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Egypt

The current situation in Egypt

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This selection of articles covers the current situation in Egypt and the situation of the left current Revolutionary Socialists.

The combat of the Revolutionary Socialists

The history of the Marxist left in Egypt has still to be written. One of its features seems to be discontinuity: over the last hundred years, organizations have been born, suffered repression and then splintered.

The Revolutionary Socialists (RS) were formed in the early 1990s without any real link with the currents of Marxism that had gone before them. This organization was founded by students of the American University in Cairo who had come into contact with the British SWP through a teacher. Since then, the RS have established links with the Trotskyist current International Socialist Tendency (IST).

A second characteristic of the Egyptian Marxist left is its relatively small size. The militant strength of the RS is estimated at several hundred activists and they regularly mobilize more than a thousand sympathizers.

In order to define their politics, the RS were led to delineate themselves:

- on the one hand from the older communist currents, who do not seem to have been very big;
- and on the other hand from the left currents in the Nasserite tradition, which are much more entrenched.

Since we would like to continue a fraternal debate with the RS that was started several years ago, it seemed to be a good idea to reproduce extracts from discussions that were held in late April 2014, before the presidential election, between, on the one hand, three representatives of the RS and, on the other independent journalist Egyptian Hany Hanna and French trade unionist Alain Baron. The first document, reproducing the contribution of Hisham Fouad, presents a political and social balance sheet of the last twelve months. The two interviews that follow focus on the controversial issue of the attitude of the RS towards the Muslim Brotherhood.

Spotlight on an eventful year

Hisham Fouad

The political and social crisis (first six months of 2013)

After six months in power, the Muslim Brotherhood had revealed its inability to respond to popular demands. This caused social anger, with a big wave of strikes, sit-ins, social protests, demonstrations and protests in poor

neighbourhoods against the run-down state of public services. The popular mobilization was massive. People had the hope of changing their lives, and the class struggle reached a level that had not been seen since the 1970s.

In parallel, there was also a political crisis, because the Brotherhood proceeded to exclude all other political currents. Liberal forces as well as those of the former regime felt themselves marginalized in the political landscape. And these forces had control of the media, which enabled them, especially through private satellite channels, to conduct an ongoing campaign against President Mohamed Morsi, although they had pretty much the same economic and social project.

Simultaneously, from January 2013, tensions were visible between the deep state [1] and Morsi. This was seen principally in the police. Morsi had not reformed and increased police salaries. He thought he could attract them to his political project. But the police and intelligence services began to work for his downfall.

In the end, it was these different forces, with different backgrounds and goals, that allied around the objective of bringing him down.

The emergence of Tamarrod and the role of the NSF

It was in this context that there appeared the Tamarrod movement. At first, the links between Tamarrod and the intelligence services were not obvious, especially for us. But subsequently these links appeared clearly.

The main demand of the petition calling for the overthrow of Morsi was the holding of early presidential elections. This demand was very popular before the call to demonstrate on June 30.

Established at the end of 2012, the National Salvation Front (NSF) was a broad coalition of liberals, democrats, social democrats, socialists, Stalinists, etc. It was the NSF that began to appeal to the *fellouls* [2] of Mubarak in order to get rid of the Brotherhood. It relied on them for financing, logistics, printing leaflets, etc. This was a big blow for the revolutionary forces, since with the *fellouls* the revolutionaries found themselves faced with another obstacle. The NSF was one of the main forces to have appealed to the army. It issued statements asking why the army did not intervene. The NSF paved the way for the coup d'état.

Intervention of the army

On June 30, 2013, the mobilization was enormous and looked like increasing even more. The role of the army began to appear clearly at the end of June. Sissi issued an ultimatum. On July 3, he made a second declaration announcing the dismissal of Morsi and the appointment of a new President of the Republic. From that moment, it was the army that took control of the country. The message was: "Go home! We will take care of everything! "

Sissi also called for demonstrations on July 26 to give him a mandate to combat terrorism, and the mobilization was very great. July 26 marked the end of an episode. From that date, the main policy that was implemented was repression. The main political forces supported the army. The Islamists were the main target: the main slogan was "Crush them, Sissi!" The bloody dispersal of the Islamist sit-ins in Rabaa and Nahda was accompanied by thousands of deaths.

