

International Marxist Tendency in Pakistan

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In his article, written on the movement at the end of March, Alan Woods, the IMT's main international leader and theorist, outlined their perspective. He argued that the movement could have been turned into a revolutionary struggle against the regime, but lacked the leadership and this is to be expected given the lawyers are part of the middle class intelligentsia. He continued by criticising the opposition parties for their call for Musharraf to resign or face being thrown out of power, arguing that "these were just words" and because of this "the movement would end up in a dead end."³⁷

What is immediately striking about this statement is how quickly it was proven wrong by events. However, Woods is not simply guilty of an error of calculation, but rather of an erroneous method. He has made the classical centrist³⁸ error of confusing the leadership of the movement with its base. What is worse is that Woods makes no demands on the leadership to take the struggle further and generalise it into a movement against the regime. In doing so, Woods lets the leadership of the movement off the hook "as he excuses them for their timidity because this is what bourgeois leaders do. While true enough in the abstract, the point is Woods makes no demands for action that challenge them.

Woods then deepens his errors. He points to how The Struggle has participated in the lawyers' movement but argues they are too weak to assume the national leadership of the movement.³⁹ This poses the question "what programme do they advance for the movement, i.e. what is the political basis for their alternative leadership?" Woods' response to this question is to make an abstract critique of capitalism and the need for socialism based on the nationalisation of industry.⁴⁰ As a means to this end Woods argues Marxists support all struggles for democracy "freedom of assembly, free and fair elections, and so forth."⁴¹ In addition, Woods points to the centrality of the working class and the masses, arguing that only when they are mobilised will the regime be threatened. Thus for Woods the lawyers' movement, without the workers, are doomed to defeat. Not only does this assume that workers will not join the movement, it critically does not call on them to do so "i.e. he does not stress the revolutionary possibility in the situation.

Moreover, while Woods makes a critique of the bourgeois state, this does not inform the political strategy he puts forward. Woods calls for democracy and socialism without pointing to the obstacle the bourgeois state presents to the socialist goal, as it is an armed force that will ultimately defend capital. For Marxists, the practical strategic consequence of this is that the state will need to be smashed in a revolution, replaced by a state of the armed workers and peasants, organised in democratic councils.⁴² What underpins Woods' position methodologically is a processist view of the development of revolutionary struggle, whereby the job of Marxists is to make abstract propaganda for socialism and the objective process should do the job of developing the class struggle.

This comes across particularly in the article of Lal Khan, written after the violence in Karachi. While Khan makes an interesting and informative analysis of the reactionary MQM and their relationship to the military,

the strategy he advances is completely insufficient. The IMT are deep entryists in the bourgeois PPP and Khan argues that the current movement is likely to lead to a PPP government. For Khan, this would not mark a defeat for the movement and the bourgeoisie diverting workers away from the struggle for power, but is to be welcomed as it would deepen the crisis further and lead to ?revolution or counter-revolution?.⁴³ Again, the objective process is asked to do the job of leading the working class to revolution and thus, the IMT are not obliged to advance a revolutionary programme in the current prerevolutionary situation, i.e. workers and peasant councils, armed militia, indefinite general strike, insurrection, a workers government. In this the IMT reveals that it is marred by the same political error that brought about the collapse of the Fourth International as an instrument of workers?? revolution ? the anti-Leninist and anti-Trotskyist theory, adopted in 1951, of the automatic development of reformist parties under the pressure of the struggle into instruments capable of effecting socialist revolution.

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