Arm Pakistani workers with a revolutionary socialist program

Build the Pakistani section of the International Committee of the Fourth International!

Part 3

Marxist Voice
5 January 2011

Part 3

The World Socialist Web Site *is publishing here the third and concluding part of a statement from Marxist Voice, a Pakistani group that has expressed political agreement with the perspectives of the International Committee of the Fourth International and undertaken to work with the ICFI to build it as the World Party of Socialist Revolution.*

The Marxist Voice statement represents an important advance in the elaboration of a revolutionary perspective for the workers of Pakistan and South Asia. Based on a review of the essential strategic experiences of the working class in South Asia, it demonstrates the necessity for Pakistani workers to base their struggles on the strategy of permanent revolution.

The WSWS appeals to our Pakistani readers to study and distribute the Marxist Voice statement and participate in the elaboration of the perspectives and program for the development of a revolutionary socialist party of the Pakistani working class by forwarding us your comments and questions.

The first part *of the statement by Marxist Voice was published on Monday. The* second part *was posted Tuesday.*

The permanent revolution today

Permanent revolution is a unified world revolutionary conception that arises from the global character of capitalism, the struggle for socialism and the working class. It was vindicated in the two Russian Revolutions of 1917, which culminated in the coming to power of the Russian working class under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party in a revolutionary alliance with the poor peasantry and with the aim of spearheading the world socialist revolution. As Trotsky emphasized, in the modern epoch there can be no democratic revolution independent of, or separate from, the socialist revolution. In the backward and oppressed countries, the democratic and national tasks can be realized only through the proletarian revolution and its extension around the world.

Based on an examination of world socioeconomic development and the class struggle, Trotsky explained in the theory of permanent revolution that the bourgeoisie in the colonies and other countries of belated capitalist development emerged too late to repeat the revolutionary role that the bourgeoisie in Western Europe and North America had played at the dawn of capitalism. The colonial bourgeoisie is too dependent upon imperialism, too terrified of the working class, and its resources too narrow to mount a revolutionary struggle to realize the tasks that in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were historically associated with the rise of the bourgeoisie—the breaking up of the landed estates, national unification, the establishment of democracy, etc. Rather, it invariably sides with imperialism and reaction so as to safeguard its own class privileges.

However, the same historical process has brought onto the scene a working class whose social weight, given its decisive role in modern industry and transport and its organic connection to the world working class, far outstrips its relative size, and whose class interests lie in rallying all the toilers against imperialism and capitalism.

The expansion of cheap-labor production in Asia in recent decades and the consequent strengthening of capitalist social relations and huge growth in the size of the working class has enormously increased the revolutionary potential of the working class and further bound together the resolution of democratic tasks with an attack on capitalist property and the struggle for socialism.

The permanent revolution was confirmed in a negative sense in the aspiring Indian and Pakistani bourgeoisies' abortion of the democratic revolution in South Asia, through their deal with British imperialism and partition. In an open letter to Indian workers written in 1939, just a few weeks before the outbreak of World War II, Trotsky denounced the Stalinists for binding the working class to the Indian National Congress on the grounds that the bourgeoisie was the historically legitimate leader of the democratic revolution.

"The Indian bourgeoisie," affirmed Trotsky, "is incapable of leading a revolutionary struggle. They are closely bound up with and dependent upon British capitalism. They tremble for their own property. They stand in fear of the masses. They seek compromises with British imperialism no matter what the price and lull the Indian masses with hopes of reforms from above. The leader and prophet of this bourgeoisie is Gandhi. A fake leader and a false prophet!

"…Only the proletariat is capable of advancing a bold, revolutionary agrarian program, of rousing and rallying tens of millions of peasants and leading them in struggle against the native oppressors and British

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imperialism. The alliance of workers and poor peasants is the only honest, reliable alliance that can assure the final victory of the Indian revolution."

