

The Egyptian election

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The announcement that the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate Mohamed Morsi won Egypt's presidential election has been widely hailed as a turning point in the country's history. The international media has described Morsi as, in the words of the *Wall Street Journal*, Egypt's "first freely elected president."

Egypt's own press was even more euphoric, with the daily *Al-Shorouk* carrying the banner headline, "Morsi president on orders from the people: The revolution reaches the presidential palace."

These claims turn reality on its head. Egypt's workers, students and oppressed masses cannot afford to lend the slightest credence to such fabrications.

It is now nearly 17 months since mass demonstrations and, above all, a widening wave of mass strikes forced out Egypt's US-backed dictator Hosni Mubarak. This eruption of revolutionary struggle was a high point of the response of the international working class to the assault on its jobs, living standards and basic rights carried out in the wake of the worldwide financial meltdown of September 2008.

Egyptian workers rose up seeking an end to conditions of poverty, exploitation, social inequality and political repression. They fought heroically against the Mubarak regime's security forces and thugs—armed and backed by US imperialism—sacrificing some 1,000 martyrs in the course of the struggle that culminated in Mubarak's ouster on February 11, 2011.

Nearly a year-and-a-half later, however, none of the demands of Egyptian workers for improved living standards, jobs, social equality and democracy have been met. Instead, the repressive capitalist state apparatus and the domination of the country by imperialism remain intact, minus the odious figure of Mubarak himself, who was recently transferred from Tora Prison to a Cairo hospital.

The installation of the Muslim Brotherhood's Morsi in the presidential palace does not change this reality. It

is the end result not of a "free and fair" election, but a vote that was held under conditions of military rule and boycotted by half the registered voters, followed by a sordid backroom deal between the right-wing Islamist party and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) military junta.

In the midst of the run-off between Morsi and his opponent, the former Air Force commander and Mubarak's last prime minister, Ahmed Shafik, the SCAF carried out a political coup, disbanding the Islamist-dominated parliament, arrogating to itself control over the writing of a new constitution, and clearing the way for a new round of repression and torture by decreeing the right of the military and state intelligence agencies to arrest civilians. It issued a further constitutional "addendum" assuming all legislative and budgetary powers of the disbanded parliament and formally establishing the complete autonomy of the armed forces from civilian control.

The decision to call the election for Morsi, rather than Shafik, one of the military's own, followed intense negotiations between the military command and the Brotherhood that continued through the weekend. The precise terms arrived at in the course of these talks, held behind the backs of the Egyptian people, will become clearer in the days and weeks to come. One thing is certain: any deal worked out between the Brotherhood and the SCAF can only produce a counterrevolutionary government whose main aim will be the smashing of the revolutionary struggles of the working class.

That this is recognized within ruling circles in both Egypt and the imperialist centers was made clear as the Egyptian stock market registered its biggest one-day rise on record in the wake of the election announcement. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that US diplomats, who held "private talks" with the Brotherhood's leadership and its economic team, said

the organization's "representatives have reassured the US by saying 'all the right things on the economic side.'"

One of the immediate aims of the SCAF-Brotherhood regime is reaching an agreement with the International Monetary Fund on an emergency \$3.2 billion loan. This will be tied to the implementation of so-called economic "reforms," i.e., drastic austerity measures that will further degrade the conditions of life for the working class in a country where 40 percent of the population subsists on \$2 or less a day.

It is vital that Egyptian workers and youth draw a balance sheet of the past year and a half and examine the political forces and programs that brought them from heroic strikes and mass struggles to the installation of the counterrevolutionary SCAF-Muslim Brotherhood regime. In particular, the closest examination is warranted of the role of the pseudo-left organizations, which despite calling themselves "revolutionary" and even "socialist," represent not the strivings of the working class to put an end to capitalism, but those of more affluent sections of the middle class to carve out a greater role for themselves within the existing social and political setup.

Typifying this layer is the misnamed group Revolutionary Socialists (RS), which opposed the demand raised by workers for a "second revolution," seeking instead to legitimize the lie that the SCAF military command was the vehicle of a "democratic transition." In May of last year, the RS asserted that the SCAF "aims to reform the political and economic system, allowing it to become more democratic and less oppressive."

Later, when popular opposition to the SCAF mounted in response to mass arrests and military trials of workers and youth, the RS promoted the Muslim Brotherhood as an alternative to the generals, brushing aside the role of the Brotherhood in collaborating with the military regime. They did so in order to head off the development of an independent movement of the working class.

In the second round of the presidential election, the RS threw its support to the Brotherhood, claiming that a vote for Morsi was a vote against "counterrevolution" and "fascism."

In an interview posted June 25 on socialistworker.org, the web site of the RS's American

counterpart, the International Socialist Organization, RS leader Mostafa Ali gives an indication of the illusions that his organization is attempting to promote about the Brotherhood, which he credits with stopping the military's coup.

He poses a series of questions: "Will the Muslim Brotherhood leadership once again compromise with the SCAF? Will they betray the mass mobilization in the square? Will they accept the terms of the deal that has been set by the SCAF?"

In the interview, given on June 22, Ali suggests that the answer is no. The Brotherhood, he states, despite its "wavering and vacillation," has "to draw a line in the sand in order to stop the coup." Within two days, this assessment proved completely bankrupt.

The task of the "revolutionary left," he continued, is to "build a united front of all revolutionary forces against the coup," in which he clearly includes the Muslim Brotherhood and other bourgeois political forces. Within this "united front," he states, "the Egyptian working class would be a significant part of a struggle that could combine both democratic political demands and economic demands in weeks to come."

Thus, the aim of this so-called "left" party is to subordinate the working class to the bourgeois Muslim Brotherhood, which has in turn agreed to serve as a figurehead for the SCAF junta. This is a formula for binding the Egyptian workers hand and foot and delivering them to their mortal enemies.

The only way forward for the workers of Egypt lies in a decisive rejection of this type of counterrevolutionary petty-bourgeois politics. The unpostponable task is to organize a new revolutionary leadership based on an international socialist perspective to mobilize the independent strength of the working class in the struggle for power and the overthrow of capitalist rule. This means building an Egyptian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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