

Arm Pakistani workers with a revolutionary socialist program

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

Of Marxist Voice
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The World Socialist Web Site is publishing here 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.

Pakistan is passing through an acute political, social and economic crisis. This crisis is part and parcel of the world capitalist crisis that is rapidly unfolding on a global scale and is having a devastating impact on the lives of billions of ordinary people. The world capitalist system is beset by the same insoluble contradictions that produced the 20th century horrors of two world wars, fascism and a nearly endless series of regional military conflicts and brutal police-military dictatorships. The basic contradictions are between the global economy and the nation-state system and between socialized production and private ownership of the means of production. From these contradictions emerge not only the danger of another disastrous world war, but also the objective conditions for the overthrow of capitalism—the socialization of industry and finance, the globalization of economic life, and the social power of the world working class.

With this statement, Marxist Voice is initiating the struggle to build the Pakistani section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the World Party of Socialist Revolution founded by Leon Trotsky—the co-leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution and the protagonist of the struggle against the privileged bureaucracy that usurped the power of the Soviet workers and ultimately restored capitalism in the USSR.

The urgency of building the ICFI is underscored by the fact that under the impact of the global capitalist crisis the working class is being propelled into struggle, yet everywhere it immediately comes up against the fact that the organizations that once claimed to speak in its name—the remnants of the Stalinist parties, social democracy and the trade unions—uphold the capitalist profit system and seek to split the working

class along national lines.

63 years of “independent” bourgeois rule: The balance sheet of a social disaster

After 63 years of independent bourgeois rule, Pakistan is characterized by horrific poverty and deprivation, grotesque social inequality, a dilapidated infrastructure, national-ethnic and sectarian strife and the continuing political predominance of the US-sponsored military.

More than 45 million people in Pakistan live below the official subsistence-level poverty line, and almost two thirds of the population lives on the equivalent of less than US\$2 per day. According to the United Nations, 60 percent of Pakistani children under five are moderately or severely stunted. Meanwhile, a tiny venal ruling class—comprised of big businessmen, landlords, top bureaucrats, officers and their business cronies—plunder the country’s wealth in league with foreign capital.

Because of poverty and the state’s failure to provide a basic infrastructure, tens of millions have no access to schools, health care, sanitation or electricity. Electricity load shedding has become a chronic disruption to socioeconomic life. Education and health care are especially neglected, forcing even the poor to turn to private institutions and Islamic fundamentalist charities and madrassas. The Pakistani state’s combined spending on education and health care is equivalent to less than 4 percent of the country’s gross national product (GNP).

Migration from rural areas to urban centers has increased due to the lack of basic facilities in the countryside and the difficulty rural people have in eking out a livelihood. Seventy percent of the rural population owns no land, surviving as sharecroppers, tenants and agricultural laborers. In the cities, the population also must contend with a lack of basic public and social services and jobs.

Unable to provide a progressive solution to the problems of the masses, the Pakistani bourgeoisie has increasingly fomented anti-Indian chauvinism, Islamic fundamentalism and ethnic nationalism to divert mounting social anger into reactionary channels and split the working class. Pakistan has become an incubator for sectarian hatreds and religious obscurantism.

The claim of the proponents of Pakistan that a Muslim national homeland would provide safety and security for the Muslims of South Asia has proven to be a cruel hoax. Pakistan has been at war or on the brink of war for much of its existence, and most of its people live in acute

economic insecurity, if not extreme poverty.

As a direct consequence of the Pakistani ruling class' logistical support for the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, Pakistan's military has been waging civil war in ever-widening swaths of northwest Pakistan since 2004, using its full arsenal of antidemocratic methods—carpet bombing, collective punishment, disappearances and summary executions. Washington has been given carte blanche to mount drone missile strikes to execute opponents of the US occupation of Afghanistan and kill large numbers of civilians in the process.

The AfPak War is but the latest stage in a three-decade intervention by Washington and Pakistan's ruling elite in Afghanistan that has proved ruinous for the Afghan and Pakistan people alike. As in the earlier stages, the current war is strengthening the stranglehold of the military and US imperialism over Pakistan's politics and governance and nourishing Islamic fundamentalism.

Pakistani democracy was stillborn. The US-supported military has directly ruled the country for half of its existence. But even in the periods of so-called civilian rule, the military wields vast power. The crisis-ridden Pakistani bourgeoisie depends on the military to protect its property and uphold the territorial integrity of the Pakistani state. It has made the military the pivot of its reactionary geopolitical rivalry with India and its mercenary alliance with US imperialism.

