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Pakistan

Pakistan's political parties: Tehreek Insaaf from Middle to Capitalist Class

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Tehreek Insaaf is in fast forward mode to become the latest political party of the capitalist and feudal class. Originating in the middle class, it is en route to becoming the third largest party of the rich in Pakistan.

Karl Marx wrote long ago that "the middle class has to take sides. It cannot remain an independent social force for long". Tehreek Insaaf is a classical example of this doctrine. Like MQM, the Tehreek Insaaf will yell a lot of slogans of middle class revolution; however, it will be working in the service of the rich through the voice of the middle classes.

The growth of Tehreek Insaaf shows the real crisis of the capitalist class parties in Pakistan. Those fed up with the prospect of two parties' domination of politics are intervening in a dynamic form. They are doing their best to do the maximum damage to Pakistan Peoples Party, Muslim League (Nawaz) and PML Q. The parties that had any illusions that "it's not me that's losing" are now feeling the pain at heart.

The worsening economic crisis is now being manifested as a political crisis of the capitalist class. Pakistan's economy is passing through one of the most serious economic crises in its history. All the efforts to find a way out of this crisis of president Asif Zardari are back-firing. China was once the country where President Asif Zardari was seen all the time. This was a result of misplaced hope that China might help. It did not. Americans are not happy either. Imran might be an option is the thinking of some sections of the capitalist class in Pakistan. They are now making it happen.

In colonial countries, masses some time turn to sports men, film actors and so on. They do so to find the same sort of act as they have done in their particular field. Some of them become very popular and won more support than traditional politicians.

In the Philippines, a film actor Josef Estrada was president of the country from 1998 to 2001. Estrada was the first person to be elected both to the presidency and vice-presidency. Estrada gained popularity as a film actor, playing the lead role in over 100 films in an acting career spanning 33 years. However, allegations of corruption spawned an impeachment trial in the Senate, and in 2001 Estrada was ousted by People Power 2. He assumed office during the Asian Financial Crisis and with agricultural problems due to poor weather conditions, which combined to slow the economic growth to 0.6% in 1998 from a 5.2% rate in 1997. He tried to work within the framework of capitalism and was unable to maintain his popularity and was ousted within three years of coming into power.

A similar scenario can develop here in Pakistan as well. The popularity of sports heroes in politics is no different than those of becoming popular because of their hereditary advantages. Both are not based on scientific realities but on emotions and low consciousness.

Questions were put to Imran Khan on 24th December 2011 in Karachi about his plan to recover from the crisis, his answer was that if he is not able to find a way out, he would quit and leave politics. That is simply a way of avoiding the real situation. Not a single mention of capitalist crisis, its impact on Pakistan's economy and ways to change the course of the economy.

The present growth of Tehreek Insaaf is a real growth. If the majority of the middle class had not said yes to TI, there would not have been a rush of joining in. The middle class felt the extreme pain of the crisis while the working class was unable to manifest itself on the political stage because of extreme disillusionment with politics and politicians.

The politicians who are queuing up to join TI are looking forward to the possibility of returning to the assemblies with a different identity. They are just echoing the objective realities. It is not what many on the Liberals are saying that "establishment" is promoting TI. "Establishment" always backs the parties of rich one way or another. It is not a conspiracy of any group that TI is making progress; it is a manifestation of the objective realities. The PPP and PMLN, and Q have disappointed the masses in general and now they are looking for a way out. The internal crisis of these parties of the rich is creating favorable conditions for TI to grow.

Tehreek Insaaf in its essence is a right wing capitalist party in the making. It will damage mainly the right wing political and religious parties; however, the party in power is not from the left wing either. So PPP will absorb a major portion of the damage that TI will inflict on them.

TI can grow even further. Popularity of any political group or individual does not mean that they have a solution. Masses always adopt an easier path of finding a solution. The present crisis is a crisis of system, the capitalist system, not a crisis of corruption of a group or individual. It will not make much difference if Imran Khan replaces Yousaf Raza Gilani or Zardari and try to find a way out of the crisis within the system by introducing some social reforms.

Why Labour Party Pakistan and other Left groups have not grown like TI? Yes, they have not grown in the masses in general but they have grown among their own class, the working class, to some extent. TI is growing in its own class. Their class has the resources and means to influence the consciousness of the masses for the time being. Consciousness is a by-product of the objective realities, so, the right wing is growing in one way or another.

The Left has to learn some lessons from this growth of TI as well. It was the public identity of TI that was visible all the time during the last five years in particular. The public appearances of the Left forces are few and also the commercial media does not give them the same importance as they do for their own class. The Left has to develop its own alternative media as it can never rely on the commercial media.

The Left has to keep going on building the movement of the workers and peasants. There is no short cut to the solutions of the miseries of the working class. The system had to be challenged and an alternatives to be presented. There is much basis for the reforms in capitalist system. It got to be challenged and changed.