

The Egyptian Revolution enters a new stage

Alex Lantier
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The forced resignation of Hosni Mubarak, the dictator of Egypt who ruled the country for more than three decades, was a significant victory for workers and youth who have participated in their millions in demonstrations and strikes during the past several weeks. Subsequent events have shown, however, that this revolution is only in its initial stages.

With its series of communiqués issued over the weekend, the Egyptian military has made clear its response to the revolutionary struggles. Its aim is to divert and suppress the mass movement, while ensuring a tactical transfer of power to maintain the old regime in all but name.

The Egyptian army is highlighting its elimination of various legal fictions of the Mubarak regime—the rubberstamp parliament and the dictator’s constitution. In line with the Obama administration’s false claims that the army would lead a “democratic transition,” the *New York Times* praised these measures as “sweeping steps that echoed protestors’ demands.”

This is an absurd falsification. The army is trying to keep itself in power, while granting none of the basic demands that are driving millions of Egyptians into the streets. The country is now under the rule of a military junta, which is retaining all the emergency powers of the old regime, preserving the police, and attempting to rule through a network of old Mubarak cronies like Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq.

As for the Obama administration, having supported Mubarak for as long as possible, it is backing the military regime. On Saturday, the administration declared that it welcomed the measures taken by the generals and their supposed commitment to democracy. Having helped train many of Egypt’s officers, it

intends to use them to secure its interests in Egypt and the Middle East. These include not only defending its strategic and military interests, but above all heading off a revolutionary challenge from the working class.

Deeply tied to Egypt’s business community, the officer corps is hostile to the wave of strikes that is shaking Egypt, and workers’ demands for improved wages and social conditions. While it does not yet feel strong enough to do so, the army is signaling its intention to move against strikers. In a statement denouncing “chaos and disorder,” the Higher Military Council said it would ban meetings by labor unions or professional syndicates, effectively making strikes illegal.

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In six months, and perhaps longer, the army plans to hold elections on the basis of a constitution drafted exclusively by itself, and without dissolving Mubarak’s National Democratic Party (NDP). That is, it hopes to use the six-month period to wind down the protests and give a pseudo-democratic cover to a regime no more responsive to the demands of the population than the one controlled by the hated Mubarak.

This basic political fact is summed up in the person of Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi—now officially the ruler of Egypt—as depicted in cables by US Ambassador to Egypt Francis Ricciardone published by WikiLeaks. Describing Tantawi in March 2008 as committed to the 1979 treaty with Israel and firmly “opposed [to] both economic and political reforms,” Ricciardone summed up Tantawi’s politics thus: “He and Mubarak are focused on regime stability and maintaining the status quo through the end of their time.”

The claim that this corresponds to protestors' demands is a repugnant lie. The millions of people now participating in strikes and protests—and the thousands who were killed or tortured—were not struggling to preserve the old regime.

Egypt's official "opposition" is nonetheless signaling its support for the army. After stressing the need for "law and order" Friday, Mohammed ElBaradei declared yesterday: "We trust the army and call upon people to give them the opportunity to implement what they promised."

Mohamed el-Katatni, a leading official of the Muslim Brotherhood, said: "The main goal of the revolution has been achieved."

These statements clearly demonstrate that no constituency for genuine democracy exists in the Egyptian capitalist class, or its backers in Washington, or in the capitals of the other imperialist powers. The basic demands of the workers and oppressed masses—for better wages and living conditions, for social equality, and for an end to imperialist domination—fill all sections of the political establishment with dread. Faced with a mass upsurge of the working class, threatening their basic class interests, the pro-capitalist "opposition" reacts by backing the dictatorship.

This confirms a central tenet of the theory of Permanent Revolution elaborated by Leon Trotsky: the bourgeoisie of oppressed countries cannot lead a struggle for democracy and an end to imperialist domination. Any such struggle, Trotsky wrote in *The Permanent Revolution*, "is inevitably and very quickly confronted with tasks, the fulfillment of which is bound up with deep inroads into the rights of bourgeois property. The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a permanent revolution."

The continuation of the revolution and the fight for its interests is bringing the working class and oppressed masses into ever more direct conflict with the military, the official opposition, and US imperialism.

To carry forward this struggle requires the building of independent organs of workers' democracy, in opposition to the military-police state, to lay the groundwork for a transfer of power to the working class. It requires the fight to unify the workers of Egypt with the working class of the entire region, along with workers in the advanced capitalist countries—above all the United States. The revolutionary uprising in Egypt is part of a global struggle of workers and oppressed around the world against a common assault of the corporate and financial elite.

Above all, it requires the building of a new party dedicated to leading these struggles to their necessary conclusion: socialist revolution. The International Committee of the Fourth International calls on all its readers and sympathizers in Egypt and internationally to join it in the fight to build such a party.

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