

Interview with the Egyptian Communist Party

Class Structure of Egypt

Below is the concluding question and answer in the interview with the Egyptian Communist Party, which we printed in our last issue.

Can you give us an idea about the class structure of the Egyptian society?

It is a grave deficiency that, based on available information and statistics, it is difficult to define Egypt's capitalist strata in terms of their position in the production system, their ownership of the means of production and their share in the profits. Until now, scientific efforts have not been exerted to delineate the lines of demarcation between the various classes and the strata within each class. However, there is sufficient data to give a general picture of the class structure and how this has changed, as reflected in the censuses of 1960 and 1976.

In 1960, the civilian labor force was approximately 7.8 million. (This is much more comprehensive than the working class as it contains all who are capable and willing to work, employed and unemployed.) Of the 7.8 million, 576,400 were business owners; these are the big bourgeoisie and the middle bourgeoisie which are bureaucratic, technocratic, feudal, capitalist, industrial and middlemen. They constituted 7.4% of all those working. On the other hand, the number of salaried workers was approximately 3.8 million or 49.2%. Along with salaried workers, there were 1.4 million unsalaried workers, who are usually members of small producers' families, and 150,000 unemployed. The number of self-employed (small producers, farmers, professionals, shop and workshop owners) was about 1.8 million; all of these constitute the petit bourgeoisie.

The situation changed with the extent of the penetration of capitalist relations in the Egyptian society. According to the census of 1976, the number of business owners rose to about 860,000. In other words, the size of the big bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie increased 49%. The number of salaried workers increased to about 6.6 million workers and personnel, or approximately 59.5% of the total number of workers, an increase of 71.9% from 1960 to 1976. The number of unemployed rose to 850,000 - five times the number of unemployed in 1960. The rate of unemployment rose from 2.2% of the civilian labor force in 1960, to 7.7% in 1976. This is in accordance with a fundamental law of any capitalist system.

The extent of the penetration of capitalist relations in Egypt is more clearly seen in another fact which complements the first phenomenon. The number of self-employed in 1976 was approximately 2 million, or 18.9% of the civilian labor force, in contrast to 22.4% in 1960. This means the percentage of the small producers of the petit bourgeoisie has diminished. The percentage of unsalaried workers declined even more sharply; their number decreased to 617,000; in 1960, they were 18.4% of the civilian labor force; by 1976, they constituted only 5.5%. These statistics indicate the near disappearance of family work. They indicate that small producers are diminishing on the one hand, and being transformed into petit bourgeoisie on the other, for they became almost completely dependent on salaried work. In my view, these small producers have become the representatives of the overwhelming majority of what can be called the nationalist bourgeoisie or nationalist capitalists. They are the ones who own enterprises with capital that is solely Egyptian. Following the open door policy, the big bourgeoisie and the overwhelming majority of the middle bourgeoisie was directed towards cooperation with multinational companies and capital. A glance at the size of the open door projects shows that the majority possess capital ranging from just under half a million pounds to three million pounds. Only a few exceed that; they are the projects in which only the big bourgeoisie participate. This shows that the upper strata of the middle bourgeoisie, which are identified as the national

bourgeoisie, while striving to improve their cooperation with foreign capital, no longer express their nationalism by fighting for the independence of the domestic market. For this reason, the social base of the open door policy is not limited to the big bourgeoisie. It also includes the major strata of the Egyptian middle bourgeoisie. The base of subordination is much larger than what some claim it is - only a handful of what they term parasitic capitalists. The petit bourgeoisie is in fact the true representative of the nationalist bourgeoisie. They have a prominent role in the completion of the tasks of the national democratic revolution with socialist horizons. The following table shows the distribution of workers according to occupation:

Occupation	no. in 1000's	percentage
professionals, technicians, related jobs	699.1	10.6%
administrators, related jobs	99.1	1.5%
writers, related jobs	698.7	10.6%
commercial workers	137.2	2.1%
service workers	716.3	10.9%
agricultural workers	2188.4	33.1%
production workers (industry, transport and construction)	1583.1	24.0%
miscellaneous	478.1	7.2%
	6600.0	100.0%

This shows that industrial workers, the most active and organized faction of the working class, constitute 24% of the civilian labor force. Along with agricultural and commercial workers, they constitute 59.2%. Thus, wage earners in general constitute approximately 17.5% of the population. This is almost twice the percentage of wage earners in Czarist Russia when the October Revolution was victorious.

The rural areas also experienced the penetration of capitalist production relations more clearly between 1960 and 1976. On the one hand, the number of agricultural workers decreased from more than 80% in 1960 to less than 60% in 1976. The increase in non-agricultural labor is an indication of extensive capitalist penetration in the rural areas. On the other hand, the number of those owning less than 5 acres of land, i.e., the small farmers, increased from 2,919,000 (or 94.1% of all land owners), to 3,479,000 in 1981 (or 95.6%). Their share of the land decreased from 3,172,000 acres, with an average holding of 1.1 acres, to 2,916,000 acres, with an average holding of .9 acres. At the same time, there was an increase in the number of farmers owning 5-10 acres. There were 80,000 farmers, or 2.6% of land holders, who owned 516,000 acres, with an average holding of 4.6 acres. This rose to 87,000, or 2.4% of all land owners, owning 577,000 acres, with an average land holding of 6.6 acres. However, the number of rich farmers, owning 10 or more acres, decreased from 1.2 thousand, or 3.3% of all owners, who own 2,396,000 acres, with an average holding of 23.5 acres, to 74,000 or 2% of all land holders, owning 2,004,000 acres, with an average of 27.1 acres in each land holding.