But the repression was also directed against the right to demonstrate and to organize sit-ins, rights that were earned after January 25, 2011.

Situation after 3 July 2013

In the course of the two or three months following July 3, there were not many protests because the situation was not very clear. But then, the social movement began to recover.

The main demands concerned bad living conditions and the absence of concretization of the main goals of the revolution. During the first three months of 2014, there were approximately 1,200 strikes and sit-ins.

The government used several methods to deal with the social movement.

In the first period, the main policy of the government of Hazem el-Beblawi was either to make promises or to ignore it completely. As the wave of social protest intensified and there was a change of government, the media said that it was the workers who had brought down the government.

But in fact, the purpose of the change of government was not to satisfy the social demands of the workers, but to strengthen the repression against the Islamists: the Beblawi government had been criticized for having had a "trembling hand". People demanded that the new government should have an iron fist.

The other objective was to strengthen the repression against the social movement.

The end of the Beblawi government (February 27, 2014)

In the Beblawi government, there coexisted alongside the military component a current that can be classified as "democratic left" with Beblawi and Ziad Bahaeddine of the Social Democratic party, the Nasserist current with the former independent trade unionist Kamal Abu Aita, the liberals with Hossam Issa of the Destour Party; Mohamed El Baradei, of the same Destour Party, was Vice-president of the Republic until August 15, 2013. [3].

They were not opposed to the policy of Sissi, but they tried to put the brakes on a little. The Deputy Prime Minister Ziad Bahaeddine, for example, wanted a reconciliation with those members of the Muslim Brotherhood who had not committed acts of violence. Kamal Abu Aita talked about the minimum wage and the law on trade union freedoms, etc. But they ended up by accepting the policies of the government to which they belonged. They accepted the freezing of the bill on trade union freedoms and the repression of sit-ins.

However, at the end February 2014, even a slightly discordant voice was no longer acceptable for the regime. As if by removing the government, things would work better.

The policy of the government of Ibrahim Mahleb

The two major changes with the new government were:

* An escalation of the repression against the Islamists;

* increased repression against the social movement.

The government therefore had two adversaries: the Islamists and the workers.

In the first communiqué of the Mahleb government, it was moreover stated clearly: "The state must confront two dangers, the Islamists and strikes by workers".

As regards the Islamists, there have been repression and show trials, with collective convictions. As regards the workers, the army began to intervene, as for example in Suez. It also came to arrest workers in their homes in Alexandria and Port Said, as well as in other places. And that had not been seen in Egypt since the 1970s.

The government has also adopted laws hostile to workers.

* The new draft Labour Code weakens workers' rights, particularly with regard to wages;

* A draft document forbids employees to file appeals against even fraudulent privatization of their companies;

* A law of 19 November 2013 prohibits strikes and sit-ins;

* The law on trade union freedoms fell by the wayside.

Attacks take place against independent unions. The ETUF, the official trade union federation before 2011, is once again the sole interlocutor recognized by the government.

We hear less about the minimum wage.

Prices have begun to rise again, and the expected increase in the price of petrol will cause a general increase in prices.

The presidential election

The climate in which the next presidential election will take place is completely different from that of the elections of June 2012.

Within the population, there is great disillusion, and even hostility to the revolution. Attacks have taken place against the revolutionary movement, including the Revolutionary Socialists. The April 6 Movement, which was at the origin of the events leading to the January 2011 revolution, was banned three days before the 1st of May.

Approximately 90 per cent of political forces are at present behind Sissi. The only other candidate for the presidential election is the Nasserist Hamdine Sabahi.

These developments have had an impact within the parties that emerged after the beginning of the revolution. These parties, and in particular their young people, began to discover that they had been deceived, that Sissi had stolen June 30, and that his objective was to restore the Mubarak regime.

