

The release of Hosni Mubarak

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The US-backed Egyptian military junta's release of former dictator Hosni Mubarak yesterday, more than two years after he was toppled by mass revolutionary struggles of the working class, symbolizes the advance of counterrevolution in Egypt since the July 3 coup.

The junta is acting with brazen contempt for popular hatred for Mubarak, in line with its hostility to every demand of the working class. Since the coup, it has massacred over 1,000 unarmed protesters in several bloody crackdowns and announced plans to slash key subsidies, drastically increasing bread and fuel prices for workers.

As Mubarak was flown by helicopter to a military hospital in Cairo, the affluent and rich could barely contain their euphoria. While "Mubarak's release, attributed to a legal technicality, would have provoked mass outrage in the months after Egypt's 2011 popular uprising," the *Washington Post* noted, "some met the court decision with nostalgia for Mubarak's order."

Two years after the eruption of one of the truly great revolutionary upsurges of the modern epoch, the political situation seems to have been thrown far back. The critical questions are: how was this possible, and who is responsible?

In February 2011, massive crowds in Tahrir Square fought off Mubarak's thugs, brought down his regime, and sang paeans to the unity of the people and of the army. As masses of people assembled, drawn from varied segments of society and reflecting different class interests, it was a time of political illusions. Those whose voices predominated in the media were largely intoxicated with vague democratic sentiments, hopes for a more lenient regime, and plans for a redistribution of the wealth of Mubarak and his cronies.

Beyond this, however, masses of impoverished workers and the urban and rural poor understood democracy as a way to effect far deeper changes in society.

The working class—the decisive force behind the 2011 revolution—became ever more insistent after it toppled Mubarak. While the years before the revolution saw approximately 200 strikes per year, and 2011 saw over 1,000 strikes, 2013 has seen a record-breaking 5,500 strikes and social protests. This ultimately culminated in demonstrations of millions of Egyptians against Islamist President Mohamed Mursi's unpopular regime, starting on June 30.

The affluent middle class recoiled in horror and anger, fearing for their social position as they realized that the demands of the working class went far beyond their own concerns over lifestyle, for more sexual freedom or access to more expensive goods at the mall. They gave up play-acting at revolution and received Mubarak and junta leader General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi as their saviors. To combat the spreading radicalization of the working class, they rented themselves out to the rich, hatching the Tamarod ("Rebel") conspiracy.

Tamarod was a coalition including supporters of the late Egyptian intelligence chief and CIA torturer General Omar Suleiman; ex-Mubarak regime officials like Amr Mousa and General Ahmed Shafik; Coptic billionaire Naguib Sawiris and the liberal National Salvation Front of Mohamed ElBaradei.

A critical role in this reactionary swindle was played by an organization embodying pseudo-left political charlatanry, the so-called Revolutionary Socialists (RS). This group—which functions as a political instrument of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, different media interests, and dubious non-governmental organizations—threw itself behind Tamarod, seeking to give it credibility.

While Tamarod prepared a "road map" for the July 3 coup in weeks of talks with the generals, the RS gave it political cover, promoting it as "a group of revolutionary youth ... opening up space for revolutionary work and experience from below." The

RS and other youth groups and parties inside Tamarod constantly presented preparations for a counterrevolutionary coup as a “revolutionary” response to popular hostility to Mursi.

The WSWS warned of the reactionary role Tamarod and its allies sought to play in the mass protests after June 30. Noting that “The protests are politically dominated by the ‘Tamarod’ (‘rebel’) platform, which is backed by various liberal, Islamist, and pseudo-left parties and remnants of the Mubarak regime,” the WSWS wrote before the coup that the political coalition envisaged by the military “would serve to delegitimize protests and give the military time to prepare a more violent crackdown.”

Events proved the WSWS’ warnings about the army and the RS correct. By working to direct opposition to Mursi behind the perspective of a coup, they helped drive a shift of broad sections of the petty bourgeoisie into the camp of dictatorship and counterrevolution. These are the conditions in which it is possible for the junta to rehabilitate Mubarak.

The RS epitomize a type of reactionary pseudo-left politics that spouts leftish phrases but supports the bourgeoisie. During the two years of the Egyptian revolution, they have found themselves in alliance with every right-wing faction of Egypt’s political establishment, whether in the army or the Muslim Brotherhood. The only consistent theme of their politics has been their vehement opposition to an independent movement of the working class.

The Egyptian revolution provides a comprehensive refutation of their entire perspective. The working class has played the central role in the revolution, again and again mounting powerful offensives. Without a revolutionary party to lead it, however, the working class was left disoriented and unprepared to successfully oppose the pseudo-left’s latest reactionary maneuvers.

Once again, a great revolutionary experience has underscored the significance of Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution. This theory holds that in countries of belated capitalist development, the struggle for democracy can only be victorious as a politically independent struggle of the working class for socialism, led by a mass revolutionary party; and that the victory of revolution in any country is only possible on the basis of an international strategy to unify the world

working class.

The working class has unquestionably suffered a significant setback. The military will seek to impose order. However, the Egyptian revolution has not yet run its course, nor has the working class said its last word. Raising Mubarak from the grave will not breathe new life into the sclerotic veins of Egyptian capitalism, let alone resolve the conflicts in the Middle East provoked by imperialist wars and the deepening crisis of global capitalism. The bourgeoisie, which cannot hold power save when protected by the tanks of the Egyptian army, stands discredited as a force for democracy.

The decisive question remains the building of a political leadership in the working class to prepare for the struggles to come. This means the construction of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Egypt, throughout the Middle East, and internationally.



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