

Mursi's crackdown exposes counter-revolutionary role of Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists

Johannes Stern
6 December 2012

Yesterday's murderous crackdown in Cairo by forces loyal to Egypt's Islamist President Mohamed Mursi against demonstrators protesting his November 22 Constitutional Decree makes clear Mursi's counterrevolutionary role. Having claimed all legislative, constitutional, executive, and judicial powers—concentrating in his hands greater powers than President Hosni Mubarak had before last year's revolutionary working class struggles forced his ouster—he is now trying to drown his opposition in blood.

This has also exposed the counter-revolutionary role of petty-bourgeois “left” forces like Egypt's Revolutionary Socialists (RS) group and their international allies: the American International Socialist Organization (ISO) and the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP). From the beginning of Mursi's election campaign last year up until the very eve of his power grab, the RS and its allies sang the praises of Mursi and his Muslim Brotherhood (MB), as forces carrying out the demands of the Egyptian revolution.

The day before Mursi's power grab, the ISO's *Socialist Worker* newspaper was whitewashing his moves to isolate the Palestinians during the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip—a policy he worked out with the Israeli and US governments. On November 21, Lee Sustar, a leading ISO writer, predicted: “Morsi has little choice but to show some measure of support for Palestinians in Gaza, even as he carries out diplomatic maneuvers ... for the first time in decades, politicians in Egypt and elsewhere feel pressured to give voice to the widespread sympathy for Palestinians.”

Before the June presidential elections, the RS supported Mursi and the MB to the hilt. They campaigned for a Mursi vote, producing countless statements promoting the MB as “the right wing of the revolution” and Mursi as a “revolutionary candidate.”

RS and ISO members laid out arguments for Mursi this summer at the ISO's Socialism 2012 conference in Chicago, where they promoted Mursi and the MB as agents of the revolution.

Sameh Naguib, the RS' leading theoretician, and a professor for Sociology at the American University in Cairo, praised Mursi's election: “The victory of Mursi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, is a great achievement in pushing back the counterrevolution and pushing back this coup d'état. For now, this is a real victory for the Egyptian masses and a real victory for the Egyptian revolution.”

He denounced anyone criticizing Mursi: “Many people, especially in the West, and also over here, have an Islamophobic attitude that does not allow them to see the nature of the Muslim Brotherhood. So many people here, even on the left, could say that there is no real difference between Morsi, the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Shafiq, the candidate of the military—that they're both counter-revolutionary forces, and that the victory of any of them is a victory of the counter-revolution and a defeat for the Egyptian revolution.”

He added, “Whenever there is the threat of counter-revolution, the Islamists will run toward the masses—will mobilize in the hundreds of thousands against the military regime.”

Naguib declared that the Islamists “have all the contradictions of the main reformist movements that appeared in social democracies in the West. They cannot play a fully counter-revolutionary role.”

As in the streets of Cairo MB thugs beat and murder protesters opposed to Mursi's attempt to crush the revolution, the bankruptcy of these arguments is clear. The MB is not mobilizing the masses in a revolutionary struggle against the military, as Naguib claimed it would. Having made a deal with the army, the MB is mobilizing thugs, reactionary imams, and other dregs of the counterrevolution to crush working class protests against the Mursi dictatorship.

The MB is neither a revolutionary nor a reformist party, and it never was one. It is a right-wing bourgeois party with no roots in the workers movement or mass membership

among workers. Founded in 1928 by right-wing layers of the Egyptian ruling elite, it aimed primarily to crush the rising influence of communism in the working class.

The MB is historically associated with attacks on striking workers, collaboration with US imperialism, and free-market economic policies. These policies are now carried out by Mursi and the MB before the entire world.

On foreign policy, Mursi supports the US war drive against Syria and Iran, while internally he prepares massive attacks on the working class. Under the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt secured a \$4.8 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), based on plans for cuts to vital subsidies such as gasoline and bread, on which the impoverished Egyptian masses depend.

Now, with mass protests erupting against Mursi, the RS are aligning themselves with secular big-business parties. Their new “revolutionary” front stretches from ex-UN official Mohamed ElBaradei and his liberal Constitution Party, to Nasserite leader Hamdeen Sabahi, the liberal Free Egyptians Party of multi-billionaire tycoon Naguib Sawiris, and remnants of the old regime such as Amr Moussa—the former head of the Arab League and minister under Mubarak.

A government led by such forces would defend the interests of the Egyptian ruling class against the workers as ruthlessly as Mursi and the MB. Indeed, the ISO and the RS are now concerned that their alliance with ex-Mubarak regime forces like Moussa makes their counterrevolutionary role too clear and are trying to distance themselves from it.

On Tuesday, the ISO’s Lee Sustar quoted RS blogger Hossam al-Hamalawy as follows: “When the polarization gets into Islamist versus secular, then this means that Amr Moussa can suddenly become a champion of the civil state, can suddenly mean that [pro-Mubarak talk show host] Tawfiq Okasha becomes a symbol of freedom of expression, can suddenly mean that [counterrevolutionary blogger] Ahmed Spider can march in the streets in order to retrieve the mantle of the martyrs ... Revolutionaries have to be very careful about this.”

If Hamalawy insists that the RS must be “careful” about distinguishing themselves from forces like Moussa, this is because the RS’ right-wing policies make them increasingly indistinguishable from leading Mubarak-era officials or other bourgeois politicians. Indeed, since the ouster of Hosni Mubarak last February, there has been one constant in the politics of the RS and its international affiliates: they have insisted that factions of the Egyptian ruling class should play a progressive role in the Egyptian revolution.

Firstly they declared that the US-backed military junta that took power after Mubarak’s downfall could be pressured for democratic reforms. Writing last year in the American ISO’s

publication, *Socialist Worker*, RS member Mustafa Omar said: “Despite its repressive measures, the Supreme Council understands that the January 25 uprising has changed Egypt once and for all The Council aims to reform the political and economic system, allowing it to become more democratic and less oppressive.”

When renewed mass protests against military rule intensified last autumn, the RS regarded their orientation to the military junta no longer tenable. They shifted their orientation towards the Islamist MB, with which they already collaborated closely under Mubarak.

This orientation towards the Egyptian bourgeoisie and ultimately to US imperialism reflects the privileged class position of the petty-bourgeois social layers the RS represent. The bulk of their membership is drawn from more affluent pro-Western layers of the middle class: academics, lawyers, better-off students, NGO activists and officials in Western-sponsored “independent” trade unions.

They are indifferent to the social and democratic aspirations of the working class, and hostile to the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois Egyptian state and the creation of a workers’ state fighting for socialist policies. They aim to reshape Egyptian capitalism so as to increase their influence and wealth.

Workers and youth have to draw serious conclusions of the bitter experiences they had in the past months with the reactionary forces promoted by the RS. This organization must be regarded for what it is: an organization leading the working class from one disaster to another, which in the final analysis is an enemy of the revolution just as the forces they seek to promote.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact