

Pakistan Breakaway group reveals causes of quitting AWP

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LAHORE: A breakaway group, which abandoned the Awami Workers Party (AWP) a couple of months ago, has made public the internal party differences, accusing the AWP leadership of manipulation to grab the party offices, keeping a parallel but secret organisation and opposing the support to that causes that could offend the establishment.

The seven-year-old grouping had emerged as a result of merger of three left-wing parties – the Workers Party Pakistan (WPP) of noted lawyer Abid Hassan Minto, Labour Party Pakistan (LPP), and the Awami Party Pakistan (APP) in November 2012.

Farooq Tariq, the leader of the dissenters and of former Labour Party, in a statement titled “Why we left the Awami Workers Party? Lessons to be learned” released here on Sunday, said they avoided explaining their departure ‘to establish a good healthy tradition of quitting the party without hurling accusations’ though the departure was not without serious differences within the top leadership on programme, strategies and actions that were needed to build the party’s mass base.

The statement from Mr Tariq and former comrades of the LPP alleges that the Worker Party Pakistan never dissolved its internal party structure, which continued meeting secretly prior to important meetings of the AWP to be prepared how to manipulate its decisions and strategies.

It also accuses the Workers Party leadership of sitting out of the electioneering of those AWP candidates, who had decided to contest the 2013 polls, on the excuse of not meeting the strict criteria and became a starting point for many to leave the AWP.

The Workers Party Pakistan men would also work clandestinely to grab all important offices, the statement claims. Following the first AWP congress in September 2014, it was found that former LPP activists were excluded in several districts in a ‘conscious’ effort by former WPP comrades.

It says not only organisational but profound political differences also emerged during the course of interaction with each other on the issue of capitalism and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

“The majority of leadership of the AWP saw CPEC as an opportunity to develop capitalism in Pakistan through ‘Communist China’. When we opposed this illusion, it issued a compromising confused joint statement on the CPEC, which was neither supported nor opposed.”

Farooq Tariq and other comrades allege that one of the most negative aspects was the way they (AWP leaders) appeased the establishment by not supporting movements and initiatives that would expose the nature of capitalism, its use of feudal relations or militarisation of society.

When army operation Zarb-i -Azb was launched in June 2014 in former Fata areas, only three out of 43 in the federal committee opposed the operation while others either supported or chose silence,

thus revealing the complete 'bankruptcy' of a party of the Left which could not see that a military operation could not end religious fundamentalism or terrorism, the statement says.

Likewise, it adds, this group never lent its support for political prisoner in Gilgit-Baltistan Baba Jan, Okara peasants movement, the missing persons' campaign, the Pushtun Tahafaz Movement, the Labour Qaumi Movement Faisalabad, or the students' campaign against cuts in education funds. Rather they would term such campaigns as sponsored by any non-government organisation (NGO).

According to the statement feminism was another controversial issue as those from the WPP would see feminism as a Western idea and would prefer the women in their own grouping to organize their own women's activity rather than participate in the broader women's marches.

"It was a long and hard-fought struggle of some women comrades with very vocal support by us to establish an "independent" women organization, Women Democratic Front. It was a two-year struggle."

Later, when the leaders of Women Democratic Front wrote an AWP internal policy document on sexual violence and harassment, it was opposed by almost all the leaders of former WPP.

Farooq Tariq was issued notice by the party leadership in 2015 for protesting against the abduction of Prof Riaz in Karacahi though there was an agreed-upon principle regarding opposition to such abductions and disappearances. The notice was withdrawn after strong internal protest.

The statement gives the vision for the future, saying that a party is required that is socialist/radical feminist/environmentalist, puts independent movements and class ahead of it, protects most exploited section of the working class and builds labour and youth movements through trade unions and students unions. "We are in favour of a party that goes all out to support religious minorities by campaigning against discriminatory laws and practices," says the statement.

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P.S.

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