Renewed uprising signals turning point in Egyptian revolution

Bill Van Auken
22 November 2011

Hundreds of thousands of Egyptian workers and youth have poured into Cairo's Tahrir Square and into the streets of cities and towns from Alexandria to Suez, from Lower Egypt to the Nile Delta, protesting the savage repression unleashed by the army and the security forces over the past three days and demanding an end to the rule of the US-backed military junta.

Scores have been killed and over 2,000 wounded. Fierce street battles continued into the early morning hours Tuesday in the streets surrounding Tahrir Square. An official at the main Cairo morgue confirmed to the Associated Press that the bodies of 35 victims of the crackdown had been brought there by Monday.

Among the wounded, some had lost eyes and suffered grievous head wounds from tear gas canisters, rubber bullets, buckshot and live rounds fired at unarmed demonstrators. Soldiers and cops were instructed to aim for the head. Other civilians were mercilessly beaten with truncheons, some apparently to the point of death.

The ammunition used to kill, wound and maim Egyptian workers and youth literally bears the stamp "Made in the USA," and Washington is carefully monitoring the upheaval while continuing to support its clients and stooges in the Egyptian military's Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (SCAF).

The White House issued a mealy-mouthed statement Monday asserting that President Barack Obama was "deeply concerned about the violence in Egypt that has led to a tragic loss of life among demonstrators and security forces," and advising that "Now is a time for restraint on all sides so that Egyptians can move forward together to forge a strong and united Egypt." Above all, the statement insisted, "These tragic events should not stand in the way of elections."

While apportioning equal blame on the unarmed demonstrators and the security forces that are gunning them down, the administration is expressing its "deep concern" by pushing a $1.3 billion military aid package for Egypt through the US Congress to assure that these forces remain armed to the teeth against the Egyptian masses.

The overriding concern that parliamentary elections set for Sunday November 28 go forward does not arise out of any commitment by US imperialism to democracy. It approaches the events in Egypt just as it does those in Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain and elsewhere, in some cases pursuing regime-change and in others supporting regime repression, all with the aim of exploiting the upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa to advance Washington's struggle for hegemony over the region and its vast energy resources.

These elections have nothing to do with advancing the interests and aspirations of the masses of Egyptian working people, whose strikes and powerful demonstrations forced the ouster last February of the US-backed dictator Hosni Mubarak after 30 years in power. Workers entered this historic struggle in a fight for jobs, decent living standards and an end to the repression, exploitation and obscene levels of social inequality imposed by the Egyptian oligarchy and international capital—conditions that have dramatically worsened since the eruption of the world capitalist crisis.

The social and political demands of the Egyptian working class, like those of their class brothers elsewhere in the Middle East, Europe, the US and internationally, can be realized only by means of a revolutionary struggle for the socialist transformation of society.

The elections backed by the US are aimed at providing a fake "democratic" legitimacy to Egypt's continued domination by the native oligarchs and their military henchmen, along with the transnational banks and corporations. The ruling SCAF has assured itself a stranglehold over political life in Egypt by reserving the power to appoint four-fifths of the delegates to a

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constituent assembly, as well as veto power over any part of the constitution that is ultimately drafted. It has likewise kept in place the full apparatus of repression and torture developed under Mubarak, using it to outlaw strikes and protests and arrest and bring before military tribunals some 12,000 people in just the last nine months.

Faced with the new popular uprising, the country's civilian cabinet, installed by the ruling military council and headed by former Mubarak minister Essam Sharaf, offered its resignation late Monday. The resignation, which was uncharacteristically announced on state television, was seen by some as an attempt to placate the mass protests. At the same time, while placing full and undisguised power in the hands of the military command, it could clear the path for another political maneuver.

A growing number of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political figures and organizations in Egypt, including Mohamed ElBaradei, the former chief of the United Nations nuclear inspection agency and current Egyptian presidential candidate, have raised the demand for a "national salvation government." It was reported Monday that 37 political groups, including "liberal, Islamist and leftist parties," endorsed this demand, while calling for a "million-man" protest in Tahrir Square on Tuesday.

Such a government, installed by the same Egyptian military command that has carried out the bloody repression of the past three days, would have as its central task the strangling of the independent struggles of the working class in the name of preserving the national interest and the unity of the "revolution."

Such a course is being facilitated by a collection of pseudo-left parties in Egypt that, while calling themselves "socialist" and "revolutionary," are determined to subordinate the struggles of the Egyptian working class to the military junta's so-called "democratic" transition and its rigged election process. Representing the interests not of the working class, but rather of more affluent sections of the Egyptian petty bourgeoisie, these groups oppose any independent political struggle by the workers on the basis of a socialist program.

This is the case, for example, with the Revolutionary Socialists, which is affiliated with the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain, and unofficially with the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the United States. This group, which had agreed to participate in the elections organized by the military rulers, issued a demagogic statement condemning the repression and insisting that "our revolution is not complete." The only concrete policy it advanced, however, was the insistence that the masses had to "apply the lessons of the 25 January Revolution" and "unite all the forces in our 'Liberated Squares' in a single front, which alone has the right to speak for the revolution."

What this high-flown rhetoric means in practice is that no demands and no policies should be advanced unless they are acceptable to all the constituencies of the "single front," with ElBaradei and the right-wing Islamists of the Muslim Brotherhood at its head.

The "single front" advocated by the Revolutionary Socialists and other elements of Egypt's middle-class pseudo-left serves to subordinate the struggle of the Egyptian workers and youth against social inequality and capitalist exploitation to the phony democratic pretensions of the Egyptian bourgeoisie, which is determined to crush the strikes and protests of the working class.

The real lesson of the January 25 movement is that the working class can achieve its social and political aims only by forging its political independence and mobilizing the masses of oppressed for the revolutionary overthrow of the military junta and its replacement by a workers' government. The fight for the socialist transformation of Egypt can be won only through a struggle to cast off imperialist domination throughout the Middle East, as part of an international struggle for socialism.

The decisive question confronting the Egyptian workers is the building of a new revolutionary leadership based upon an international socialist perspective. Only on the basis of this perspective can the working class defeat the counterrevolutionary offensive of the Egyptian bourgeoisie and its petty-bourgeois pseudo-left accomplices, break the stranglehold of imperialism, and carry through the fight for a genuine democratic and socialist transformation. This means building an Egyptian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Bill Van Auken

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