

Egyptian bourgeoisie and pseudo-left oppose a “second revolution”

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On May 27, hundreds of thousands workers and youth demonstrated in all major Egyptian cities against the policies of the military junta which took power after Mubarak's ouster on February 11. The demonstrations made clear that protesters identify the military government as an open threat to the revolution. Among the slogans has been the call for a “second revolution.”

Indeed, the military government has pursued all the same policies as the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak. The emergency law remains in effect, strikes and protests that affect the economy are banned, and protesters and activists criticizing the military dictatorship are prosecuted and detained. With respect to foreign policy, Egypt remains the cornerstone of Western imperialism in the region. Slight changes such as the partial opening of the Rafah border crossing with Gaza or the resumption of bilateral talks with Iran have been aimed at containing domestic opposition and preserving the strategic alliance with the United States and Israel.

Many protesters who talked to the *World Socialist Web Site* on Tahrir Square on May 27 insisted that nothing had really changed in the four months since the beginning of the revolution.

One student from Helwan University said, “I am today on Tahrir Square again because we have another dictatorship now. The military punishes any critical word about their rule. It has already attacked and detained hundreds of peaceful protesters and activists. Furthermore it didn't meet any of the democratic and social demands of the people, and the prosecution of leading figures of the old regime really is a joke. The mass murderer Mubarak is still in his five star hospital in Sharm el-Sheikh.”

Another protester, who came from Menoufiya to Cairo in order to join the protests said, “In my opinion Field Marshal Tantawi [the head of the military junta] and Mubarak are the same. In fact, the whole military council is part of the old regime; I mean these are Mubarak's generals. To me it's really not a surprise that there hasn't been real change yet. The revolution has to continue and that's why I am here today.”

Confronted with this increasing militancy of Egyptian workers and youth, the military junta is using the same methods and arguments as the Mubarak dictatorship to justify strangling the working class. At the same time, the pseudo-left parties of the Socialist Front play an increasing role in attempting to control the working class and encouraging illusions in the military junta and bourgeois politics in general.

Over the past several weeks, Islamist groups have tried to incite religious strife between the Muslim majority and Egypt's Christian minority. The military stood idly by when armed thugs attacked a church in the working class neighborhood of Imbaba in Cairo. At least ten people died during the clashes. Now the military rulers are using the fear of “chaos” to strengthen the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state and denounce everybody who continues protesting.

Before the protests on May 27, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) released a message on its Facebook page, accusing protestors of being “suspicious foreign elements who claim to be patriots,” and of making false statements to divide the army from the

people. Such “foreign elements,” according to the statement, used outlaws to infiltrate protests and provoke confrontations with army and police forces. Their aim is to weaken the military, the “linchpin of Egypt's safety and security in this important phase in the history of our beloved Egypt.”

The army's statement was surrounded by a huge propaganda campaign in the state-controlled media against any further protests and strikes and for the call of a tougher stance of the military rulers in the “transition period.” Various commentators demanded that the army do “everything necessary to restore security” and to stop “chaos.”

A comment in *Al Ahrām Weekly* by Galal Nasser made clear that the whole campaign for “security” is directed against the revolutionary Egyptian working class. The last lines of his comment read: “Unless we stop this chaos, another revolution may follow, and this time it will be the revolution that sociologists warned us before 25 January: the revolution of the hungry.”

The Egyptian bourgeoisie is split over how to deal with the threat of a second revolution. There are discussions that the Junta itself could prepare a deal with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and other Islamist groups.

The Muslim Brotherhood is the biggest and best-organized political force in Egypt, and sections of the bourgeoisie consider an MB government, backed by the military as the best means to contain the revolutionary movement. The MB was hostile towards the revolution from the start and opposed the mass demonstrations in the first days of the revolution. Now it openly supports the military government. It denounced the May 27 protesters as “secularists and communists”.

Several liberal parties, like al-Wafd or the newly-founded Free Egyptians Party of billionaire Naguib Sawiris, also rejected the protests on May 27, citing the need for stability. Prominent bourgeois politicians like Mohamed ElBaradei, Hisham Bastawisi, Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh or Amr Moussa, who was participating in the G8 summit in France, also abstained.

Some members of ElBaradei's National Alliance for Change participated in the protests, but on an individual basis. According to the independent Egyptian Newspaper *Yom7*, his Alliance has decided to suspend its activities “until there is stability in the country.”

The presidential candidates Hamdeen Sabahi, leader of the Nasserist Karama (Dignity) Party and Ayman Nour (El Ghad) participated. Their aim was to distract from the main objectives of the mass protests. Nour claimed that the call was not for a million man march, and that people only protested “to eradicate political corruption.”

Other liberal parties and youth groups like the April 6 Youth Movement—who initially demanded that the military take power to “protect the revolution”—have begun to take a somewhat more critical stance towards Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) government. They have proposed that the SCAF be replaced by a civilian council and have accused the army of using excessive force against peaceful protestors after Mubarak's downfall.

The army has repeatedly cracked down on peaceful protesters, detaining thousands and sending them to military trials. Human rights groups regularly report the use of torture against detained protesters.