There is a revanchist tendency in relation to the revolution. The security apparatus of the state has regained its control over the street, so that many young people who mobilized on June 30 are now opposed to Sissi. This is particularly the case of the April 6 Movement.

If we categorize the population by the type of attitude it has, there are three categories:

* disappointed, even desperate;

* fence-sitters waiting to see what Sissi will do;

* and a minority which sees Sissi as a prolongation of Mubarak.

It is these divisions within the coalition of June 30 that encouraged Sabahi to stand in the presidential election. That is one of the reasons why, despite the criticism that we have of him, we are supporting him in the coming election [\[4\]](#).

Hisham Fouad is an Egyptian journalist and longtime activist of the Revolutionary Socialists. He was interviewed by Hany Hanna and Alain Baron, at the end of April 2014.

"The question is: "Who is leading the counter-revolution?"

An interview by Hany Hanna and Alain Baron with Hatem Tallima

Question: What is the basis of the Front of the Path of the Revolution in which the Revolutionary Socialists participate?

Hatem Tallima: The Front of the Path of the Revolution was created on June 27, 2013, three days before the gigantic demonstrations of June 30. Its objective was to provide the most pertinent strategy in opposition to the Islamist President Morsi. There existed among the forces that were mobilized two points of view on how to "kick out" the Muslim Brotherhood: either rely on the army and the police, or avoid finding yourself with them and with other residues from the Mubarak era (*fellouls*). This resulted in two types of slogans: "The people, the army and the police, hand in hand" and "Down with all those who have betrayed: the *fellouls*, the army and the Brotherhood."

The RS organized mobilizations in common with the second group, which was not the most numerous.

What was done by the Muslim Brotherhood in the year they were in power was horrible. They demonstrated a sectarian and sexist vision. They opposed freedoms. They, in close collaboration with the business community, adopted neoliberal policies in line with those of Mubarak. Among the population, hatred of the Brotherhood had become such that many were ready to ally with the devil to get rid of it. We understand that.

But at the same time, we thought that this attitude was dangerous, that it gave an opportunity to the pillars of the Mubarak regime to regain power: these pillars are the police, the military and business. We thought that getting rid of the Muslim Brotherhood without doing it under the sign of the relaunching of the revolution, by attacking simultaneously the pillars of the Mubarak regime, would be used by them to regain power. And this is what, in our view, is happening now. The crowning of this process was the arrival in power of Sissi on July 3: he was a general appointed head of Military Intelligence by Mubarak himself and he will, of course, become President of the Republic at the end of May.

It is in this context that the Front of the Path of the Revolution was created. We participated in the mass demonstrations on June 30 demanding the departure of Morsi. At the same time we said no to police brutality, no to a military regime, not to the *fellouls* of Mubarak!

The Front of the Path of the Revolution matured after the coup of July 3. Things became clearer after the announcement of the roadmap designed by Military Intelligence and published on July 8. This paved the way for August 14, the date of the greatest massacre committed by the Egyptian government against its population (in Cairo, during the dispersal of the sit-ins in Rabaa and Nahda) and into which there has been no proper investigation. From there, we developed the platform of the Front of the Path of the Revolution, and we made it public on September 14, 2013. The Front regroups revolutionary movements like the Revolutionary Socialists, the April 6 Movement, independent activists, human rights activists, the collective against civilians being judged by military courts, collectives against torture and various other small collectives. Participation in the Front of the Path of the Revolution is now one of the activities of the Revolutionary Socialists.

Question: Some people say that the orientation affirmed by the RS is to oppose both the military and the Muslim Brotherhood, but in fact, nine out of ten of your slogans are against the military and one against the Muslim Brotherhood. They accuse you for this reason of being de facto allies of the Brotherhood...

Hatem Tallima: Regarding the slogans, a year ago it was the opposite: nine out of ten were against the Muslim Brotherhood and one against the military.

For us, the question is "who is leading the counter-revolution?" We, the Revolutionary Socialists, were the first to take to the streets on August 30, 2012 against Morsi, only two months after his election. And we issued a press release entitled "The Muslim Brotherhood is leading the counter-revolution." They also physically assaulted me in Tahrir Square on October 12, 2012.