The current crisis

Long riven by profound class antagonisms and national-ethnic and communal frictions, Pakistan has been further destabilized by its decade-long participation in the US's criminal drive to subjugate Afghanistan. With the eruption of the global capitalist crisis in the fall of 2008, the ground has been cut from under the Pakistani bourgeoisie's schemes to grow the economy by wooing foreign investors and offering up the country's impoverished workers as cheap-labor producers for the world market.

The popular enthusiasm for the Pakistan Peoples Party-led coalition government that came to power two-and-a-half years ago following the unraveling of the Musharraf dictatorship has rapidly dissipated.

Defying the wishes and aspirations of the population, the PPP-led government has continued and intensified the policies of the military regime that preceded it. It has provided pivotal support for the Afghan war, pressed forward with privatizations and other pro-market "reforms," imposed the austerity diktats of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and repeatedly hiked the military budget.

With the support and encouragement of Washington, the military, now led by General Kiyani, General Pervez Musharraf's former second-in-command, has increasingly asserted its political predominance. In recent weeks, President Zardari and Prime Minister Gilani have issued repeated warnings of unconstitutional plots to unseat the government, while granting Kiyani an unprecedented three-year post-retirement extension of his army command and otherwise ceding to pressure from the military. But all to no avail. The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* report that the US is actively considering joining the military in demanding a "reorganization" of Pakistan's government.

This summer's Indus Valley floods have provided a chilling demonstration of the corruption, callousness and incompetence of the Pakistani bourgeoisie. Two months after the floods began, the majority of the more than 20 million people affected had received no help from the government relief effort.

The devastation the floods wrought was largely man-made. Not only was the flood-control infrastructure woefully inadequate—a consequence

of the ruling elite's failure to develop the economy in a coherent, rational way and its prioritizing of military expenditures. Millions were displaced as the result of the manipulation of the barrage network in the interests of the US and Pakistani militaries and their AfPak war and of various big landowners and their political allies.

The floods have exacerbated an already profound economic crisis, the burden of which the bourgeoisie is determined to place on the backs of Pakistan's workers and toilers. Living standards have been ravaged in recent years by rising food and energy prices. But the government and the IMF are insisting that all electricity, gasoline and natural gas price subsidies be eliminated in the current fiscal year and, so as to contain the burgeoning budget deficit, social spending be cut yet again.

As in the case of last January's devastating earthquake in Haiti, international capital, as attested by the pronouncements of the IMF, the World Bank and the Pakistani elite, intends to use the floods as an opportunity to speed up capitalist restructuring. The PPP-led government has declared that the infrastructure destroyed by the floods will be rebuilt through Private-Public Partnerships, a ploy that has been used the world over to provide big business with a means of leveraging state funds and securing guaranteed profits at the expense of essential services.

Last year saw mounting popular protests, sporadic food riots and strikes across Pakistan. Now there are daily protests over the lack of flood relief, load shedding, price rises and a host of other socioeconomic and political grievances. The entry of the Pakistani workers into struggle, presaged in the mass protests in Faisalabad against load shedding and the repeated militant strikes of the PTCL (telecommunications) workers, promises to decisively transform the political situation.

For its part, the ruling class is increasingly apprehensive. Leading newspapers and politicians have repeatedly issued warnings about an impending social explosion. This danger from below only causes the Pakistani bourgeoisie to clutch more tightly to the bosom of the army and US imperialism and to foment ethnic and communal divisions.

Fulfillment of the elementary democratic and social aspirations of the Pakistani people—from guaranteeing basic civil liberties and the equality of women, to providing education, sanitation and jobs, to eliminating child labor and bonded labor—requires the liquidation of landlordism, the dismantling of the US-sponsored military-security state, and the placing of the banks and basic industry under the democratic control of the workers and toilers. These measures will be realized only through the bringing to power of a workers' and peasants' government that consciously links the fate of the toilers of Pakistan and South Asia to the international working class' struggle to put an end to capitalism.

A new revolutionary working class party must be built to spearhead this struggle. Such a party must base its program and perspective on the lessons of the strategic experiences of the world working class, including those of the workers of Pakistan and all of South Asia.

