

Letters from our readers

15 February 2011

On "Mubarak's speech: only revolution can oust regime"

Another excellent example of analysis on Egypt.

It compares very favourably to any mainstream coverage. For example, an editorial in the *Guardian* today stating that the army must help with the transition to democracy not long after posting an article about the army torturing protestors. Of course the editorial forgot to mention the fact that Mubarak is an ex-army officer and that the Egyptian army has historically oppressed all opposition to the regime. Why would it change now?

This deliberate obfuscation of the facts can only be an attempt to pacify the Egyptian people with false hopes. The inevitable result of this would be to leave the Egyptian masses defenceless in the inevitable backlash if they do not seize power. Fortunately the protestors are not being taken in by these attempts.

David C
11 February 2011

On "The Egyptian working class moves to the forefront"

Last night as I was watching a political discussion program (not on regular channels, but on cable TV); I was amazed to notice how their analysis of the situation in Egypt did not go in depth to what really is the obvious source of the problem. They went around trying to explain the uprising and provide solutions in terms that accommodate the ideology and mental set of the powers that currently mandate, oppresses and are the origin to the conflict. Not one of the panel in true honesty dare to mention the reality of the class struggle that we are currently witnessing. In your editorial you have simply clarified and provided a historically documented and sound perspective for us. That is what is needed.

Eulogio B
10 February 2011

On "The downfall of Hosni Mubarak"

I cannot believe that the US and Israel did not have a hand in this somewhere along the line, perhaps to avoid a major corruption scandal involving the Obama administration, for example. The new man taking over is an ex-security chief for heaven's sake.

Phil
12 February 2011

On "Italian politicians fear spread of 'Egyptian fever'"

Yes, Marianne, to the point. The media, in deflecting the power battle is doing a satisfactory job in diverting the real problem in Italy by reporting on the various sex scandals involving Berlusconi. The protests throughout Egypt amplify this in rejection of any politician and corporate interest of which you point out clearly.

Philip T
Germany
9 February 2011

On "Mass protests and strikes escalate as Egyptians reject 'orderly transition'"

Dear Bill,

I was also happy to hear on sandmonkey that people have started forming political action committees (soviets). It seems your message is getting through or may be the Egyptians are figuring it out based solely on experience. Either way, these are fantastic developments. I trust WSWs to report on these issues objectively and I'm struggling to find the time to read on the past revolutions and Trotsky's perspective on 'Permanent Revolution'.

I watched *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* recently and found that it was a well-made movie regarding the IRA.

Thanks for this work you do, and having stuck to it for so long.

Thushara
9 February 2011

On rural Egypt

The following quote is from "Strikes and demonstrations spread across Egypt," which is an excellent article, as all WSWs articles generally are. "The majority of Egypt's population still lives in the countryside, tilling the land under the domination of a semi-feudal landlord class. Reuters News Agency carried one of the few reports on unrest among these brutally oppressed agricultural laborers and small farmers..."

If I, please, may make a small point here in a comradely spirit. My point is about the 'Semi-feudal landlord class' (who exploits farm labourers and others).

In the context of the imperialized countries, many (especially Maoists) have been saying that these countries are semi-feudal (and especially in their countryside), that a fully functioning capitalism is yet to exist, that therefore a bloc of classes including peasants and sections of the national bourgeoisie should first fight for democracy and against these semi-feudal landlords etc., and the rest of their theory does not need to be repeated.

This is the notorious two-stage theory, which is based on the semi-feudalism theory.

I do not know much about the conditions in Egypt's villages. But: when landowners employ agricultural labourers to make products for sale for a profit, they are capitalists whether or not they use corrupt methods, support dictators, practice racial and gender oppression, pay poverty-level wages, beat up their labourers, and even, here and there, use un-free labourers, and so on. Of course, in such a country, in specific pockets you may have feudal type (semi-feudal) landlords, who appropriate surplus mainly based on extra economic coercion. But to imply that the ruling class in Egypt's countryside is the class of semi-feudal landlords, unintentionally, may lead one in a wrong theoretical and political direction.

More likely than not, Egyptian landowners are employers of labour making a profit out of them, and they are therefore agrarian capitalists. So, they deserve the same kind of theoretical and political treatment as do urban capitalists, and they must be dispossessed by the alliance of workers and poor peasants, led by workers, fighting for democracy, peace and socialism, as a part of an international revolutionary strategy for a more humane society.

A rose is a rose and a thorn is a thorn, whether one calls it that. But in the context of revolutionary theory and revolutionary politics, even naming (including whether we call a demonstration revolutionary or reformist) is political and theoretical.

In revolutionary solidarity,

Raju D
10 February 2011

On "Pentagon official: US could send troops to fight Mexican 'insurgency'"

I was on an airplane flight from Puerto Rico recently. On the plane was an American soldier dressed in his uniform. It was a long flight and the soldier got up and strolled to the stewardesses' galley at the back of the aircraft and proceeded to engage in conversation. The soldier spoke in both English and Spanish. His conversation with the stewardesses turned to his current deployment. An Iraq veteran, he told them that many soldiers with Spanish language skills had recently been pulled from other theatres of war and reconstituted stateside. His feeling was that his superiors had in mind for his next deployment "the Mexican theatre".