One of the two most popular slogans of the revolution is "Down with the power of the Guide [of the Muslim Brotherhood]!" The other is "Down with the military!"

Two days ago we took part in a demonstration of about two thousand people against the law banning demonstrations. Our slogan was "Down with the military! "When someone asked me why we do not also say "Down with the power of the Guide!" I told him it was because he was no longer in power but in prison!

We are not for self-flagellation. We voted for Morsi in 2012 against General Ahmed Shafiq (the last Prime Minister of Mubarak) and we are proud to have done so. If we had to do it again, we would. But the day after his election, we were against him. This is the Leninist tactic "one step backward, two steps forward."

In Egypt, there exists an "Islamophobia", which divides society into Islamists and non-Islamists and which promotes inter-class alliances against the Islamists. Thus the left party Tagammu did not hesitate to ally with the Party of Free Egyptians of the billionaire Naguib Sawiris in the parliamentary elections of 2012. Its leaders met Sissi yesterday and

are at present discussing with Sawiris about how they can coordinate for the next parliamentary elections. Their logic is "let us put aside for the moment our social proposals" in order to deal with the common threat, acting along with the police, businessmen and those who exploit Egyptian society.

On the other side, we have Islamists ranging from the Deputy Guide of the Brotherhood, the billionaire Khairat El Chater, to the poorest Islamists of the most remote villages. We are for the class struggle. We see no difference between Khairat El Chater and Naguib Sawiris, except as regards some particularly reactionary positions of El Chater.

Question: Why did the RS call for a vote for Morsi in the second round of the presidential election of 2012?

Hatem Tallima: We called for a vote for Morsi in order to beat General Ahmed Shafiq, Mubarak's right-hand man. If he had been elected, that would have announced the defeat of the revolution. It was simply a tactical vote. We did not ally with them. We did not sit around a table with them to discuss anything. We know it is a sectarian, sexist, reactionary and neoliberal movement. We had no illusions about them. But the great mass of the people did. It was necessary for the Muslim Brotherhood to exercise power for their illusions about them to dissipate.

Question: Why did revolutionaries not all call for a vote for the left Nasserist Hamdine Sabahi in the first round of the presidential elections of 2012?

Hatem Tallima: The fact that it he got such a good result was a surprise. In the first round, the RS had pushed Khaled Ali to stand. The RS considered that the dispersion of votes in the first round between several candidates was a mistake.

Question Does the policy of the RS towards the Brotherhood correspond to what revolutionary Marxists call the "united front"?

Hatem Tallima: The RS never had a policy of a united front with the Brotherhood. We declined the invitation to take part in their meeting.

There may be some confusion, insofar as a number of activists are sometimes misrepresented as being RS, whereas it is no longer the case: Tamer Wageeh, for example, left in 2010 with Socialist Renewal and then in 2011 joined the Popular Socialist Alliance, which somewhat resembles the German Die Linke. He supported the dissident Muslim Brother Abul Futuh, who can be defined as being on the left of a right-wing movement. The RS are in total disagreement with him.

Question: For the SR, what is the nature of the Muslim Brotherhood?

Hatem Tallima: The Muslim Brotherhood is a totally bourgeois organization whose base is the bourgeoisie and the "middle class". It is a sexist and sectarian organization. On the economic and social levels, its positions are very right-wing.

But we make a difference with their young people... We want to win away from the Muslim Brotherhood their supporters who have illusions about them and see them as defenders of the poor. Because the Brotherhood has half a million members ...

Hatem Tallima is a research professor in chemistry. He is a leader of the Front for the Path of the Revolution and a member of the Political Bureau of the Revolutionary Socialists (RS), an organization to which he has belonged since

the early 1990s.

The Revolutionary Socialists confronted with the Muslim Brotherhood

Interview by Hany Hanna and Alain Baron with Mustafa Omar

Question: How does the Muslim Brotherhood function?

Mustafa Omar: Many Muslim Brothers were recruited when they were very young, in high school or college. Others are recruited at the beginning of their university studies; they often come from the countryside.

