence of UNP manipulation?

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9. Four of the six districts where the UNP got over 50% of the total polled include four (Kandy, Matale, Nuwara Eliya and Badulla) where the estate Tamil vote would have been decisive.
10. It would appear that despite the problems in the North and East and its role in past anti-Tamil pogroms the UNP has succeeded in getting the bulk of the votes of the Tamil minority - both in the estate and urban areas like Colombo. The SLFP failed in this and the Left through association with the SLFP. Did the SLMP and NSSP get some Tamil support?
11. The Muslim vote - The Muslim Congress contested widely and had 27 candidates elected to 23 local bodies but got only 56,195 votes or 1.0%. The bulk of the Muslim vote went to other parties but largely to the UNP.
12. The SLFP itself got 1,963,576 votes or 35.2% of the valid votes and remains the main opposition party. If the independent groups are added to it the figure goes up to 40.1%. If the 119,382 that the LSSP, Cp and BNP got is added the total goes up to 2,353,447 i.e. 42.2%.
13. Of the 34 local bodies that the SLFP won 18 were with less than 50% of the valid votes -specially in Colombo, Kalutara, Matara and Hambantota districts. In 5 districts the SLFP failed to win a single local body - Kegalle, Badulla, Nuwara Eliya, Matale and Kandy. If the SLFP had a better agreement with opposition parties it could have won 23 more local bodies - 12 with the Left (including our three parties, the MEP and NSSP) and 11 with the SLMP.
14. On the face of it the SLFP may not appear to have benefitted from running as an Independent Group with the Left, as Anura claims, as only 2 out of 12 such local bodies were won. These were Homagama in the Colombo District where the Opposition (SLFP 4 MEP 2) had won more local bodies than the UNP (5); and Ja-ela in the Gampaha District where the SLFP won 6 local bodies as against UNP's 11. As the UNP had

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14. On the face of it the SLFP may not appear to have benefitted from running as an Independent Group with the Left, as Anura claims, as only 2 out of 12 such local bodies were won. These were Homagama in the Colombo District where the Opposition (SLFP 4 MEP 2) had won more local bodies than the UNP (5); and Ja-ela in the Gampaha District where the SLFP won 6 local bodies as against UNP's 11. As the UNP had polled more in the past. Anura's argument is strengthened by the fact that the Independent Group in Colombo polled 33.8% which is a lower percentage than what the SLFP alone obtained elsewhere in Colombo District (38.5% to 50.5%) (? Anura's role in this). Also the remaining independent groups were in districts where the SLFP fared badly without capturing a single local body - Kegalle, Badulla, Nuwara Eliya and Matale districts - and only 1 local body - Puttalam district. Unfortunately only a few of those independent groups e.g. Kegalle U.C. got more than the SLFP groups.
15. The agreement between the Left and the SLFP was broken to varying extents by the SLFP except in the case of the CP, and this permitted the latter to win 3 out of 6 local bodies. Of the 10 local bodies contested on the LSSP symbol the SLFP contested 4, supported independent groups in 2 and possibly the SLMP in one. Of the 12 contested by the BNP the SLFP contested 9 and supported an independent group in one. The outcome was that the LSSP and BNP failed to win any local bodies.

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16. The SLFP had an agreement with the MEP by which they conceded 3 local bodies in the Colombo District while contesting each other in 3 others. Had the SLFP got the support of the MEP and other opposition groups they may have defeated the UNP at Dehiwela as they only got 47.8%. The MEP clashed with the SLFP in the 13 local bodies that it contested in other districts. It polled 73,775 in 10 Districts with "37" candidates elected in 19 local bodies.
17. The NSSP clashed with the SLFP in nearly all the 44 local bodies it contested, and this includes Eheliyagoda and Kuruwita in which the UNP could have been defeated had a clash been avoided. The NSSP polled 49,652 (0.9%) in 13 districts and had 22 candidates elected to 17 local bodies, but it did not win any local bodies.
18. The SLMP contested in all 17 districts and polled 149,280 votes. It got 62 candidates elected to 56 local bodies though it did not win any local body. Did it get this degree of success because of the Vijaya K following?
19. The strategy of the SLMP, SLMC, NSSP and to some extent the MEP was to contest as many local bodies as possible. They therefore succeeded to some extent in broadening their base and setting up the nucleus for party organisations in many local body areas in many districts. By getting just one member elected to each of several local bodies they could try to build up a mass base. There also appears to be about 5% of voters who tend to vote for a non-UNP, non-SLFP candidate, preferably from the Left.
20. The LSSP 54,546 (0.98%), CP 42,941 (0.77%) and BNP 21,895 (0.39%) may have done better in terms of candidates winning than appears under the party label, as many contested in the SLFP lists. There may have

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been a wider distribution in local bodies as well. But in the eyes of the country they appear to be parties with a localised following, rather than national parties. Could these parties have played a "MEP-line" and retained the benefits of an SLFP alliance and also contested more widely so as to counter the loss of identity of being in an independent or SLFP list?

21. Where the SLP local leaders sabotaged the agreement in Panadura and Kotte they managed to win power in the local body. Thus even though the Left Independent Group managed to win a seat at Kotte it did not effectively counter the Anura line.
22. In certain areas like Moratuwa the LSSP had too many running on the SLFP list so that our limited vote was badly divided and none won.

WHERE THE LSSP SECURED PLACES

Colombo District: Colombo MC (1), Dehiwela-Galkissa MC (1), Kolonnawa UC (1), Kotte UC (1), Kaduwela PS (3), Kesbawa PS (1), Maharagama PS (1), Homagama PS (1).

Gampaha District: Seeduwa UC (1), Minuwangoda UC (1), Mahara PS (1).

Kalutara District: Kalutara UC (1), Kalutara PS (3), Wallallavita PS (2), Panadura PS (1), Matugama PS (2), Agalawatte PS (1), Dodangoda PS (1), Bandara-gama PS (1).

Galle District: Ambalangoda UC (1), Ambalangoda PS (1), Elpitiya PS (2), Balapitiya PS (3), Thavalama PS (1)

Kegalle District: Yatiyantota PS (5), Ruanwella PS (4), Deraniyagala PS (3), Dehiowita PS (4), Mawanella PS (1), Warakapola PS (2)

Ratnapura District: Eheliyagoda PS (1)

Matara District: Kamburupitiya PS (1), Thiyagoda PS (1)

Kandy District: Passage Korale PS (1).

L.S.S.P. Statement on the Assasination of
Rajiv Gandhi

"The assasination of Shri Rajiv Gandhi has added a new and sadder colouring to the events of today. It marks a halt in what may be regarded as one dynastic span in the history of our neighbour" Stated a statement issued by Bernard Soysa, General Secretary of the LSSP.

The statement adds:

"The grief that welled up this assasination has spread out from India to the countries of South Asia and the rest of the world. Together with these millions of persons we of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party who did not find ourselves in accord with everything he did, deeply mourn his passing".

"He was one Statesman who had the capacity and the charisma to develop a necessary new dimension in the policy and prospects of Non-Alignment".

"That the LTTE carried out this assasination is the belief that is gaining an ever wider acceptance. Whoever was the active agency in this dastardly crime it is well within reason to suspect behind it the menacing motive of destabilisation on the part of aggressive imperialism" the statement concludes.
