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Pakistan

Bravura expression of growing left influence in Pakistan

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The two-day Labour Party Pakistan Fifth congress helped to advance the revolutionary process in Pakistan. It brought together comrades from different traditions and trends to discuss the central topic: “build a mass working-class party independent of the influence of the capitalists and feudal elements.” The congress was a bravura expression of the growing influence and strength of emerging left-wing politics in Pakistan.

Over 140 delegates and few observers representing 7263 members of the LPP discussed the political and organizational aspects of the party. For the first time in the LPP’s 13-year history, delegates attended, representing Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, Gilgit Baltistan, Sareiki Waseeb, Pukhtoonkhawa and Kashmir. There were leaders of trade unions, of social movements, of peasants and from the labour movement – all eager to learn from each other and discuss their future course of action.

Comrades travelled overnight to arrive at the Faisalabad Centre for Peace and Harmony, a social organization, for a residential congress followed by a mass rally of workers and peasants held at famous Dhobi Ghat grounds. (On the way to the congress one comrade from Baluchistan was seriously injured in a train accident and had to be hospitalized at Multan. As a result of the unfortunate accident he lost three of his toes.)

The three-panel chair presided over the congress proceedings with a three-member standing order committee to help organize the congress.

The congress opened with a two-minutes silence in memory of seven comrades who, since the 4th LPP congress, are no more with us: Abdullah Qureshi (killed in a suicidal attack in Swat on 9th December 2007), Jilal Shah (died 2008), Master Khudad (killed in a Peshawar suicidal attack October 2009), Rehana Kausar, Najma Khanum and Abdul Salam Salam (died in road accident December 2009).

Several organizations sent donations to enable holding the congress and the one- day conference. These included Europe Solidaire Sans Frontieres (ESSF), comrades related to Workers International Network, Socialist Alliance Australia, Organization of Communist International Greece, Solidarity USA, and Pakistani comrades in Sweden, Norway and the United Kingdom as well as several individual donations. Over 100,000 Rupees was raised in the finance appeal from the delegates attending the congress.

At the congress Comrade Farooq Ahmad read some of the solidarity messages received from the following organizations across the globe Congress opened up with reading of some of the solidarity messages received b, including the Fourth International Japan Revolutionary Communist League (JRCL), Central Committee Communist Party of Cuba, New Anti Capitalist Party (NPA) France, International Socialist Organization USA, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), Independent Lawyers Association International UK, Revolutionary Socialist Party (Australia), Consumers Action Committee Pakistan (CACP), The South Asian Peoples Solidarity group Toronto, Canada, Action Aid International, Workers International Network (WIN), South Asia Alliance For Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) and Organization of Communist International Greece.

Here are some parts of the messages received:

* “We think in particular of your involvement in the Lawyers’ Movement for the overthrow of the Musharaf dictatorship, your intransigent defense of democratic rights and minorities threatened by religious fundamentalism, your constant combativity in offering a progressive and solidarity alternative to the joint threats of talibanism and militarism, the help which you bring to strengthening the struggles of women, workers and peasants, your active participation in the social forums and internationalism that you express in a part of the world that is in a permanent state of war,

dominated by the Pakistan-India nuclear face-to-face and NATO-US intervention in Afghanistan.” (Fourth International)

* “We hail the holding of your Congress, which is convened in the midst of a complex political situation and a global economic crisis that imposes new challenges on the political forces that are struggling for a better possible world for all. We wish you success in your work.” (Department on International Relations Communist Party of Cuba)

* “The New Anti Capitalist Party (NPA) of France brings you its warmest greetings for your 5th congress. We wish in particular to salute the efforts that you have made to build a strong progressive and popular political force, independent of established power systems, capable of offering a socialist perspective and solidarity alternative to talibanism and religious fundamentalisms, to militarism and to the bourgeois clientelist parties. (New Anti Capitalist Party (NPA) France)

* “It is imperative for the Left in both India and Pakistan to resist this imperialist design and work consistently for bilateral peace, cooperation and friendship. The CPI(ML) and LPP have a history of shared initiatives and mutual exchanges towards this common goal and we are sure in the coming days we will be able to further strengthen our comradely ties and defeat the designs of our pro-imperialist rulers. Wishing you every success with your Congress and the rally, with warm comradely greetings, Dipankar Bhattacharya General Secretary, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)

The 120-page draft documents on national and international perspectives were presented.