Education is no longer really free now. In theory it is, but in reality, it no longer is because it is necessary to take private lessons, to buy food, etc.

The Brothers provide significant financial support for young people in high school and university who do not come from affluent backgrounds, but belong to the poorest layers of the "middle classes" and to the working class. They have very little money, and the Brothers give them what the state no longer gives them: books, housing for those who do not find a place in university residences, food, etc.

This is important because some of the most militant demonstrations against Sissi have been organized by the students who support Morsi and the Brotherhood. This is how they earn their loyalty.

There is a real difference between these young people and some of the richest leaders of the Brotherhood.

Question: But doesn't obedience to leaders form part of the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood?

Mustafa Omar: This is generally true, but it is also true that the leaders listen to the young Brotherhood members. It is not a unilateral relationship. Those who are anti-Brotherhood, such as the Stalinists, often tend to exaggerate. They describe the Brotherhood as a very hierarchical organization from top to bottom, with blind obedience. This is true, but only partly. The young members exert pressure on their leadership. This was true before Morsi became president in June 2012, and it remained so after the coup of July 3, 2013.

Many of these young people are convinced that the present economic system poses serious problems, that capitalism poses serious problems. But they have a reformist vision of the world; they want a reform of capitalism and redistribution of wealth. They want free medical care and free education. Many things that we, revolutionary socialists, also want.

Nevertheless, they genuinely believe that they have to follow the strategy and tactics of the leadership. They trust their leadership to achieve this goal. I have spoken with many young members of the Brotherhood. They have a critique of capitalism, albeit reformist, but a real criticism. They do not all observe blind obedience to the leaders.

Secondly, many of them believe in general in a democratic society. Not only as a means for the Brotherhood to come to power. Many of them can genuinely live in a pluralistic framework. We worked with them in Egypt before the

revolution of 2011. And they generally believed in that. For me, it is not cynicism in order to achieve power, as is sometimes said.

In fact, before and after the revolution, there were many significant splits among young Brotherhood members. They did not involve many people, but these splits were significant.

Among many young members of the Brotherhood, there has been a shift to the left under the pressure of the revolution. They have split from the Brotherhood and joined the "Strong Egypt" party of Abul Futuh.

Some of these ex-Brothers are now founding members of the Front for the Path of the Revolution. And even if they do look like Islamists, they are not as hostile to Marxism as they were a year ago ... We have to take account of the social origin of these ex-Brothers, their class origin. A significant portion of them - not all! - are open to dialogue with forces of the left, socialists. We share with them certain positions on democracy and opposition to imperialism.

Question: What about women and sexism?

Mustafa Omar: Things are also complicated. Part of the supporters of the Brotherhood are women. They work, and the Brothers agree with that. On this point, they are not as far to the right as the Salafists. They are sexist, but not as much as the Salafists. The sexism of the Salafists is on another level altogether. The Brothers usually have a conception of a very "middle class" urban lifestyle. Their point of view is very different from the totally antiquated, conservative and reactionary views of the Salafists, who say that women should stay at home instead of going to work.

Question: How are you able to tell the difference between those who are members of the Muslim Brotherhood and former members? When people say they are not members do you take their word for it? Doesn't the "taqéÅa" (the right to lie to the enemy) form part of their ideology?

Mustafa Omar: Many of the people I am talking about have publicly resigned from the Brotherhood. They have a radical critique of the worldview of the Brothers. We have been working with them for years, and we know exactly who is who, who is honest and who is not.

Many of them still have an Islamist bent, but they reject the politics of the Brotherhood.

The pressure of the revolution has produced a small split in the Brotherhood. A significant minority of several thousand members left the Brotherhood to join the left. When they saw the Brotherhood make cynical arrangements with the Mubarak regime and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, thousands of members preferred to leave the Brotherhood and continue to participate in the January 25 revolution. Before, they really believed their leaders when they said that they were against the regime, against the military dictatorship, against corruption, etc. When they saw that this was not the case, they left.

