The Egyptian revolution that began last January has reached a crucial turning point in which the masses of working people, whose struggles overthrow the Western-backed dictatorship of President Hosni Mubarak, confront the threat of a counterrevolution by the military junta that controls the government. Under these conditions, a group of parties calling themselves “left” and even “socialist” have joined together to establish an alliance with the bourgeoisie, which in turn supports the military.

On May 10 these parties—the Workers Democratic Party, the Revolutionary Socialists, the Popular Alliance, the Egyptian Socialist Party and the Egyptian Communist Party—united in a so-called Socialist Front, declaring its aim to be that of “defending the rights of the people and the interests of the nation.” It added that it would “cooperate with all progressive and democratic powers to achieve common national goals”, consisting of the establishment of a bourgeois democratic, secular state.

The driving force of the revolutionary movement that brought down Mubarak was the working class, which paralyzed the country with mass strikes and forced the hand of the military, which found itself compelled to renounce the dictator.

Since the military assumed power on February 11, not a day has passed without significant strikes and protests by Egypt’s working population. For the masses of Egypt, the fall of Mubarak was only the beginning, and they have already formulated extensive demands that can be resolved only on the basis of a political offensive against the capitalist system.

For example, on March 11, the newspaper Revolutionary Egypt published a list of demands made by revolutionary workers. Their demands included:

- Raising the minimum wage and pensions and fixing the [wage] ceiling at approximately 15 times the minimum level in order to realize the principle of social equality which the revolution has adopted. Unemployment benefits for the unemployed and routine increases commensurate with the increase in prices.
- Reclamation of the companies which have been privatized and their controls the government. Under these conditions, a group of parties calling themselves “left” and even “socialist” have joined together to establish an alliance with the bourgeoisie, which in turn supports the military.
- The right to strike, to sit in, and to protest peacefully for all Egyptian workers…and all those who are currently striking against the lackeys of the former regime…and those who were imposed upon their organizations with the goal of ruining them, knowing that if this revolution does not lead to a fair distribution of wealth and to the establishment of social justice…then it will be as if nothing changed.. Political freedoms cannot be complete without social freedoms…The right to a loaf of bread is the natural precursor of the right to a ballot.
- The dissolution of the General Union of Egyptian Workers which is considered one of the greatest symbols of the former regime’s corruption
channels and thus preserving the capitalist system. It is in this context that
the role played by the parties that formed the “Socialist Front” has
become increasingly significant, with their activities and views given
generally favourable coverage in the bourgeois media.

The character of these activities and views is expressed clearly in the
political trajectory of one of the front’s members, the Workers
Democratic Party (WDP). Founded in the wake of the January 25
revolution, it claims to represent the interests of Egyptian workers, but it
is in fact a thoroughly bourgeois party, firmly anchored in capitalism and
striving for a parliamentary republic.

In its founding manifesto, published on May 1, the WDP describes one
of its main principles as the “consolidation of democracy”. This is to be
achieved through “a constitution committed to human rights, civil rights,
and freedom of expression”, as well as through the “founding of a
parliamentary republic, with the freedom to found political parties and
trade unions”.

On March 24, the WDP presented its first draft program, which made it
clear that the group has nothing to do with socialism. The term “socialism” does not appear once in the document. The second paragraph,
with the headline “Our Party”, puts forward purely bourgeois demands
and states: “Our party is one that pursues the goal of achieving freedom,
democracy, human dignity and social justice.”

In the next paragraph, its “Declaration of the principles of the Workers
Party”, stresses again that the WDP is a bourgeois party. “The WDP will
strive for the three principles of the Egyptian Revolution: Freedom, social
justice and a bourgeois (civil) state”.

In the fourth paragraph, after proposing some relatively limited
democratic and social demands, the WDP abruptly declares its desire to
topple capitalism. A few more paragraphs later, however, it clarifies what
the party means by this: “Toppling the system does not just mean
removing its head. We want to change the basic character of the regime’s
policies”. In other words, it poses as the central task that of pressuring the
bourgeois regime to alter its policies.

The last paragraph of their draft, titled “The workers’ struggle for their
national interests”, outlines demands related to neighboring Arab states
and Israel that are basically shared by broad layers of the Egyptian
bourgeoisie, who wish for more independence from US imperialism after
the overthrow of Mubarak, in order to better pursue their own interests in
the region. Such demands could find the support of other bourgeois forces,
such as ElBaradei’s National Association for Change and the Islamist
Muslim Brotherhood.