As it usurped working class power in the USSR and sought peace with the international bourgeoisie in the name of "socialism in one country," the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy resurrected and codified the Menshevik two-stage theory of revolution. This theory justifies the subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie, cedes to it leadership over the toilers, and accepts the bourgeoisie's claim to power on the grounds that it is the historically determined leader of the democratic revolution and that the existence of unresolved burning democratic questions is proof that conditions are not yet ripe for socialism. The various Stalinist Communist parties pursued this line for decades, facilitating the bourgeoisie's political dominance and invariable betrayal of the masses. A series of disasters resulted: in China in 1927, in Spain in the 1930s, in Iran in 1953 and again in 1979, in Indonesia in the run-up to the 1965 Suharto-led massacre of leftists. The list goes on and on.

The tasks of the democratic revolution will be realized in Pakistan and South Asia not by, or in alliance with, the bourgeoisie or any section of it, but in revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie and the capitalist social order. The working class will emerge as the liberator of the downtrodden masses and the leader of a revolutionary alliance of the working class and peasantry only by waging a ceaseless struggle to free the masses from the political influence of the bourgeoisie, by exposing its subordination to imperialism, indifference to the democratic aspirations of the masses and venal pursuit of its class interests. A workers and peasants government will combine revolutionary democratic measures, most importantly a radical transformation of land relations, with the expropriation of big business and other socialist measures and place at the heart of its strategy the struggle to mobilize the world working class to put an end to capitalism. Freedom from imperialism and capitalist exploitation, the prerequisite for any enduring solution to the problems of the masses in South Asia and across the globe, can be secured only as part of the world socialist revolution—a process that begins on the national arena, unfolds internationally or *permanently*, and attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet.

For the Socialist United States of South Asia!

A strategic imperative for the workers of Pakistan and India is to reach across the partition divide and coordinate their struggles against their common enemy—the subcontinent's rival national bourgeoisies and world imperialism. The lifting of the threat of a fourth and potentially nuclear Indo-Pakistani war, the eradication of the scourge of communalism, and rational and equitable economic development in the interests of working people require the overthrow of the reactionary state system that the national bourgeoisie and imperialism imposed in 1947 and the voluntary unification of the peoples of the subcontinent in the Socialist United States of South Asia.

The bourgeoisies of India and Pakistan have proven utterly incapable of providing for genuine equality among the myriad ethnic groups that constitute their respective states. The political wounds of 1947-1948 have only festered and putrefied. In Pakistan, as in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, the bourgeoisie has made the fanning and manipulation of ethno-national and communal differences an integral part of its system of political and ideological control. This, in turn, has provided fertile ground for the rise of myriad ethno-nationalist and secessionist movements.

These movements appeal to genuine democratic and socioeconomic grievances. But the nationalist-exclusivist program they advance in no way corresponds to the interests of the working class of South Asia. The balkanization of the subcontinent would facilitate imperialist manipulation and oppression, create new obstacles to the unification of the working class, and further institutionalize ethnic politics and strife.

The national-separatist movements articulate the strivings of sections of the bourgeoisie for their own ethnically defined state with a view to expanding their possibilities for enrichment and exploitation, especially by brokering deals with international capital. Their politics are oriented not toward overturning the reactionary nation-state system imposed on South Asia in 1947-1948, but toward reshuffling some of its borders by pressuring the dominant bourgeois faction, frequently through insurgencies, and by winning the favor of the great powers. Raising slogans like "Balochistan for the Balochis," "Karachi for the Mohajirs," and "Sind for the Sindhis," such movements subject workers and toilers of "alien" nationalities to chauvinist denunciations and violence, and champion exclusivist language and citizenship laws.

As the International Committee of the Fourth International has explained:

"In India and China, the national movements [of the first half of the twentieth century] posed the progressive task of unifying disparate peoples in a common struggle against imperialism—a task which proved unrealizable under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie. This new form of nationalism promotes separatism along ethnic, linguistic and religious lines, with the aim of dividing up existing states for the benefit of local exploiters. Such movements have nothing to do with a struggle against imperialism, nor do they in any sense embody the democratic aspirations of the masses of oppressed. They serve to divide the working class and divert the class struggle into ethno-communal warfare."