Some activists from the Brotherhood have joined the Front of the Path of the Revolution. We are talking about a small group of people, not many, but of a significant size. The slogan of the Front is: "Neither the military nor the Brotherhood." They campaign along with us on this slogan. They cannot therefore be moles of the Brotherhood.

Question: Do you still defend the slogan: "Always against the military, sometimes with the Brotherhood"?

Mustafa Omar: It was our general approach before the 2011 revolution. I think this formulation has become partially obsolete during the last year, but the most important part of this slogan is still correct and can be used today. We are indeed trying to defend the right of the Brotherhood to exist as a political force, from the point of view of the defence of democratic rights.

We had a big debate about this in the Revolutionary Socialists. Everyone was not always happy with this position. Our organization had experienced a split in 2009. Many people refused this slogan. Today, all the RS in Egypt agree with this slogan.

Question: What is the position of the left towards the Brotherhood?

Mustafa Omar: One of the most important issues for the Egyptian left is how to address the Muslim Brotherhood.

Historically, the majority of the currents of the Egyptian left consider that the Brothers are fascists. A minority on the left disagrees with this approach. Among them, there are the Revolutionary Socialists. This is a very important issue because it is now possible to see the ramifications of these different ways of analyzing the Brotherhood.

The entire Stalinist and Nasserist left consider that they are fascists, and now they are reaching out to Sissi. A minority on the left, and not just the RS, considers that the Brothers are not fascists and that for that reason they are capable of having an independent position of opposition to the state, but also independence from the Brotherhood.

We are able to fight for democratic rights, while historically the majority of left currents have considered the authoritarian state as a lesser evil compared to the Brothers.

In the 1990s, the majority of the left supported the repression against the Islamists and it supports today the repression against the Brothers, including the massacres. Some of the icons of the left of the last fifty years now support Sissi. For example, Aberrahman El Abnoudy, poet of the revolution, supports Sissi today because he believes that the Brotherhood is an obscurantist force. It's unbelievable, it's a disaster!

Question To refuse the repression against the Brotherhood is one thing, but is it really possible to ally even momentarily with them?

Mustafa Omar: The profile of some Muslim Brotherhood supporters makes it possible to work with them. We can work with some grassroots Brothers on democratic objectives. This is for example at the moment the case on economic and social issues, in particular in the University. At this time, tactically, it is very difficult to work with the Brothers. But in a few months, it will be important to work with them on common goals. Otherwise we will not be able to have an influence on people who belong to the Brotherhood. This is a difference between us and other left forces. It would be crazy to say that we will never demonstrate with the Brothers. If they agree with our demands, they should be welcome.

Question: As individuals or as an organization?

Mustafa Omar: It is possible to do it with individuals. The issue of working with them as an organization is not at present on the agenda. But I do not know what may happen in the future. This is a tactical problem. We must not forget that they are not only present in the University. They are also implanted in the workplaces, in the factories, in large enterprises ... We cannot ignore them.

Question: On January 23 and 25, 2014, didn't your two organizations demonstrate together?

Mustafa Omar: No, of course we demonstrated separately. It would be suicidal to work with the Brotherhood at this time. As regards the future, we do not know how the Brothers may change; we do not know how the situation may evolve. You should never say never.

Regarding the possibilities of working together at the moment, we must take into account two aspects:

1. Before coming to power, the Brotherhood said they were for democracy. Once in power, they fought against democracy. Now that they are no longer in power, they can say again that they are for democracy...

2. It depends on the situation and on the mobilization. If they agree to participate in a mobilization, it is because they agree with the demands of this mobilization. That does not mean that we will forget what they have done in the past or refrain from criticizing them. The problem at present is that they refuse to join any mobilization that does not demand the return of Morsi. For this reason, it is not possible to work with them.

They are persecuted and very angry. It should be understood that thousands of them are in prison, thousands are being tortured. They are very angry, even against the Revolutionary Socialists.

Question: You say that you defend their democratic right to have a party. Do you think their claim to speak in the name of God, to hold the absolute truth, is compatible with democracy?