CB
10 February 2011

On "New York City closes 22 more public schools"

Mayor Bloomberg's condescending remarks toward the parent and teacher protestors are telling: "This is not democracy, letting people yell and scream. That's not freedom of expression—that's just trying to take away somebody else's rights." Wow—who's taking away whose rights? Stripping students of their right to a free public education in a school located within a reasonable distance from where they live—that is the only right being violated here. What right is he referring to—the right to profit off of our system of public education? When did that ever become a right? Or is he referring to the right to turn schools into corporate training grounds, where one can easily imagine that students will learn nothing

truthful about the historical struggles of labor or democracy, nor are they likely to read good literature, or be offered courses in art or music. Not to mention the fact that it seems a fundamental violation of the constitutional right to a free public education when schools are replaced with schools that can deny students admission due to language barriers, learning disabilities, or behavior problems. I hope this isn't the end of the fight. I hope the parents and rank-and-file teachers will not simply give up and accept this brutal attack on their livelihoods and their children's future.

Isabelle B
12 February 2011

On "New York City teachers and students voice opposition to school closings"

I'm a Stuyvesant Alumnus and it is not true that Stuyvesant or Bronx Science get any more funding than other schools. From the city and state, Stuyvesant actually gets less money per student because it does not qualify for any special education funding. Recently Stuyvesant qualified for federal funding because of the percentage of students who qualified for free lunch, something most other public schools qualified for too.

What Mr. Johnson meant to talk about is the resource gap between the schools. The funding is equal but the fundraising is not. The difference comes not from the city but from the school community, and obviously it is easier for a school with a 100-year history to get alumni donations than a school with a 5-year history.

Additionally Stuyvesant and Bronx Science have a larger middle class population than the rest of public school system. By no means is it like Dalton or Horace Mann, but these schools have kids with parents who can make donations to the school or cover their children's extracurriculars. And despite all of these advantages Stuyvesant still has to cut teachers and curriculum alongside the rest of the city.

It truly disheartens me to hear schools that close down gripe about Stuyvesant or Bronx Science. It serves the upper class to have the working class rail against the middle class while no mention is made of the incredible extravagance of New York's private schools.

Aaron
11 February 2011

On "Toronto announces privatization of municipal workforce"

Once upon a time, capitalists were willing to concede certain roles to the government and public sector as there were plenty of ways to profit. However, during the past decades, as those profit sectors began to disappear, often moving overseas, capitalists have had to turn to the services provided by the public sector in order to find new profit-making opportunities. Especially during these cash-strapped times, cash-strapped due in part to capitalists' ability to get government to cut their taxes, they are able to appeal to the public by claiming that privatization will save tax dollars. But in the end, the taxpayers don't really see the savings. The savings are derived primarily from slashing the wages benefits for all the affected workers, well beyond any savings they will see. Instead, much of the "savings" turns into profit for the capitalists who own the companies that get the government contracts. In the end, only a fraction is actually saved, and is a small amount per each individual taxpayer. And by privatization, as profits become the main goal, service will decline and accountability will no longer be to the citizens. Privatization is just

another gimmick being used to drive a wedge between the members of the working class and the rest of the public.

MZ
Maryland, USA
12 February 2011

On "Ronald Reagan (1911-2004): An obituary"

Comrade Dave ... I enjoyed re-reading your Reagan obituary. Shortly before my father's death in 1985, I spoke to him by phone. He was incensed by Reagan's speech at the SS cemetery at Bitburg. "That bastard Reagan," he said bitterly. My father was a Staff Sergeant, and told me he was at Bitburg, shortly after the murder of US prisoners of war by the Nazis. To those who seek to immortalize the "great communicator" with his face on Mt. Rushmore, I can think of a more malleable, albeit smelly substance, that would serve as a fitting tribute to this reactionary political cipher.

EB
10 February 2011

This has long been one of the top articles in my book in that it demonstrates quite clearly that one need not be disinterested to be objective. It went a long way in clarifying for me the many ambiguities between my feelings toward Ronald Reagan and what I have heard others, over the years, speak of him. I have revisited this obituary occasionally over the past few years for the simple reason of my unique situation at the time of Reagan's death in the first week of June 2004. At that time I had the distinct pleasure of landing the assignment of American liaison for a Columbia Pictures movie called *Stealth*.

Predominantly filmed and produced in Australia, two of the movies planes, the F/A-37 Talon and "EDI" had been disassembled and sent by barge and semi-truck to the US Naval Air Station on Coronado Island in Southern California. So Saturday June 5th found me with ten or so Australian specialists and a handful of Yankees, pier-side, prepping these two planes to go aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) (of "Mission Accomplished" fame) for some point of view filming, on board and at sea, when news of Reagan's death became known to us there. I suggested in all seriousness to my Aussie supervisor that we could very well lose a day as it was likely that there would be a national day of mourning or at least at the base as it was slated to be the home port of the newly christened USS Ronald W. Reagan (CVN-76) which was at that moment passing through the Panama Canal on its way from Norfolk Virginia to its new digs at Coronado. Well needless to say nothing of the sort came to pass and in fact the flags around base never went down to half mast until ordered to do so on Monday morning. No spontaneous show of grief from the rank and file. I suppose the brass were all too busy in their garrets counting to even notice. Always the empiricist I am wont to draw conclusions sometimes haphazardly. Then the article. That, "The aim of this unrelenting propaganda is not only to mislead and confuse, but also to intimidate public opinion, that is, to foster a sense of political and social isolation among countless Americans who despised Reagan and everything he represented, to create in their minds, if not doubt about their own judgment, then at least a sense of futility about the prospects for dissenting views in the United States."—went a long way in validating and reinforcing my idea, that perhaps the impression that a large number of people really don't give a flying f--- about the legacy of the "great

communicator," would be an understatement.

Heinz S
9 February 2011



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