Partition and the suppression of the democratic revolution

The establishment of India and Pakistan in 1947 constituted not freedom, but the suppression of the democratic, anti-imperialist revolution by the communally organized bourgeoisies of India and Pakistan, working in concert with British imperialism.

The immediate outcome of partition was an orgy of violence, which resulted in some 2 million deaths and turned 12-14 million people into refugees. The living body of the subcontinent was cut by what were, in effect, multiple partitions—the division of the Bengalis, Punjabis, Kashmiris, etc.—and state borders were imposed that defied and continue to defy economic, historical and cultural logic.

Far from resolving the “communal problem,” partition has compounded it by enshrining communal divisions in the state structure of South Asia. Partition has given rise to a reactionary geopolitical struggle between India and Pakistan that has resulted in three declared wars and countless war crises, squandered vital economic resources, and today threatens the people of South Asia with a nuclear conflagration, which would have catastrophic consequences for world civilization.

Partition has facilitated imperialist dominance of South Asia by frustrating rational economic development, including the use of water resources, and by providing a political mechanism for the US and other great powers to play one state and ruling elite against the other. Today South Asia is the least economically integrated region in the world.

The communal Pakistani national project represented the venal class interests of sections of the Muslim zamindars and capitalists of South Asia who had obtained privileges within the British colonial order by serving as its “Muslim representatives” and by promoting the use of various Muslim groups as cannon fodder for the British Indian Army (the martial races).

The Muslim League was an elite organization, notorious for its disdain for the workers, peasants and artisans who comprised, then as now, the vast majority of South Asia’s Muslims. It openly sought and received the patronage of British imperialism.

The ultimate responsibility, however, for the success of British imperialism’s divide-and-rule strategy and partition lies first and foremost with the Indian National Congress, the principal party of the emerging Indian bourgeoisie. While it espoused Hindu-Muslim unity, the Congress, because of its class position, was utterly hostile to the struggle to unite the masses of South Asia on the basis of an appeal to their common class interests in the struggle against colonial-zamindar-capitalist oppression.

Fearing the rising tide of worker-peasant struggles in post-World War II India and the increasingly insurgent character of the anti-imperialist movement, the Congress grew desperate to get its hand on the state machine built by British imperialism so as to stabilize bourgeois rule. Thus it rapidly abandoned key tenets of its program, such as the demand for a constituent assembly elected on the basis of universal suffrage and its opposition to Dominion status, and chose to unite with the Muslim League and the British in dividing the subcontinent. Indeed, the Congress became the most vehement and consistent protagonist of partition, insisting that the communal division of South Asia also required the communal partition of Bengal and Punjab.

This betrayal was greatly facilitated by the Stalinist Communist Party of India (CPI). Under the influence of the bureaucratic caste that had usurped power from the Soviet working class, the CPI in the two decades that preceded independence and partition pursued an opportunist course that greatly strengthened the Congress’ hold over the anti-imperialist movement. On the basis of the Menshevik-Stalinist theory of the two-stage revolution, the Stalinists opposed any challenge to the Congress’ leadership of the struggle against British colonialism, and in the final years of British rule followed a similar line in respect to the Muslim League. This included providing legitimacy to the communal Pakistan demand and sending CPI cadres into the Muslim League to build it. Between 1945 and 1947, when the Congress and the League faced each other with daggers drawn, the CPI pleaded to the rival bourgeois parties to join together and fulfill their “responsibility” to lead the national revolution.

Partition defined—and continues to define—the “freedom” and “independence” incarnated in bourgeois India and Pakistan. Far from being an aberration, it was only the most bloody and immediately apparent consequence of the abortion of the anti-imperialist revolution.

The new state defended the wealth of the zamindars, princes and big businessmen and otherwise protected property and privilege. It retained the key institutions and laws of the British colonial state, adopting at most a handful of meager, piecemeal reforms aimed at facilitating capitalist

development.

Six decades on, none of the burning democratic and social problems of the masses have been resolved. On the contrary, they have grown ever more malignant as landlordism, caste oppression and other feudal vestiges have become increasingly intertwined with capitalist exploitation.

Half of the world’s poor live in the subcontinent. In no region of the world is a greater proportion of the population malnourished. Neither the Indian nor Pakistani state spends more than 5 percent of its gross domestic product on education and health care.

In keeping with the reactionary logic of partition and the Indo-Pakistani rivalry, no region of the world is less economically integrated than the subcontinent.