Mustafa Omar: I believe in their right to have a party; I am opposed to a government that attacks democracy. I can explain to people around them that their policy is harmful. But the state has no right to decide who should have a party or not.

If it was a fascist organization, it would be a different matter. I would not be opposed to a ban. They are conservative, reactionary, but not fascist.

For me, fascism is wanting to completely destroy democracy, the working class, trade unions ... That is not their intention. They are simply authoritarian. They are both conservatives and reformists. They are centre-right. They are not fascists.

Question: You say they are authoritarian. Is authoritarianism compatible with democracy? If they believe they have the absolute truth because it is the word of God, why, once they were in power, would they allow the expression of opinions that were contrary to the divine will? This problem is not confined to the Muslim Brotherhood. It also relates to the Salafist Nour party.

Mustafa Omar: My answer is not an absolute answer. At this time, in relation to the state, when the ruling class is carrying out a counter-revolution to completely destroy every kind of democratic achievement of the revolution of January 25, 2011, I am opposed to the state banning the party of the Muslim Brotherhood or the Nour party. In a different situation if the revolution revived and strengthened, I would not be opposed in principle to the prohibition of such parties. But right now, the main adversary is the state.

Question: But a year ago, when they were in power, did they not try to establish a dictatorship?

Mustafa Omar: No, what they tried to do was to share power with the ruling class of the Mubarak era. They did not have the opportunity. From a formal point of view, they governed. But in reality, the ruling class of the Mubarak regime did not allowed them the possibility.

Question: But have they not killed opponents?

Mustafa Omar: Of course they have committed crimes and we, the RS, demonstrated ceaselessly against them for a year. We were the first, along with the April 6 Movement, to protest against Morsi; that was on August 31, 2012. We do not want to whitewash their crimes, but they were not really governing Egypt, they were trying to share power with the military and the ruling class in general. They could not do much. Everything they did was sabotaged. They offered their services to the ruling class and the ruling class sent them packing.

The Brotherhood is reactionary; I'm not saying it is progressive. But 90 per cent of those killed under Morsi were killed by the Minister of the Interior who is still in office today. In fact, the Brotherhood did not organize a real mass mobilization of their members before the end of June 2013; they only did it just before the coup of July 3.

During the 12 months they were in power, their offices were all burned down. The police and the army refused to protect their premises. They refused to mobilize their members to engage in a street fight. Not because they were against doing that, or because they do not have the capacity to do so. But because they hoped that the state would continue to trust them. They did not want to destabilize their power. I'm not trying to take up the defence of the Brotherhood, but trying to explain what happened during the year that Morsi was in power.

Question: You say that 90 per cent of those killed were killed by the police, but who killed the remaining 10 per cent?

Mustafa Omar: There was a major incident after the Constitutional Decree of November 2012, by which Morsi tried to assume full powers. When confrontations with those who were opposed to the Brotherhood took place on December 4, 2012 in front of the Presidential Palace, the Brothers were defeated and most of those who died during this battle were members of the Brotherhood. But the only victim that people speak about is Hussein Abu Deif, an icon of the revolution who was really killed by the Brothers that day.

However, the Brothers lost this battle; they were thoroughly defeated. And they never tried it again. Their only recourse to violence took place on June 30, 2013, when a crowd came to burn down their headquarters in Cairo. Their members who were inside killed three people. That was in a specific context. It is not as if the Brothers were fascist brutes who took to the streets to kill people. The state was in a certain fashion involved in the burning down of Muslim Brotherhood premises. Dozens of them were burned during the year Morsi was in power. And when Morsi said to the police: "stop it, please," the police answered that they were not interested in their premises.

So this was not a year when they succeeded in imposing an authoritarian order. They had a different project: it was to "sell" the ruling class their ability to control the masses through their grassroots organization. But the ruling class was not interested. It had been at the beginning, but once the situation had stabilized and the Brothers had succeeded in neutralizing the revolution, they had done the job. The ruling class then said to them, "thank you and goodbye." They had done the job: they had betrayed the revolution.

Question: But betraying the revolution supposes that they had previously adhered to it. Was that really the case or had they just used it?