The international perspectives discussion was opened by comrade Farooq Tariq, who explained the basis of international capitalist crisis, the ecological disaster, and the imperialist occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Adding to this crisis, is the decline of reformism and growing Islamic fundamentalism. Is there a way out? Where are the forces that can save the planet and challenge the new face of counterrevolution? Where in Africa, Latin American and Asia do we see a challenge to imperialist globalization? He outlined the class struggle ahead, highlighting the role of women and building international ties as part of constructing a coming revolution.

Comrade Pierre Rousset of the NPA (France) and comrade Simon Butler of Socialist Alliance (Australia) spoke about the crisis of capitalism and climate change. Comrade Arif Afghani of Afghan Labour Revolutionary Organization (ALRO) outlined the worsening social and economical conditions of the Afghan masses. A discussion by more than 12 comrades enriched the topic, covering aspects insufficiently mentioned in the draft document.

The perspective discussion was introduced by comrade Farooq Ahmed. His main emphasis compared the policies of the present civilian government with those of General Musharaf military regime. These are remarkably similar. In addition, the rise of religious fundamentalism is direct threat to the organizations of the working class. Washington's imperialist aggression and daily drone attacks are fueling the popular appeal of the religious fanatics. He argued that, in order to cover up its anti-people policies, the present civilian government is making a lot of noise about a possible military takeover. While there is little probability of a takeover in the near future, implementing policies to raise the standard of living of the masses remain the government's best defense.

Over 30 comrades spoke on different aspects of Pakistan's political and economical situation, once again deepening the analysis. These ranged from discussion on the national question, the rise of religious fundamentalism, imperialist economic policies, and the declining living standard of the masses.

The organizational perspectives were laid out by comrade Nisar Shah. Describing the achievements of Labour Party Pakistan since the last congress at the end of 2007, he cited its magnificent growth. For the first time, the LPP has a

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presence throughout Pakistan, including Baluchistan, Gilgit Baltistan and Tribal areas. The most important growth area has been in Pukhtoon Khawa, where the LPP has over 2000 members. He stressed the need for more study circles and schools for the integration of this new membership.

A second, and interrelated, point is that the LPP is working to develop the social and labour movements in Pakistan. It has promoted regional and international solidarity and actively participates in anti-imperialist globalization initiatives.

Before the opening of general discussion on organizational issues, LPP secretaries from Sindh, Baluchistan, Pukhtoon Khawa, Punjab and Sareiki Waseeb gave provincial reports to fill in the overall report with specifics.

A constitutional amendment to change the name of National Committee to Federal Committee was accepted unanimously. Another amendment to hold two annual meetings of Federal Committee instead of three was defeated.

The election of 31 members Federal Committee was held through secret ballot organized by a three-member election commission. Thirty-seven comrades contested. The newly elected members of the Federal committee include Nasir Mansoor, Mukhtiar Rahu, Farooq Ahmad, Beena Fida, Azra Shad, Rehana Shakil, Maqsood Mujahid, Bukhshal Thallo, Aziz Baluch, Farooq Tariq, Bushra Khaliq, Zara Akbar, Nisar Lighari, Younas Rahu, Latif Lighari, Moeen Nawaz Punno, Nazli Javed, Mehr Abdul Sattar, Mian Abdul Qayum, Choudry Imtiaz Ahmad, Riffat Maqsood, Baba Jan, Ihsan Ali, Suhail Javed, Salim Noshad, Khalid Mehmood, Kafait Ullah, Abdul Jalal, Irfana Jabbar, Nisar Shah and Talat Rubab. This includes nine women.

The Federal Committee held its first meeting and elected the Federal Executive Committee, who is the main LPP officials. For the second term comrade Nisar Shah was elected general secretary and comrade Farooq Tariq as spokesperson. Bukhshal Thallo was elected secretary of Education and Culture, Nisar Lighari secretary of Youth, Nasir Mansoor secretary of Labour and Mehr Abdul Sattar as Kissan [peasant] secretary. The decision to elect the secretary of Women was postponed until the next meeting.

Most of the congress delegates then participated in the international workers peasants' conference on 29 January at Dhobi Ghat ground Faisalabad.

Report by Farooq Tariq