The myriad national grievances that today beset South Asia are rooted in the failure of independent bourgeois rule and bourgeois nationalism. Like the other unfulfilled tasks of the democratic revolution, the elimination of all forms of national oppression is bound up with world socialist revolution. In keeping with the program of permanent revolution, the working class must wrest the leadership of the toiling masses from the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie by demonstrating that only through the overthrow of the current bourgeois order can genuine democracy, national equality and independence from imperialism be secured.

The workers of Pakistan should study the principled struggle that the Socialist Equality Party (formerly the Revolutionary Communist League) of Sri Lanka has waged in defense of the Tamil people. Since its founding in 1968, the Sri Lankan section of the International Committee of the Fourth International has placed the struggle against Sinhalese chauvinism at the center of the fight for the unity and political independence of the working class.

The SEP adopted a revolutionary defeatist attitude toward the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie and its state in the three-decade-long Sri Lankan civil war. It demanded and continues to demand that all Sri Lankan troops and security forces be withdrawn immediately and without condition from the north and east of the island as part of its struggle to mobilize the working class and oppressed masses, Sinhalese and Tamil, against capitalist rule and for the Socialist United States of Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam.

While placing responsibility for the civil war on the Sinhalese bourgeoisie and imperialism and tirelessly explaining the connection between the oppression of the working class and that of the Tamil minority, the SEP opposed the LTTE's attempt to carve out a new capitalist nation-state in the north and east of the island through communal warfare and diplomatic maneuvers with the Indian government and imperialist powers.

Ultimately, the failure of the LTTE insurgency was rooted in its selfish class aims. It could not and would not make an appeal to the Sinhalese masses and the international working class; the police regime that it established in the parts of the island it controlled increasingly alienated the Tamils. This experience has provided fresh confirmation that the only

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historically viable program for securing the democratic rights of the peoples of South Asia is socialist revolution.

The Pakistani ruling class is presently waging yet another bloody counterinsurgency campaign in Baluchistan. These campaigns, coupled as they are with the ruling class's complete indifference to the wretched conditions of the masses in Pakistan's poorest province, have invariably fed popular alienation and resistance to the Pakistani state. But the Baloch nationalists, with their demands for greater provincial autonomy or for independence and the creation of a Greater Balochistan, in no sense offer a progressive alternative. Their reactionary aims are exemplified by their splitting of workers' organizations along national lines, their violent attacks on Punjabi, Hazara and Pashtun workers and those of other nationalities, and the declarations of Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) spokesmen like Brahamdagh Bugti and Nawabzda Hiar Biyar Marri that they are ready to accept support from the US and other imperialist powers. Ominously, BLA leaders have held up the independence of Kosovo, under the tutelage of the US and other imperialist powers and as a consequence of the 1999 NATO war against Yugoslavia, as an example of how an independent Balochistan can be created.

The state borders of Pakistan—incorporating as they do the British imperialist-imposed Durand line of 1893—have divided the Pashtun people. Their unification and real emancipation will be achieved only by defeating imperialism on a class basis. In supporting the US invasion of Afghanistan and the AfPak war, the Pashtun nationalists of the Awami National Party have helped drench the whole region in blood.

The Kashmir question has special importance given the role it has played and continues to play in the reactionary Indo-Pakistani state rivalry. Both the Indian and Pakistani elites have abused and repressed the people of Kashmir. When the Indian government's flagrant rigging of the 1987 state election in Indian-held Jammu and Kashmir helped spark an insurgency, Pakistan quickly intervened to promote the most communal-minded and Islamicist elements among the insurgents, calculating they would be the most susceptible to its control.

The working class must resolutely oppose the rival territorial claims of both states. All of the solutions proposed by New Delhi and Islamabad—Kashmir's incorporation into Pakistan, a communal partition of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, greater autonomy, etc.—are based on a continuation of the same communal policies that are at the root of the current conflict and will only give rise to new tensions. Nor should the working class lend support to the demand of some Kashmiri nationalists for an independent Kashmir. This is a program for the creation of another capitalist nation-state in South Asia based on the calculation of sections of the Kashmir elite that they could leverage an independent Kashmir's geo-strategic importance as a state bordering India, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan and lying close to Russia.

