

Political tasks of the Egyptian Revolution

Johannes Stern
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In recent days a new wave of strikes and protests against the US-backed military junta has swept over Egypt. Doctors, students and different sections of the working class, including postal workers and teachers, have gone on strike, and further protests have been announced. There are calls for a general strike on the first day of the school year, September 17.

After the ousting of US-backed dictator Hosni Mubarak through mass strikes in February, the working class has clearly emerged as the leading force opposing continued dictatorship in Egypt. After seven months of direct military rule, illusions in the military as “protector of the revolution” and caretaker of a “democratic transition” are being shattered. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) is widely seen as an extension of the Mubarak regime.

On Sunday, Egypt’s military rulers announced an expansion of the emergency laws, whose abolition was a central demand of the revolution. The junta is also threatening to enforce an anti-strike law it passed this spring but has not yet dared use.

The crackdown on protesters at the Israeli embassy Friday—killing three and injuring over 1,000 in a raid that followed talks with Israeli and US officials—underscores the military junta’s role as an agent of imperialism. Together with Israel, Egypt is the biggest recipient of US foreign aid and Egypt’s ruling generals have been working closely with Israel and the US for decades.

Continuing protests highlight the political gulf separating the working class from all the established political parties. All these forces—be they Islamist, liberal or pseudo-left—have spread illusions in the military, claiming that Mubarak’s generals would establish democracy and social justice. The purpose of these lies is to disarm the Egyptian working class, to prevent it from forming its own organizations and parties, and thus block it from struggling to overthrow

the junta and take power into its own hands.

Behind these parties’ support for military rule lie profound social and material interests. They regard the SCAF as the backbone of the Egyptian capitalist state, defending the privileges of the ruling class. This includes prominently the middle-class, pseudo-left parties like the Egyptian Socialist Party (ESP), the Workers Democratic Party (WDP), and the Revolutionary Socialists (RS), all of which issue toothless criticisms of the junta while seeking to channel popular opposition into futile appeals for it to modify its policies.

They are deeply hostile to an overthrow of the junta and the struggle for a workers’ government. During the last round of mass struggles in July, the RS published a statement directly opposing popular demands for a “Second Revolution.” To prevent the overthrow of the junta, the pseudo-left groups entered a so-called “United Popular Front” with liberal and Islamist groups, paving the way for the August 1 crackdown on protesters in Tahrir Square.

These groups have nothing to do with socialist politics. They represent a small, affluent middle-class layer, e.g., journalists and university lecturers, who are integrating themselves into the political establishment. Their leaders work for the international press, rub shoulders with the Muslim Brotherhood and other bourgeois organizations, and have easy access to publicity and revenues. They are now seeking to cash in on building “independent trade unions” with money given by Western governments and NGOs, so as to create a new bureaucracy to strangle workers’ struggles.

The experience of the revolution shows workers’ demands for social equality and genuine democratic rights can be achieved only through conscious revolutionary struggle against the junta and all its defenders. The only viable perspective for the strike

movement is to expand it into a general strike to bring down the junta and replace it with a workers' government pursuing socialist policies.

As world capitalism slides further into its deepest crisis since the 1930s, the conditions for an international struggle for socialism are not only increasingly favorable, the organization of such a struggle is increasingly posed as a practical task. It is impossible to solve the problems raised by the Egyptian revolution in Egypt alone.

The international working class is moving into struggle against the ruling class. In Israel, the working class has emerged in mass protests against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and, more fundamentally, against the domination of Israeli life by billionaire oligarchs. Jewish workers have begun to join hands with their Arab brothers in a common struggle for democratic and social rights.

In Europe, workers and youth are struggling against devastating austerity policies imposed by governments completely subservient to the financial markets, and American workers this year waged mass protests in Wisconsin against social cuts partly inspired by the protests in Tahrir Square.

At the same time, imperialism's international drive to war and social reaction becomes ever more naked. To Egypt's west, NATO is installing a pliant puppet regime in Libya to plunder the country in the interests of Western corporations and serve as a base for counter-revolutionary intrigue. The Netanyahu regime has responded to the outbreak of mass struggles in Israel and Egypt by increasing tensions with both Turkey and Egypt.

To wage its revolutionary struggle and appeal internationally for revolutionary class solidarity, Egyptian workers must build their own organizations of struggle.

During the 1917 Revolution in Russia, the working class, under the political influence of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, established *soviets* (councils) as organs of working class revolution and state power. The Bolsheviks led this organized working class in the overthrow of the bourgeois Provisional Government and the establishment of a workers' government.

The absence of such workers' organizations and such a revolutionary party has enabled the bourgeoisie to

this point to retain state power and control of the productive forces, and prepare a counterrevolution. The most critical question is the building of a new revolutionary leadership in the working class to imbue its struggles with a conscious revolutionary and internationalist program and strategy.

The only tendency advancing such a perspective is the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which defends the heritage of Leon Trotsky and the theory of Permanent Revolution against the betrayals of Marxism by Stalinism and social democracy. We urge workers to take up the struggle to build a section of the ICFI to fight for the program of the United Socialist States of the Middle East, as part of the world socialist revolution.

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