But the forces now criticizing the army don't question the SCAF in general, not to mention the capitalist state through which it rules. Now, as broad layers of society begin to understand the real character of the SCAF and lose some of the illusions of the early days of the revolution, the student organizations claim that mass pressure is enough to engage the army in a "real dialogue" and to complete the revolution.

A critical role in this effort to prevent a second revolution from below and to bolster the bourgeois state is played by the various pseudo-left groups like the Revolutionary Socialists (RS), the Workers Democratic Party (WDP), the Socialist Alliance Party (SAP), the Egyptian Socialist Party (ESP) and the Egyptian Communist Party (ECP). On May 10, these forces united in a so-called Socialist Front, declaring in their founding statement that they would "cooperate with all progressive and democratic powers to achieve common national goals."

The Socialist Front has a bourgeois and nationalist platform, falsely adopting the label "socialist" only to mislead workers and youth looking for an alternative to the capitalist system. The perspective underlying the formation of the Socialist Front is of building a broad alliance of middle-class parties, which will seek influence or public office under the control of the Egyptian military. It has nothing to do with socialism or a struggle for workers' power.

On May 27, none of these pseudo-left forces supported the call for a second revolution. The RS issued a statement under the title "No to military rule – why we go back to Tahrir on May 27," calling for a "revolutionary civilian presidential council for the transition period" to bring the revolution back "on the right path". Furthermore, it demanded the "election of a constituent assembly to establish a constitution before the elections."

Without the perspective of a new revolution against the SCAF junta, however, this is empty phrase-mongering—the expression of pious hopes that the military dictatorship will peacefully create a capitalist democracy. Significantly, the RS's appeal was co-signed by the National Front for Justice and Democracy (NFJD)—an openly pro-capitalist party working in the orbit of the old state and media apparatus.

The NFJD's stated goal is to "work with all other political movements to form the best governmental, political, and constitutional environment for the coming period without excluding any side." Its program includes "influencing the results of the elections as much as possible." Its methods include "popular pressure" as well as "media pressure," including work to "deepen beneficial relationships with traditional media platforms." (See: <http://www.tahrirdocuments.org/2011/05/national-front-for-justice-and-democracy/>)

The other forces of the Socialist Front did not even raise the demand that the SCAF step down, but spread the illusion that the junta could be pressured to adopt democratic policies.

The SAP called for a "roadmap for the transition period which guarantees a new constitution before any elections." It appealed to the Military Council to "protect the countries from dangers whose extent only God knows." The SAP's fear of the revolution and its fawning before the military dictatorship is little wonder—it consists largely of former members of the official "left" party during the Mubarak era, the National Progressive Unionist Party ("Tagammu"). After many years of collaboration with Mubarak, it is widely discredited.

Members of the WDP, a party newly founded by the RS, handed out a flyer titled "Together in support of the revolution." It states that "the demands of the Egyptian people still exist" but that "official statements, both of the ministers or the military council indicate that the demands for social justice and a life in dignity are not among the priorities of the next phase."

The American International Socialist Organization (ISO)—an organization in solidarity the International Socialist Tendency (IST), to which the RS in Egypt is affiliated—openly praised the SCAF junta.

A June 1 comment by Mostafa Omar, published on the ISO's web site socialistworker.org, maintains that the junta has "no intention of trying to return to the way the regime operated before January 25." It even adds that the military "Council aims to reform the political and economic system, allowing it to become more democratic and less oppressive." Then Omar concludes that the "left" needs to "pressure the Council and its supporters in the coming few month, while avoiding premature confrontations."

Such arguments—that the SCAF junta is somehow a progressive force, or that it can be persuaded to build a democratic regime—are reactionary lies. The parties advancing them are not only hostile to a struggle for socialism; their hostility to socialism means they are also hostile to any struggle for real democracy.

As the working class revolts against poverty and exploitation as cheap labor, the capitalists and the military dictatorship are drawn into ever closer alliance against the mass of the population. The Egyptian military needs the financial and technical support of foreign imperialism, notably the multi-billion aid packages it receives from Washington. For its part, foreign and Egyptian capital needs the Egyptian military junta to impose the right-wing policies they are preparing on the working class and oppressed masses.

On June 5 Egyptian Finance Minister Samir Radwan announced that Egypt will conclude a \$3 billion standby financing arrangement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Like IMF packages in Europe and around the world, this will only further impoverish the masses. The US and the European powers are using the IMF to force Egypt to open up the economy even further to foreign capital. These free-market policies led to the enormous poverty and social inequality in Egypt which was the main cause of the outbreak of the revolution.

As it prepares to carry out these policies, the military dictatorship is increasing its use of force against the working class. On June 1, military police detained five of about 150 Petrojet workers who are staging a sit-in in front of the Ministry of Petroleum.

On June 3 a microbus driver died in police custody in the notorious Azbakeya Police Station in Cairo. His colleagues said that he was tortured to death by the police. In response they started rioting and set a police truck on fire. Military police and Central Security Forces cracked down on the rioters and arrested several of them.



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