

Egyptian liberal, pseudo-left groups demonstrate against Mursi

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Last Friday liberal and pseudo-left groups protested against the ruling Muslim Brotherhood (MB) and Egypt's Islamist president, Mohamed Mursi, on Tahrir Square in Cairo. The protest was called by a coalition of nearly 30 liberal and pseudo-left political parties and movements, under the slogan "Egypt is not a fiefdom, Egypt for all Egyptians."

They published a joint statement on the website of the petty-bourgeois Revolutionary Socialists (RS).

It calls for equal constitutional representation of all political groups in Egypt and condemns an attack by MB members on protests staged by the liberal and pseudo-left groups the Friday before. On October 12, Islamist thugs attacked a stage set up by the secular groups on Tahrir Square and beat up anti-Mursi protesters in an attempt to intimidate their secular political opponents.

Besides the RS and other pseudo-left parties, signatories included Mohamed El-Baradei's National Association of Change and his Constitution Party, the Popular Egyptian Current of Nasserite leader Hamdeen Sabahi, the Kefaya Movement, the April 6 Youth Movement, the liberal Free Egyptians Party of multi-billionaire tycoon Naguib Sawiris and the newly founded Congress party led by Amr Moussa, former head of the Arab League and minister under former dictator Hosni Mubarak.

Besides former officials of the old Mubarak regime and Egyptian billionaires, the demonstrations were also supported by the Western-backed Independent Trade Unions and NGOs. One protest march to Tahrir Square was led by Kamal Abu Eita, the head of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) together with Kamal Khalil, the leader of the Workers and Peasants Party (formerly Workers' Democratic Party), set up by the RS after Mubarak's ouster.

The groups participating in the protests falsely sought to present their protests as a continuation of the Egyptian Revolution, when mass struggles of the Egyptian working class ousted long-time dictator and US-stooge Hosni Mubarak in mass revolutionary struggles in February last year. Protesters were shouting slogans such as "Hold on country. Freedom is being born." "Mursi is Mubarak." "Down, down Mursi-Mubarak" and "Those who beat Egyptians cannot rule Egypt."

The pseudo-left and liberal groups' claims to represent the Egyptian Revolution are a fraud. As the Muslim Brotherhood the pseudo-left and liberal groups do not represent the democratic and social aspirations of Egyptian workers who ousted long-time dictator Hosni Mubarak in mass revolutionary struggles in February of last year. They speak for affluent layers of the middle class and the bourgeoisie struggling with the Islamists over the distribution of wealth and power.

In fact, many of the groups now protesting against the MB until quite recently supported the Islamists. The pseudo-left RS and the April 6 Youth Movement campaigned for Mursi during the presidential elections, presenting the MB as a revolutionary force. Eita is a member of Sabahi's Karama Party which campaigned inside the Muslim Brotherhood's Democratic Alliance in last November's parliamentary elections. He was elected to the now dissolved parliament on a MB list.

However, the tensions of the Islamist and secular layers in the Egyptian bourgeoisie have grown since Mursi took over the presidency on June 30 and staged a US-backed coup against the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) junta. Since then, Mursi and the MB have systematically sought to strengthen their influence in the state apparatus, creating the framework of an Islamist dictatorship while sidelining

other political forces.

Mursi currently holds all legislative and executive powers, ruling Egypt as a *de facto* dictator. The Constituent Assembly is dominated by Islamists—the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafist Nur and Asala parties—who have presented a draft of the constitution preserving the authoritarian character of the 1971 constitution while adding references to Islamic Sharia law.

The secular bourgeois parties want a larger role in the drafting process of the constitution and to reshuffle the Constituent Assembly. Today the Supreme Administrative Court is scheduled to rule on the validity on the assembly and the draft constitution, several lawsuits having been filed.

Another area of conflict between the pseudo-left and the MB is the dispute over independent trade unions and Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF). Like SCAF, the Brotherhood initially signalled its readiness to accept independent trade unions in Egypt as a new mechanism to control working class struggles. In recent months however it has become increasingly clear that the Islamists refuse to make any significant compromises with the pseudo-left groups and the independent unions.

Minister of Manpower Khaled Al Azhary sits on the board of the ETUF and defends the old trade union apparatus and against the new “independent” labour bureaucracy the pseudo-left seek to build. Last Wednesday he refused to enact a new trade union law proposed by the independent unions and amended the Nasserite state’s restrictive trade union law 35/1976.

In recent months the Islamists have repeatedly cracked down on workers strikes and protests. Members of the independent unions were also attacked and interrogated by Mursi’s security forces.

The independent unions and the pseudo-left have no perspective to fight the installation of another authoritarian regime in Egypt, however. Their perspective is not to mobilize the working class for a second revolution against the Mursi-regime and the establishment of a workers’ government fighting for socialism. They fear the reemergence of mass working class struggles more than an Islamist dictatorship; their perspective is to convince the Islamists to cooperate with them in establishing a refurbished capitalist regime in Egypt.

After Azhary’s decision, the Center for Trade Union and Workers Services (CTUWS) issued a statement begging Mursi to accept their role and warning him of the possible consequences.

A section of the statements reads: “The hard lesson of the revolution should be remarkable for all arrogant officials who have always believed they would never fall. The revolution was a logical consequence for the unbalanced conditions of the Egyptian society, a condition that have pushed millions of Egyptians to protest believing that things would not remain the same. Unfortunately, those millions are still at rage, they could not believe that after all the bloodshed, they are still calling for their rights.”

The CTUWS is sponsored by the AFL-CIO, and like the RS, the April 6 Movement and other pseudo-left groups, has close ties to Washington. At the moment, however, US imperialism—which is waging a proxy war to bring down Syrian President Bashar Al Assad and prepare an attack on Iran—seems to have decided to rely mainly on Sunni Islamists to defend its regional interests.

Yesterday the *New York Times* published a comment by Roger Cohen who praises the “most radical change in U.S. Foreign policy under President Obama.” Cohen wrote that the US “policy of engagement with even extreme currents of political Islam in the Middle East is salutary,” adding that “the model should be extended.”



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