The unification of the Kashmiri people on a progressive basis and, more generally, the development of equitable relations among all the myriad people of South Asia will be possible only as part of an undoing of partition from below—as the result of a united working-class led struggle against decrepit bourgeois rule and for the Socialist United States of South Asia.

Oppose the AfPak war and the occupation of Afghanistan! Smash the Islamabad-Washington nexus!

The working class must vigorously oppose the reactionary AfPak war, which is being waged by the US with the assistance of its NATO allies and the Pakistani bourgeoisie in order to expand Washington's military-strategic presence in Central Asia. This region, from which US imperialism was largely excluded during most of the twentieth century due to the existence of the Soviet Union, is coveted by Washington and Wall Street because it has the world's second largest reserves of exportable oil and other valuable resources and because it lies adjacent to China, Russia and Iran, all powers deemed potential challengers to US world dominance.

Echoing the war propaganda of Bush and Obama, the PPP and other representatives of Pakistan's moribund liberal bourgeoisie have sought to rally support for the AfPak war by declaring it a war against Islamic reaction—not a "US war," but a "war for Pakistan" and "moderate Islam." In making this argument, they point to various outrages and atrocities perpetrated by the Taliban and Taliban-aligned militia groups.

The claim that US imperialism and the Pakistani bourgeoisie and its military-intelligence apparatus can act in the interests of democracy is refuted by the entire history of Pakistan. For more than half a century, the US has partnered with the Pakistani military—serving as the bulwark of a succession of military dictatorships and promoting the army as the pillar of the Pakistani state and the US-Pakistani alliance—precisely because the officers corps is so insulated from, and hostile to, the Pakistani people.

The AfPak war emerges directly from previous crimes perpetrated by US imperialism and the Pakistani bourgeoisie.

For more than a decade, beginning in 1978-1979, Washington prevailed on Islamabad to organize, train and arm Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan and Afghanistan so as to make Afghanistan a major battlefield in its reactionary Cold War campaign against the Soviet Union. Two decades later, Washington came to view many of these elements as obstacles to its drive to establish US hegemony in oil-rich Central Asia and launched what has now become a decade-long war. In both cases, the lives and democratic rights of the Pakistani and Afghan people have been of no account to US imperialism.

The Pakistani elite has a much longer history of using Islamic fundamentalists to further its predatory class aims, dating back to Jinnah's "Islam in Danger" campaign and the incorporation of sections of the ulema into the agitation for partition. General Zia institutionalized this policy, promoting Islamic rightist political parties and a network of fundamentalist organizations and militias. But all sections of the political establishment are implicated—from the PML, whose leader Nawaz Sharif promised at General Zia's graveside to "complete" his "mission," to the "Islamic socialist" PPP.

The Taliban-aligned insurgency in Pakistan has fed off Pashtun anger and revulsion at the horrors being perpetrated by the US-NATO occupation forces. It has also made a limited appeal to social grievances born of landlordism, ruling class corruption and the official neglect and abuse to which the people of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas have been subjected during the six decades of Pakistani independence.

The working class must not let the Islamic fundamentalists and their patrons like Hamid Gull in the military-intelligence establishment monopolize the opposition to the US-NATO occupation of Afghanistan and the AfPak war.

In linking opposition to the war to the fight for urgently needed democratic and socialist measures—the eradication of landlordism, the dismantling of Pakistan's security state, the nationalization of the commanding heights of the economy so as to provide jobs and basic public services to all—the working class will emerge as the leader of Pakistan's toilers and dramatically undercut the appeal of the Islamic fundamentalists.

The emergence of a working class-led movement in opposition to the AfPak war would also serve as a powerful stimulus to the development of opposition to the war and imperialism among the workers of Europe and North America and thereby hasten the days when the Afghan and Pakistani people break free of the shackles of imperialist oppression.