The working class must draw far-reaching conclusions from the experience of partition and six decades of “independent” bourgeois national rule in South Asia. Imperialist oppression and the legacy of colonial rule and South Asia’s belated capitalist development will be overcome only through a working class-led socialist revolution, one that of necessity will have to challenge the reactionary state structure of South Asia.

Key experiences of the Pakistani working class

From a review of the key experiences of the Pakistani working class, two pivotal conclusions emerge:

- All sections of the bourgeoisie are hostile to and organically incapable of realizing the democratic and social aspirations of Pakistan’s toilers.
- The Pakistani working class is a mighty social force and has exhibited great militancy and potential for self-sacrifice. But it has repeatedly been politically derailed by trade unions and parties—the Stalinist Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) and its offshoots, including the Maoists, and more recently various pseudo-Trotskyist groups—that have tied it to the parties and politics of the Pakistani bourgeoisie.

The first decade of Pakistan’s existence—before the resort to outright military rule in 1958—was dominated by the attempt of the north- and north-west South Asian Muslim capitalists, zamindars and politicians who had spearheaded the campaign for Pakistan to construct a political-constitutional system that would guarantee them a privileged economic and political position in the new state and thwart the will of the majority of the population.

Urdu, a language spoken by less than 10 percent of the population, was imposed as the country’s sole *national* language, while Bengali, the language of the majority of Pakistanis and virtually the entire population of East Pakistan, was denied official status. Similarly, East Pakistan was systematically denied anything approaching its share of government spending and development funds. When East Pakistani students protested, they were repressed, initiating a cycle of mounting protests and increasing state repression that culminated in 1971 in a savage military offensive that killed hundreds of thousands of Bengalis and triggered the successful breakaway of Bangladesh.

The denial of elementary democratic rights went hand in hand with the Pakistani bourgeoisie’s solicitation of a subordinate partnership with imperialism. No sooner was Pakistan founded than its new rulers began promoting it as an imperialist bulwark—a proxy garrison state in Asia first for Britain, and when Britain proved too weak to assume this role, for the US.

The US-Pakistan alliance—enshrined in the 1954 US-Pakistan Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, and SEATO and CENTO—encouraged the Pakistani elite in its reactionary geo-political rivalry with India and facilitated the emergence of the military as the most powerful state

institution and one increasingly with political ambitions. Under conditions of deep factional rifts within the ruling elite and a mounting wave of worker and peasant struggles, the military first seized power in 1958 under Ayub Khan.

From the get-go, the Stalinists accepted the legitimacy of the capitalist nation-state framework imposed by partition. The failure of Pakistan's crisis-ridden government to uphold basic civil liberties, institute land reform or address the other democratic and social needs of the masses became for the Stalinists a fresh argument justifying the need for alliances with the so-called progressive bourgeoisie. In the name of opposing the reactionary One-Unit West Pakistan scheme, the Stalinists forged ties with regional bourgeois elites through such formations as the National Awami Party (NAP). So as to be better able to pursue these class-collaborationist alliances, the CPP in 1968 split itself into two parties, one for West Pakistan and another for East Pakistan.

In 1968-69—after a period of economic growth whose benefits flowed almost exclusively to a tiny capitalist elite and Ayub Khan's cronies—and under conditions of a growing international working class offensive, the workers of Pakistan erupted onto the stage. Clashes between students and the dictatorship provided the catalyst for working class protests and strikes. But it was the fear of the growing power and militancy of the working class that ultimately led the military to itself sack the hated Ayub Khan and impose martial law, while promising to hold the country's first ever national election.

If Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto—the scion of a feudal family and a disgruntled Ayub Khan cabinet minister—and his newly founded Pakistan Peoples Party emerged as the leadership of the opposition to military rule in West Pakistan, it was because they were able to exploit a gaping political vacuum on the left. The various Stalinist parties were all in one form or another immersed in the regime's phony political structures. The Maoists were, if anything, the most craven. Taking their cue from the Chinese Stalinist regime under Chairman Mao, they proclaimed the dictator Ayub Khan a “progressive autocrat,” since he was a proponent of Pakistan's capitalist industrialization and a diplomatic ally of Beijing.

