

The acquittal of Hosni Mubarak

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The acquittal Saturday of deposed Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on charges of corruption and state murder is a statement by the regime of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi that it intends to carry through the counterrevolution and make the restoration of military dictatorship permanent.

The whitewashing of Mubarak's role in the killing of 846 people and wounding of 6,000 by police snipers and thugs during the revolutionary upsurge that toppled him in 2011 is part of the drive by the bourgeoisie and its supporters in the upper-middle class to crush the resistance of the Egyptian working class. "It is very common to find [news] anchors openly saying that 25 January was a 'conspiracy that the West plotted,'" one foreign diplomat in Cairo told *Al Ahram*. Another said that officials of Egypt's political parties now believe "Mubarak was a good man who made a few mistakes."

Outside Tahrir Square, which security forces sealed before the verdict was announced, police attacked a protest of several thousand people with water cannon and live ammunition, killing two and wounding nine.

Like all great revolutionary upheavals, the Egyptian revolution has passed through definite stages. The revolution began with a massive upsurge of the working class against the Mubarak dictatorship, a key instrument of US imperialism and Israeli policy in the Middle East. In Egypt as in previous revolutions, the bourgeoisie responded in the initial stages by seeking to adapt itself to the mass movement, buying time and reorganizing its forces while it prepared the counter-offensive.

At this stage, democratic slogans generally prevail, and so it was in the initial days after the upsurge that began in Egypt on January 25, 2011. The Egyptian ruling class and its sponsors in Washington sought to keep Mubarak in power, vaguely promising democratic reforms. When bloody repression failed to crush the mass upsurge, in which the working class began to

emerge as the major social force, US imperialism and the Egyptian bourgeoisie reluctantly removed Mubarak and installed a new, supposedly more "democratic," military regime in the form of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

The liberal bourgeoisie, represented by figures such as Mohamed El-Baradei, backed the new regime. It was joined by petty-bourgeois organizations such as the Revolutionary Socialists, who rallied behind the new military rulers and even vouched for their "democratic" intentions.

But this initial tactical shift failed to put an end to the revolutionary upsurge. The ruling class and Washington turned to the Muslim Brotherhood and engineered the coming to power as president of its candidate Mohamed Mursi. The Revolutionary Socialists and similar organizations of the privileged middle classes now came behind the Muslim Brotherhood, promoting its accession to power as a "victory" for the revolution.

The right-wing policies of the bourgeois Islamist regime only fueled the anger of the working class. In 2013, the Egyptian proletariat waged a stormy offensive against Mursi. While 2011 had seen over 1,000 strikes and protests, five times more than in the years before the revolution, the first half of 2013 alone saw 5,500.

The ruling class reacted by exploiting the political confusion of the masses, in the absence of a revolutionary Marxist leadership, to prepare a counterrevolutionary strike in the guise of a popular uprising against Mursi. Groups such as the Revolutionary Socialists, petrified by the mounting wave of working class struggles, played a critical role in promoting the military-backed Tamarod ("Rebel") movement, which called for the military to remove Mursi from power.

The Revolutionary Socialists and other supposedly

“left” groups that initially opposed Mubarak joined the liberals in supporting the July 3, 2013 coup led by al-Sisi, who proceeded to massacre thousands of anti-coup protesters in the streets, arrest tens of thousands more, and impose sweeping energy price hikes on the working class.

The acquittal of Mubarak is the outcome of this counterrevolutionary offensive, the aim of which is to restore military rule, utilizing if anything even more brutal methods than under Mubarak.

Once again, the counterrevolutionary role of the bourgeoisie, in the former colonial countries no less than in the imperialist centers, has been demonstrated. So has the impossibility of realizing the democratic aspirations of the masses outside of a revolutionary struggle under the leadership of the working class against all factions of the bourgeoisie on the basis of a program for workers’ power and socialism, and an international strategy linking the revolution in any one country to the world socialist revolution.

Inevitably in the course of a revolution, whatever the initial democratic pretensions of the bourgeoisie, the problems that drove the masses into struggle come to the fore. They seek to gain something from the struggles they have waged, while the opposition of the ruling elites to all such demands acquires an ever more vicious form. To the extent that the masses have not worked through the political challenges facing the revolution, social reaction gains strength and reconquers the positions it had lost.

The bitter experience to date of the Egyptian revolution has brought to the fore the most critical problem facing the working class not only in Egypt, but internationally—the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

Even the most enormous upsurge of the oppressed masses cannot by itself secure the basic demands and interests of the working class. The ruling classes and their agents—such as the pseudo-left organizations of the privileged middle class—are able to take advantage of the political confusion in the working class that is the result of the historic betrayals carried out by its old bureaucratic leaderships—Stalinist, social democratic, trade union.

A revolutionary party with deep roots in the working class must be built to direct the mass struggles to the conquest of power and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie.

The International Committee of the Fourth International understood this very well and warned from the earliest days of the Egyptian revolution of the necessity for an independent perspective and organization of the working class. In a Perspective column published February 10, 2011 on the *World Socialist Web Site*, we wrote:

“The revolutionary Marxists must counsel workers against all illusions that their democratic aspirations can be achieved under the aegis of bourgeois parties. They must expose ruthlessly the false promises of the political representatives of the capitalist class. They must encourage the creation of independent organs of workers’ power which can become, as the political struggle intensifies, the basis for the transfer of power to the working class. They must explain that the realization of the workers’ essential democratic demands is inseparable from the implementation of socialist policies.

“Above all, revolutionary Marxists must raise the political horizons of Egyptian workers beyond the borders of their own country. They must explain that the struggles that are now unfolding in Egypt are inextricably linked to an emerging global process of world socialist revolution, and that the victory of the revolution in Egypt requires not a national, but an international strategy... In this global struggle, the greatest and indispensable ally of the Egyptian masses is the international working class.”

These lines have been absolutely vindicated. The bitter experience of the Egyptian revolution must become the impetus to undertake the struggle to build the necessary revolutionary leadership in the working class. The decisive question facing the working class in Egypt and in every country is the construction of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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