



Egyptians protest US and Israeli aggression

between the leaders and the base. Some of the leaders have close ties with Arab reactionary capital, such as the Islamic banks, with commercial and industrial big capital (the Sharif factories), and with investment companies. Some of them have dubious relations with the US intelligence service. However, the broad base consists of petit bourgeois elements that have rebelled against the prevailing capitalist society and its injustices. They suffer a great deal from the crisis, but are unable to find a revolutionary alternative. Finding no alternative, in this life, to their bitter situation, they try to escape from their reality by going backwards in time, chasing the illusion of metaphysical solutions and reverting to the life style of pre-capitalist societies. The leaders avoid offering definite political, social and economic programs, which in turn averts class polarization in the ranks of these groups. They depend solely on evoking religious feelings with 'glorious' but vague slogans about Islamic rule and Sharia (Islamic law).

The Islamic trend includes over 80 groups and circles. Among these, there are many contradictions, so deep that they accuse one another of being infidels. It is hard to imagine that these groups could merge. All attempts to unite them in the so-called Islamic Front have failed. There are two main trends among the Islamic groups. The first tends to cooperate with the regime, hoping to achieve their goals with its protection; this applies to the Muslim Brotherhood groups. The second trend rejects cooperation with the regime, seeking to replace it with Islamic rule. Included in this trend are the Jihad (holy war) groups.

Realizing that the religious trends are a real phenomenon that cannot be ignored or underestimated, our party deals with this on a clear basis:

1. We conduct a serious ideological struggle against their thoughts and ideology.
2. We demand that they politicize their activities and present a definite political and economic program. Such a program will expose the leaders and their relations with imperialist cir-

cles and the big bourgeoisie. These programs will isolate the leaders from their masses, expose their glittering moral slogans and show what interests their ideology serves. We saw one example of this when the leader of a prominent religious group was forced to speak politics with *Al Musawer* magazine. He clearly declared his concept of democracy, saying that under Islamic rule there is no room for opposition, or for any parties or organizations, not even Islamic ones. He also made clear his view that the main illness from which the society is suffering is the public sector, and called for strengthening the private sector!

3. Our party tries patiently to use any chance for joint action with the religious trends, on a minimum platform, in the struggle against Camp David and normalization with the Zionist enemy, for liberating Jerusalem, freedom of political organization and the defense of political prisoners and resisting torture. We know that it is difficult to reach a point of agreement with the Islamic groups, due to radically contradictory concepts and their blind, fanatically sectarian nature. These groups usually stay away from any joint nationalist work, but in the past period they participated in a number of activities organized as front work - the National Committee to Defend Democracy, the struggle against Israeli participation in the Cairo book fair, and the mass movement against the trial of Suleiman Khater. Their participation, however, usually confuses the national struggle, for they insist on imposing their slogans, such as instituting Islamic law, on the other forces. They tend to make side battles, raising issues like atheism and Afghanistan.

With the rise of the progressive national movement, the growth of the left, the formulation of a correct, realistic program and tactics, and the presentation of revolutionary, scientific solutions to our national and social problems, we are confident that we will minimize the power of the Salafi ideology and isolate the extremist religious groups. (Salafi is an Islamic reform movement in Egypt, founded by Mohammed Ahduh in the late 1800's).

For years now, there has been talk of economic, social and political 'reforms'. What has come of these illusions?

The regime was able to implement some 'reforms', but we cannot view this question in isolation as some do. We must employ a class point of view - what is the nature of these 'reforms' and which classes benefit from them? The 'reforms' made only serve the interests of foreign and local capital; they consolidate the material base for the development of subordinate capital. The 'reforms' focused on efforts to direct the capitalist performance and the operation of the infrastructure. The toilers and middle strata do not benefit at all from these 'reforms'. On the contrary, the living conditions of the masses are getting worse. Wages have lost their real value due to spiraling inflation. Unemployment and indirect taxation are increasing. The limited advances that were made under Nasser's regime, in the fields of education, health and social services, are being retracted.

It is enough to know that the 'reforms' enacted by the ruling authority are directed by the International Monetary Fund, international capital and its institutions. These 'reforms' caused a decrease in subsidies for locally produced, basic consumer goods, and devaluation of the Egyptian pound, etc. The results of these 'reforms' are a heavy burden on the masses' shoulders, while the regime grants more benefits, such as exemptions from customs duties and taxes, to capitalist enterprises, to an estimated value of tens of billions of dollars.

The most recent statistics available, for 1975-82, reveal that for one per cent of families, income increased from 9.6% to 17.2% of gross family income, whereas for the vast majority of the masses, income is declining. The governmental 'reform' program includes decreasing the number of workers and overall wages. Ibrahim Nafee, editor-in-chief of *Al Ahram* news-