At its birth, the PPP was a bourgeois party that employed socialist-sounding, populist rhetoric to harness the masses to a program of national capitalist development and, just as importantly, prevent the working class from escaping the political control of the bourgeoisie. Virulently Pakistani-nationalist, it advocated “Islamic socialism”—a religio-communal nationalist ideology combined with a series of reforms, including the nationalization of sectors of industry, meant to underpin a state-led program of capitalist development similar to that pursued by India under the Congress Party and by many other newly independent bourgeois regimes in Asia and Africa.

The Stalinists immediately adapted to the PPP, boosting its claims to represent a viable instrument for social progress. Large sections (especially pro-Beijing groups like the National Students Federation) openly called on workers and other socialist-minded elements to join and build the PPP.

Virtually from the outset, Bhutto made clear the limits of his opposition to the dominant faction of the Pakistani bourgeoisie. He collaborated with the Pakistan military and state bureaucracy in opposing the Bengali-based bourgeois opposition led by Sheik Mujibur Rahman, including supporting the horrific military repression mounted against the Bengali people.

Bhutto was thrust into the presidency in December 1971 after the Pakistani ruling class had suffered an ignominious defeat in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War and had lost East Pakistan/Bangladesh. By the fall of 1972, his PPP government was coming into violent conflict with the working class, especially in Karachi.

Trade unionists who had been jailed for their opposition to the military regime soon found themselves incarcerated under Bhutto. Land reform legislation was enacted, but as one historian notes, “behind the rhetoric,

the status quo was largely unshaken... As in 1959 only a limited amount of land was ultimately made available for redistribution” (Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History*).

The dictatorship of General Zia-ul Haq, who toppled Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto in 1977 and then organized his judicial murder, is rightly recognized as a major turning point in the history of Pakistan.

Zia declared *Nizam-i-Mustafa* (the Rule of the Prophet), and working in close association with the Islamic fundamentalist Jamat-i-Islami, stripped women of basic rights and imposed medieval punishments for various offenses. For Zia, Islamicization was a means of legitimizing his dictatorial rule, revitalizing the increasingly discredited Pakistan national project, and promoting a network of fundamentalist institutions and parties that could serve as a reactionary bulwark against the working class and the left.

With the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—an invasion that former US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski now admits was deliberately provoked by Washington through US support for the Mujahedin—the Zia military regime emerged as the linchpin of a renewed US military-diplomatic offensive against the USSR. The Saudi monarchy also emerged as a major sponsor of the Zia regime, the CIA-ISI intervention in Afghanistan, and Zia's reactionary Islamicization campaign, infusing it with its own obscurantist Wahhabi ideology.

The policies of the Zia regime have had an enduring and disastrous impact on the Pakistani people. But it is critical to recognize that the populist bourgeois demagogue Z.A. Bhutto paved the way for Zia, and not just because he catapulted him over the head of more senior generals to the post of army chief. Bhutto maintained Islamabad's alliance with Washington and helped politically rehabilitate the military by championing its role in the bloody suppression of a nationalist insurgency in Baluchistan. He encouraged the religious right, ceding to a whole number of its reactionary demands, including decreeing that Ahmadis are not Muslims, making the Muslim Sabbath a holiday, and outlawing alcohol. The 1973 constitution went far beyond that authored by Ayub Khan in affirming a privileged position for Islam in Pakistan, and Bhutto stressed Pakistan's Islamic character in courting the support of the reactionary sheiks of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. With Bhutto's blessing, the Pakistani military provided sanctuary and logistical support to Gulbadin Hikmatyar and other Islamicists opposed to the Afghan government under Mohammed Daoud.

There are striking parallels between the role played contemporaneously by Bhutto in Pakistan, Indira Gandhi in India, and Madame Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka. Under conditions of a rapid intensification of the class struggle associated with the end of the post-World War II capitalist boom, all sought to bind the working class and oppressed toilers to the bourgeoisie through pseudo-socialist rhetoric and populist nationalism, initially enacted very limited reforms, then came into headlong collision with the working class and employed emergencies and other authoritarian methods to suppress dissent.

Having served to blunt the challenge from the left through populism and repression, they all fell from power within the space of five months in 1977. Bourgeois politics then shifted sharply to the right, although in the case of Indira Gandhi, she herself came to embody this shift when restored to power in 1980. These governments left an enduring reactionary legacy—their “left” populism, laden as it was with chauvinism and appeals to national and religio-communal identities, sowed the seeds for a qualitative escalation of ethno-communalist politics across South Asia in the 1980s.

