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Pakistan

Building a party at the service of new generations of activists

- IV Online magazine - 2020 - IV541 - February 2020 -

Publication date: Wednesday 12 February 2020

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In January *International Viewpoint* published Farooq Tariq's article "[Why we left the Awami Workers Party. Lessons to be learned](#)". Here Pierre Rousset fills in some of the background.

As Farooq Tariq recalled, activists from the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP) tried for seven years to build the Awami Workers Party (AWP), along with two other political components, and this experiment ended in failure. In spite of this failure, our comrades are now playing a very important role in the extraordinary mobilizations under the banner of solidarity and the fight against all forms of discrimination. That is why they are the target of repression. [1]

The comrades who were to be at the origin of the LPP, in exile in the Netherlands, had their first contact with the European far left through the current The Militant, of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI). In the 1980s they formed the organization The Struggle. Returning to Pakistan in 1986, this current maintained an entrenched policy within the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The PPP has long enjoyed a left-wing aura, having been formed on a socialist discourse at the time of the great years of struggle in 1967-1968. It was, however, led by the Bhutto clan - one of the country's main "political families" that more than once led the government during the civil interlude between the military regimes. Popular disillusionment with the PPP began in the 1970s, but was not a linear process.

The question of the continuation of an entrenched policy arose. The founders of the LPP (finally established in 1997), members of The Struggle, felt that its time had passed. To build an independent organization, however, they had to break away from the British "parent company", whose leadership maintained the entryist tactic worldwide. They joined the Fourth International, believing that it functioned as a "common house" and not as a world fraction under the aegis of a national party (established what's more in the former colonial power).

Other Struggle activists chose to continue the PPP's entryist policy, but abandoned this tactic two years ago. Turning the page on past controversies, this current, which has kept the name The Struggle, has renewed collaborative relations with our comrades and joined the perimeter of the Fourth International at its last congress.

The question of the unity of the independent Marxist left arose as a matter of urgency to face a military regime, special services, fundamentalism (Taliban...), the social brutality of the possessors. Apart from the Trotskyist tradition, this left is essentially of pro-Moscow origin. Maoism exists in Pakistan, but does not occupy the same historical place as in other Asian countries. Beijing has indeed supported Pakistani military regimes against India and Russia.

Two of the three parties that made up the AWP were therefore pro-Moscow, advocating a "revolution by stages" in a rather specific form. As I realized to my great surprise during a trip, some of the intellectuals and political leaders of this left wing hoped that the pressure of the IMF would push the Pakistani bourgeoisie to "modernize" itself. Contemporary capitalism, however, especially in a dominated country, accommodates feudal forms of exploitation very well, as is the case with the brickyards.

The AWP experience had to be tried - but it showed that these parties were not ready to change their worldview and ways of operating. The founding organizations of the AWP were supposed to dissolve within the new formation; the LPP was the only one to do so. This led to a difficult period for our comrades, with some leaving the AWP (like the youth in Lahore facing Stalinist bureaucracy) and others not wanting to leave the party or feeling that the time was not ripe.

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The "LPP tradition", however, has gained political authority over the years. Because it led a real unitary, principled struggle. Because it has always mobilized on all fronts. One of the "trademarks" of this tradition is indeed its reactivity: to be part of all struggles, on all terrains. Thanks to this, it has forged many social ties (in the textile industry, in the peasantry, among students...) and solidarity (with the Pashtuns, for democratic rights...). Over the years, its activists have accumulated valuable experience.

This allows this tradition to be revived today and to be fully involved in the foundation of a new militant political generation.

PS:

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[1] See *International Viewpoint* 9 January 2020 "[Struggling under the flag of solidarity, facing repression, in a fractured country](#)" and December 2019 "[Solidarity Marches in Pakistan: Widespread student mobilization and political repression - A new generation of activists](#)."