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Build the Pakistani section of the International Committee of the Fourth International!

A vital part of the struggle to build a new revolutionary party of the Pakistani working class is the political-theoretical exposure of the pseudo-Trotskyist groups that have gained significance in Pakistan over the past two decades as a result of the political and organizational collapse of the Pakistani Maoists and CPP Stalinists. The Stalinists' collapse was occasioned first and foremost by the liquidation of the Soviet Union by their political mentors, the Kremlin bureaucracy. But the political bankruptcy of the Pakistani Stalinists was also laid bare in the debacle of the PDPA regime in Afghanistan and by the PPP's lurch further right on its return to power in 1989.

Virulently opportunist, the pseudo-Trotskyist groups like The Struggle and the Labour Party of Pakistan have played an utterly reprehensible role. They serve to block workers and socialist-minded youth from genuine Trotskyism. They exploit the prestige of Trotsky as the strategist of world socialist revolution and implacable opponent of Stalinism, while carrying out miserable right-wing maneuvers with the trade union bureaucracy and the bourgeois political establishment that are in diametrical opposition to all that Trotsky stood for.

The Struggle, the Pakistani affiliate of the International Marxist Tendency (IMT), has operated for well over two decades as a spokesman for, and integral part of, the ruling-class Pakistan Peoples Party. It insists that the PPP, which served as the instrument to politically harness the working class to the bourgeoisie during the mass upheaval of the late 1960s, is the historic mass party of the Pakistani working class and that workers must fight to "win it back" to its original "socialist" program. In fact, the PPP's founding program, based as it was on the twin pillars of Pakistani nationalism and "Islamic socialism," was a political fraud. A critique from the standpoint of Marxism of the populist politics it embodies is an essential part of the struggle for the political independence and hegemony of the working class.

Taking The Struggle's perspective to its logical reactionary conclusion, its second most prominent leader, Chaudry Manzoor Ahmed, and several dozen others, including (according to its own statement) several "old leaders," recently broke away so that they could function even more crassly as agents of the bourgeois PPP. For five years, The Struggle and the IMT promoted Manzoor Ahmed, a PPP national assemblyman from 2002 to 2008, as "Pakistan's Marxist MP." Now it condemns Manzoor—who has been named head of the PPP's "People's Secretariat" and of the PPP's trade union front and who has emerged as one of the foremost advocates of the government's privatization program—as a thug for Zardari. The Struggle concedes that Manzoor, while still a leading member, shamelessly betrayed a militant strike of PTCL telecommunication workers in June 2008. But when Manzoor was helping break the strike, The Struggle made no public criticism of his role because it and the IMT were still trying to work out a deal whereby Manzoor could accept a leading post within the PPP officialdom and remain within their organization. Such are the sordid right-wing ties The Struggle cultivates with the leadership of Pakistan's governing party.

The Labour Party of Pakistan (which has permanent observer status in the international Pabloite organization) emerged from a split-off from The Struggle in the early 1990s. It is likewise oriented to sections of the bourgeois political establishment, the trade unions, NGOs and the World Social Forum. Viewing even nominal adherence to Trotskyism as an encumbrance to its maneuvers within Pakistani establishment politics, the LPP does not define itself as a Trotskyist party.

In the midst of Musharraf's 2007 Emergency, the LPP's principal leader, Farooq Tariq, boasted about a friendly meeting he had with Benazir Bhutto at which he urged her to spearhead an anti-Musharraf alliance and advised her on how to win support from the working class. Subsequently, the LPP entered into the All-Parties Democratic Movement (APDM), an alliance for boycotting the 2008 elections that included the right-wing fundamentalist Jamat-i-Islami, Imran Khan's PTI, and various Sindhi, Baluchi and Saraiki nationalist parties. The LPP has been among the foremost boosters of the lawyers' movement.

The Struggle, the LPP and several other smaller groups are the political progeny of a liquidationist current—Pabloism—that emerged inside the Fourth International under conditions of the post-Second World War restabilization of capitalism. (Michel Pablo, the secretary of the Fourth International in the immediate post-war years, and Ernest Mandel were the principal leaders of this current.)