The Stalinists and Maoists played a crucial role in preventing the working class from challenging these ostensibly left regimes. They failed to fight to mobilize the working class as an independent political force against the PPP regime and the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), the right-wing-dominated anti-Bhutto opposition created in 1977. A coalition

that united the Stalinists' long-time ally the NAP (renamed for legal reasons the National Democratic Party) with the right-wing Pakistan Muslim League and the Islamic fundamentalist parties, the PNA contested the 1977 elections jointly, then after the elections mounted a wave of anti-government protests that helped pave the way for Zia's coup.

The Communist Party of India was a coalition partner of Indira Gandhi's Congress government, including during the 1975-77 Emergency. The Communist Party of India (Marxist), meanwhile, subordinated the working class to the bourgeois opposition to Congress, ultimately supporting the coming to power of the Janata Party—an ad hoc coalition of Congress opponents, including the cadres of the Hindu supremacist Jana Sangh. The Naxalites (Maoists) refused to challenge the Stalinist parliamentary parties' political domination of the working class. They proclaimed peasant-based guerrillaism ("a protracted people's war"), not the struggle for the development of socialist consciousness and the political independence and hegemony of the working class, to be the crux of revolutionary struggle. And like the CPI and CPM, the Naxalites openly opposed socialist revolution, advocating a peasant-led bloc of four classes, including the "patriotic" elements of the bourgeoisie, in order to complete the national democratic—i.e., capitalist—revolution.

Afghanistan provides yet another tragic example of the political disasters that have resulted from Stalinist-nationalist politics in South Asia. The 1978 Afghan or Saur Revolution was nothing of the sort. When their long-term ally, the Afghan prince and politician Daoud, turned on them and began a campaign of repression, the Afghan Stalinists, organized in the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), responded with what was in effect a palace coup. The bitter rivalry between them notwithstanding, all factions of the PDPA hoped to consolidate a progressive bourgeois regime through reforms from above and the patronage of the Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy. They grossly underestimated the opposition they would encounter from landlords and tribal leaders, other sections of the Afghan elite, and, more importantly, from the Pakistani ruling class and imperialism. Steeped in Afghan nationalism, they were incapable of appealing to the workers of Pakistan, India and the world and responded to the machinations of US imperialism with political retreats and savage repression.

The Zia-ul Haq dictatorship provoked mass opposition, especially in Sind in 1983, where the army required three army divisions and helicopter gunships to crush a peasant rebellion. Five years later, the dictatorship ended abruptly with Zia's assassination. But there had been many signs that he and his regime were rapidly reaching the end of their tether. The Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy had begun a promised full withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan, making Zia a rapidly diminishing asset for the US national-security apparatus. Broad sections of the Pakistani bourgeoisie and even the military had come to see the dictatorship as a liability, especially its divisive and destabilizing Islamicization campaign. Not only was the Islamicization campaign fueling sectarian strife, it and the related policy of a "strong" central government were feeding centrifugal tendencies within the Pakistani state and making the army the target of popular wrath.

The Stalinists sought to politically subordinate the working class opposition to the Zia dictatorship to the PPP and its Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). Their perspective was shared by Tariq Ali, the one time Pabloite leader and current-day promoter of the Labour Party of Pakistan. During much of the 1980s, Ali served as an unofficial advisor to Benazir Bhutto, including writing the speech she delivered in Lahore in 1986, the first occasion when the military regime that killed her father allowed her to speak to a mass audience.

Pakistan's official Left promoted popular illusions in the PPP and bears political responsibility not just for the actions of the PPP when it returned to power following the 1989 election, but also for the political confusion and disorientation occasioned by the PPP's role in spearheading

privatization and other right-wing pro-market reforms.

The actions of the PPP and the Nawaz Sharif-led Pakistan Muslim League (PML) during their repeated abbreviated terms in office in the 1990s underscore their fundamental class unity. Both imposed IMF restructuring, pursued Pakistan's nuclearization, and supported the Pakistan military-intelligence establishment's sponsoring of the Taliban and its rise to power in Kabul. Today the PPP and PML (Nawaz) dispute who deserves the true credit for the "triumph" of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program.

Musharraf's October 1999 coup was rooted in major changes in world geo-politics following the end of the Cold War. The military was angry that Sharif had caved in to pressure from the US to end the Pakistani army incursion into Kargil in Indian-held Kashmir. The US stance arose from Washington's eagerness to establish closer relations with India now that it was free of its Cold War alliance with the Soviet Union.

