

The Egyptian revolution turns against the military

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The year 2011 began with powerful struggles of workers and youth in North Africa against long-time US-backed dictators, which culminated in the forced resignation of Egypt's Hosni Mubarak on February 11. As the year draws to a close, a new wave of demonstrations is rocking Egypt, directed at the military government that replaced him.

The renewed revolutionary upsurge is the working class's verdict on the Egyptian military's claims to be leading "democratic transition." Demonstrations throughout the country against the military junta, still backed with billions of dollars in money from American imperialism, have confronted a brutal state crackdown, which has already killed dozens and wounded thousands.

Attempts to promote elections that are to be held under the junta's thumb today were met with mass chants of "Down, down with military rule!" When the junta chose a new prime minister, Kamal El-Ghazouli—who served as prime minister under Mubarak from 1996 to 1999—to form a new government on Thursday, protesters immediately opposed it.

By these mass struggles, workers and youth have made clear that they reject the junta's "democratic transition" as a fraud. They sense that elections run by the military under emergency laws have nothing to do with democracy. Such elections would only produce a legislature controlled by the junta and its imperialist backers, trying to lend false parliamentary legitimacy to further repression and right-wing policies by Mubarak's old cronies.

As the military confronts mass opposition, various political forces are seeking to offer their services to preserve the status quo. Some youth groups and self-proclaimed revolutionary movements claim that a "national salvation" government under liberal

politician Mohamed ElBaradei would be different. This is a lie. An ElBaradei government installed by the junta would simply be a different puppet to defend the interests of the Egyptian ruling class and US imperialism.

On Sunday ElBaradei and former Arab League leader Amr Moussa met the junta's leader, Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi. Tantawi told them to support Prime Minister Ghazouli, informing them that the army would not submit to pressure or scale back its powers under a new constitution.

The renewed mass protests have laid bare the huge gap between the working class and the entire political establishment, which has sought to cultivate illusions about the junta's supposed reforms. Protesters did not let any political parties set up stages on Tahrir Square Friday, as they are widely seen as tools of the junta.

The protests dealt a serious blow to the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood (MB), which hoped to profit from popular disillusionment with the middle-class "left" parties' support for the junta to win today's elections and take office. The MB even publicly criticized anti-junta protests. Now they stand exposed as a counterrevolutionary force tied to the US. Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed El Beltagi was expelled from Tahrir Square by protesters on Monday.

The central role in propping up the junta was played by various petty-bourgeois pseudo-left groups like the Revolutionary Socialists (RS), the Socialist Popular Alliance Party (SPAP) and the Egyptian Socialist Party (ESP). They said Mubarak's generals could be pressured, and the demands of the Egyptian revolution achieved, by building "independent" trade unions and working with pro-capitalist forces—the Islamists, ElBaradei and the junta itself.

Their perspective was summed up by RS member

Mustafa Omar, in an article of May 31, which claimed that “despite its repressive measures, the Supreme Council [of the Armed Forces, i.e. the junta] understands that the January 25 uprising has changed Egypt once and for all in certain ways... The Council aims to reform the political and economic system, allowing it to become more democratic and less oppressive.”

After ten months of military dictatorship, deadly repression and the imprisonment of over 12,000 workers and youth, the bankruptcy of this perspective is exposed by the class struggles in Egypt. Forces like the RS, the SPAP and the ESP do not represent the workers, but a small section of the affluent middle class inseparably tied to bourgeois rule, the military and its imperialist backers.

In a statement Sunday, the so-called Revolution Continues electoral alliance—including the SPAP, the ESP, and liberal and Islamist groups—announced their participation in the elections, praising them as an important step towards democracy. They also issued a statement with the Egyptian Bloc electoral alliance supporting the formation of a “national salvation” government.

The emergence of the working class in direct struggle against such promises of a “democratic transition” has enormous political significance. The logic of these struggles is directed not at reforming the military government, but at overthrowing it. However, the fundamental problems of political program and leadership remain unresolved.

The eruption of new mass demonstrations in Egypt takes place against the backdrop of a deepening capitalist crisis and growing struggles of workers and youth internationally. The world economy is on the brink of a new and even more catastrophic downturn, and the ruling class is united in its determination to force the working class to pay.

As the events in Egypt are making clear to millions of workers, the only way forward is socialist revolution. The downfall of Mubarak, while an event of immense objective significance, has not resolved any of the political and social questions confronting the masses.

The reemergence of working-class struggles against the US-backed junta is a powerful confirmation of the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). As the WSWS explained

on February 14, “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.”

Guided by Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution, which holds that the bourgeoisie of oppressed countries like Egypt cannot lead a struggle for democracy and against imperialist domination, the WSWS declared that only an independent, socialist struggle by the working class in alliance with their class brothers and sisters internationally can achieve the revolution’s aims.

The conditions for such an international struggle for socialism are becoming increasingly favorable. The Egyptian workers and youth have already given the international working class a priceless example of determined struggle. To take their revolution forward, the most decisive task is now to build a section of the ICFI in Egypt to fight for a socialist perspective to overthrow the junta.

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