Impressed by the strengthening of the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy as a result of the outcome of World War II and by the ability of social democracy to obtain certain material benefits for the working class under conditions of a rapid capitalist expansion, the Pabloites declared Trotsky's revolutionary perspective obsolete. Pablo bluntly asserted that the reorganization of the working class under the leadership of the Fourth International was "the least likely variant" in the struggle for socialism. Instead, argued the Pabloites, the Stalinist bureaucracy and other alien class forces would be compelled under the pressure of imperialism from above and the masses from below to expropriate the bourgeoisie, leading to "centuries of deformed workers states."

The Pabloites came to view the Stalinist and social democratic parties, as well as various petty-bourgeois nationalist and radical movements, not as political obstacles to the revolutionary mobilization of the working class, but rather as alternative instruments for realizing socialism. It was not, therefore a matter of opposing to these organizations the independent perspective of the Fourth International, but rather of transforming the Fourth International into a pressure group on the existing leadership of the working class and national movements. The Pabloites attributed to the Stalinists and bourgeois nationalists a historically progressive role, rejecting Trotsky's insistence on their counter-revolutionary character. In pursuit of their perspective of "integrating into the mass movement," they set about politically and organizationally breaking up the existing Trotskyist parties.

The implications of this perspective—the transformation of Trotskyist parties into appendages of the counter-revolutionary labor bureaucracies and secondary props of the bourgeois order—was soon demonstrated for all to see by political events in South Asia. Under Pabloite tutelage, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) adapted to Sinhala populism, abandoned the permanent revolution in favor of trade union and parliamentary opportunism, and in 1964 entered into a bourgeois coalition government headed by Mde. Bandaranaike and her Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

The ICFI was founded in 1953 to rally the genuine Trotskyists against the Pabloites and in the ensuing decades it has waged a tenacious struggle to defend and develop the program of world socialist revolution. It has created the *World Socialist Web Site* as its political organ to report on, unify and provide political leadership to the struggles of the working class around the world. With its colossal political experience derived from many decades of struggle in defense of Marxist and Trotskyist principles, the International Committee embodies the need for the world working class to consciously coordinate its struggles and overthrow the moribund capitalist system.

The central task of Marxist Voice is to build the Pakistani section of the ICFI, a Trotskyist working class vanguard that will be able to intervene in the mass, spontaneous struggles of the working class, combat and politically defeat the Stalinists, opportunists and trade union bureaucracy, and arm workers with a clear revolutionary program and perspective.

Marxist Voice emerged out of a split with the IMT-The Struggle opportunists in 2001—a split occasioned by our opposition to their

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harnessing of the working class to the bourgeois PPP, their routine violations of democratic centralism and opportunist organizational practices, and their criminally light-minded dismissal of the US invasion of Afghanistan as a passing episode not rooted in a strategic push of US imperialism into Central Asia. Subsequently, Marxist Voice came into contact with the ICFI through the *World Socialist Web Site* and was immediately attracted to its internationalist perspective, principled approach to political questions and revolutionary orientation to the working class, including the American workers. Over several years of discussion we became increasingly convinced of the critical importance of the ICFI's protracted struggle against opportunism and for Marxism and the necessity of bringing the lessons of that struggle to the workers of Pakistan. Of especial relevance is the struggle waged by the RCL/SEP of Sri Lanka, under the guidance of the ICFI, to develop the program of permanent revolution.

Greeting the founding of the Fourth International in 1938, Trotsky emphasized its historic importance as the vehicle for overcoming the crisis of revolutionary proletarian leadership. "We are not," declared Trotsky. "a party like other parties…. Our aim is the full material and spiritual liberation of the toilers and exploited through the socialist revolution. Nobody will prepare it and nobody will guide it but ourselves."

We urge all the supporters and readers of Marxist Voice and all the readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* in Pakistan to study this statement and to join our ranks and the struggle to build the ICFI.

See also:

A welcome advance for the Pakistani and world working class
[January 3, 2011]

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