Mustafa Omar: Of course they used it. At the same time, all their members are not opposed to the revolution. That is

why some of them left. The Muslim Brotherhood betrayed the revolution, but they are not the ones who killed it. It is the ruling class that killed the revolution. The Brothers just helped it by betraying the people who had voted for them in five different elections. And the majority of their electors are not members of the Brotherhood. They simply believed that the Brotherhood would bring about social justice and dignity. On January 25, 2011, they committed themselves to achieving the goals of the revolution. Once in power, they changed their discourse ... so they betrayed. Thirteen million people voted for Morsi, whereas the Brotherhood had only five million supporters. Eight million people voted for Morsi because they believed in the revolution and because Morsi said he would accomplish the tasks of the revolution. In the first round of the presidential election, Morsi had only five million votes. In the second, he had about thirteen million. And ten million did not want Mubarak's men to come back.

Question: Marxists say that the Stalinists and Social Democrats have betrayed the working class because historically these parties said that they were on the side of the working class and that they were against capitalism. Is it justified to use the same term about the Muslim Brotherhood?

Mustafa Omar: The Brotherhood was an integral part of the revolution. On February 2, 2011, when Mubarak's thugs on camels attacked the protesters in Tahrir Square, the Brothers were there to repel them. The revolution would have been defeated if they had not been there and Mubarak would still be in power. They are reactionary rightists, opportunists, but they participated in the revolution.

We believe that Hamdine Sabahi betrayed the revolutionary process by lining up on the side of the army after the military coup of July 2013. But in the presidential election we gave him critical support. We never allied ourselves with the Brotherhood.

In the United States the Democrats are part of the ruling class, and for this reason, people should not vote for them. The Brotherhood, on the contrary, is not a party of the ruling class. It is "a mixed party." If they belonged to the ruling class, why would tens of thousands of them be in jail or have been killed? Republicans have never killed Democrats. These two parties do not kill each other. The Brotherhood is a party of the middle class which is supported by a significant part of the working class. I have never seen George Bush demanding that Clinton should be sent to the guillotine. The Brotherhood is not a party of the ruling class. They wanted to join the ruling class. They were turned away.

Question: And how is the situation of trade unionism today?

Mustafa Omar: Terrible. The government has once again imposed Mubarak's trade union confederation. And the new Constitution has more or less outlawed independent unions.

Omar Mustafa is a journalist in Cairo and an activist of the Revolutionary Socialists.

A badly elected and fragile president

According to the official figures, which are quite clearly rigged, unverifiable and in which nobody believes, 93 per cent of electors voted for Marshal Sissi. But simultaneously, only half of the electorate took part in the vote. The left Nasserist Sabahi, the only candidate against Sissi, supposedly won only three per cent of the votes.

The main concern of the population remains how to survive from day to day, with rising unemployment due to a disaster-stricken economy, rocketing prices, cuts and frequent cut-offs of water and electricity.

The current situation in Egypt

The current regime is likely to be more repressive than its predecessors: Sissi must silence any possibility of social protest in order to try and restore the system as it was before 2011.

The situation can quickly change if strikes, which were suspended during the presidential campaign, start up again.

Equally decisive will be the structuring of the revolutionary forces (April 6 Movement, Revolutionary Socialists, Bread and Freedom ...) in a front, like the one that was established during the mobilizations against the law restricting the right to protest last January. Only then will it be possible to create an alternative to both the Army and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Excerpts from an article published on June 5 in [l'Anticapitaliste](#), weekly paper of the NPA in France.

[1] What is called in Egypt the "deep state" consists of the institutions of the state, with all their national and local ramifications, and also the officials who run them.

[2] The term *fellouls* is used to designate the residue of Mubarak's reign.

[3] Whereas El Baradei resigned from his position as Vice-president in the wake of the massacres of Islamists on August 14, 2013, the former independent unionist Kamal Abu Aita remained in place until February 27, 2014.

[4] Just before the election took place, the RS finally asked Hamdine Sabahi to withdraw his candidacy.