Less than two years later, Musharraf was himself compelled under US pressure, including threats to bomb Pakistan "back to the Stone Age," to make a far more significant strategic reversal: withdrawing Islamabad's patronage of the Taliban regime in Kabul and providing logistical support to the US invasion of Afghanistan.

As in the past, the Pakistani elite, especially the officer corps, has reaped economic and geopolitical benefits from acting as a handmaiden to US imperialist aggression. But the Afghan War has also compounded the crisis of the Pakistani bourgeoisie, plunging significant parts of the country into civil war. Even more fundamentally, the US drive to assert hegemony in Asia is disrupting the entire region, adding an unpredictable and explosive dimension to many longstanding geo-political conflicts, not least the Indo-Pakistani rivalry. Power and influence in Afghanistan has become a major object of the competition between New Delhi and Islamabad. And the US drive to contain China by forging a "global strategic partnership" with India threatens the long-term strategic interests of the Pakistani bourgeoisie.

The PPP initially welcomed Musharraf's coup, just as Nawaz Sharif had welcomed the repeated anti-democratic maneuvers of the military and state bureaucracy to unseat PPP-led governments during the preceding decade. Only after the general made clear that he was determined to exclude the PPP from all positions of power did the PPP come out against the dictatorship. Much of the leadership of the PML (reorganized into the PML-Q) rallied to the Musharraf regime.

The subsequent opposition from the PML (Nawaz) and PPP was anemic. Benazir Bhutto stated repeatedly that the PPP would not lead or support a mass movement against the dictatorship for fear that it would escape the control of the parties of the bourgeoisie and take a radical direction. Instead, she courted the Bush administration, pledging that a PPP-led government would pursue the Afghan war more aggressively than the military government. Ultimately, she and the PPP entered into a Bush administration-brokered deal to partner with Musharraf, Washington having become increasingly concerned that the war and the mounting socioeconomic crisis could spark social upheavals.

Under conditions where the official political opposition was prostrate, the growing resentment of the urban middle class and wide sections of the bourgeoisie with the Musharraf regime found expression in the lawyers' movement against the dismissal of Chief Justice Chaudry and, following Musharraf's second coup of November 3, 2007, for the restoration of all the purged judges.

The question that needs to be raised is why did the lawyers' movement monopolize the political stage? Why was the working class not able to mount its own challenge to the dictatorship, mobilizing all the toilers behind it? Here once again the politics of the ostensible left played a pivotal and debilitating role.

The Musharraf regime did face significant opposition from the working class in response to its privatization, downsizing and liberalization

policies. Especially important was the May-June 2005 PTCL (Pakistan Telecom) strike. But these struggles were confined by the unions, with the backing of the left, to collective bargaining disputes—not made the spearhead of a working class-led mass movement of the toilers—and thus betrayed.

When the lawyers' movement emerged, organizations like the Labour Party of Pakistan (LPP) and International Socialists (Pakistan) [a sister party of the British SWP] became its cheerleaders. Insofar as they made any appeal to the working class, it was for it to support the lawyers, not intervene as an independent force advancing its own program to mobilize the masses against the dictatorship and the big business and imperialist interests upon which it rested.

The LPP and International Socialists hailed Justice Chaudry, a longtime hand-raiser for the military regime, for "challenging" Musharraf, and repeated the lawyers' claims that the fight for an "independent judiciary" was the cutting edge of the fight for democracy. They thus covered over the fundamental class truth that the social function of Pakistan's judiciary is to enforce the laws that uphold its grossly unequal social order, and they promoted the lawyers' emasculated definition of democracy—a definition which reduces it to the observance of a handful of civil liberties and accepts as a given Pakistan's capitalist order and subservient relationship to the US and world imperialism.

Predictably, the lawyers' movement, notwithstanding the courage and sincerity of some of its participants, has effectively become an instrument of the ongoing campaign of the PML (N) and the military to destabilize the current PPP government.

The time is long overdue for the Pakistani working class to open a new page in its history—for the development of a genuine revolutionary party. The vanguard elements in the working class must turn to the Fourth International, led today by the International Committee, and base their struggles on the Trotskyist program of Permanent Revolution.

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 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 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.

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 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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wsws.org/contact