Like these forces, the WDP strives for a bourgeois government that will
make minor changes in foreign policy, which exclusively reflect the
interests of the Egyptian bourgeoisie.

The WDP ends its programs by stating that it is ready to participate in
such a government: “We will continue to strive to achieve the vision of
Egyptian workers, and involve them in the revolutionary government,
which truly represents the interests of the majority of the popular masses
of Egyptian people.”

In order to better understand the WDP’s character, it is necessary to
take a closer look at the political group that initiated its founding. The
WDP is the project of the Revolutionary Socialists (RS), the Egyptian
section of the International Socialist Tendency (IST), whose most
important national group is the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

The SWP was founded by Tony Cliff, who broke with Marxism in the
late 1940s based on his conception that the Soviet Union was not a
degenerate workers’ state, as Leon Trotsky had analyzed, but rather a
form of state capitalism.

Since its foundation, the IST’s policies can be summarized as a history
of opportunist adaptation to social democratic and union bureaucracies.
The state capitalists have gone so far as to take up important positions in
the bourgeois state. In Germany, Christine Buchholz from Marx 21, (an
organization affiliated to the SWP), is a member of the German
government’s Defence Commission, supporting German military crimes
in the imperialist war in Afghanistan. The German faction of IST has fully
dissolved into the Left Party, which consist of aging social democrats and
Stalinists and has been active for many years in organizing the
dismantling of Germany’s welfare state.

The political perspective of the Egyptian state capitalists’ is no better.
For years they have been collaborating with the Muslim Brotherhood, a
reactionary Islamist group deeply hostile towards the working class. The
RS tries to justify its collaboration with the Brotherhood on the basis of
“Marxist traditions” that they have either failed to understand or have
deliberately distorted.

In an interview with International Socialism, Sameh Naguib, a leading
representative of RS, and a sociologist at the American University in
Cairo, explained that the collaboration with the Muslim Brotherhood was
based on the “Marxist tradition of the united front”. In practice, he said,
this means “entering joint struggles alongside reformist organizations
such as the Muslim Brotherhood, for certain goals; and without giving up
one’s own independence or open criticism.”

In reality, a united front with the Muslim Brotherhood has nothing to do
with a Marxist policy. Originally, the united front was a tactic developed
by the Comintern at its Third World Congress in 1921, with the goal of
breaking the majority of workers, who still trusted Social Democratic
parties, from these old organisations and winning them to a revolutionary
policy. Unlike the Social Democrats of the 1920s, the Muslim
Brotherhood is neither a “reformist” party, nor does it have any traditions
or roots within the working class; and, one might add, the RS, unlike the
Comintern before its Stalinization, does not represent a revolutionary
program.

The “united front” advocated by RS has much more in common with the
Stalinist popular front of the mid-1930s, when the Communist Parties of
France and Spain entered bourgeois governments that strangled the
workers’ revolutionary movements and enabled the fascist powers to
drown the revolutions in blood.

Today, like the Stalinists before them, the Revolutionary Socialists stand
on the side of counterrevolution. Their policies are playing into the hands
of the Egyptian military, which is preparing to suffocate the revolution by
force.

In the midst of a revolution in which the task of the working class can be
nothing less than the establishment of a workers’ government to defend
democratic and social interests, the Egyptian state capitalists are
trying to establish a bourgeois party to derail workers from waging their
own class struggle.

Their justification for such a policy could hardly be more cynical. In an
interview on the RS’s web site on March 31, the leader of RS and WDP,
Kamal Khalil, claims that the WDP is not a socialist party, because the
workers themselves are not “prepared to support socialism”.

Instead of fighting for the development of a socialist perspective and an
international socialist program in the working class, the RS simply
declares the Egyptian workers hostile to socialism, and, on that basis,
justifies its own orientation to bourgeois politics.

The Egyptian state capitalists do not represent the Egyptian workers’
interests, but rather those of the bourgeoisie and the upper middle classes,
whose greatest fear is that the workers will take power and establish a
socialist society. Thus it comes as no surprise that the RS and WDP are
being wooed with overly positive articles in the Egyptian and
international bourgeois media, from Al Masty, Al Youm and Al Ahram, to
the British Guardian and Al Jazeera, with its leading representatives, such
as Hossam al-Hamalawy, provided a forum for their articles and columns.