

Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists ally with Sawiris tycoon, ex-Mubarak officials

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The misnamed Revolutionary Socialists (RS) in Egypt are working out a political alliance with billionaire tycoons, ex-Mubarak-regime officials, operatives of the United Nations, Nasserites and various liberal and pseudo-left parties.

On October 18 they published a joint statement on their web site, signed by the liberal Free Egyptians Party of multi-billionaire tycoon Naguib Sawiris, the newly founded Congress party of Amr Moussa (the former head of the Arab League and minister under ousted dictator Hosni Mubarak), Mohamed El-Baradei's Constitution Party, and the Popular Egyptian Current of Nasserite leader Hamdeen Sabahi.

The statement, titled "Egypt is not a fiefdom—Egypt for all Egyptians," criticizes the repressive policies of Egypt's president, Mohamed Mursi, and the ruling Muslim Brotherhood (MB), comparing them to "the practices of the Mubarak regime." It calls for a secular "constitution for all Egyptians" and the fulfillment of basic social demands: "bread, freedom and social justice."

The RS's claims that workers and youth can achieve their social aspirations together with tycoons such as Naguib Sawiris, or defend democratic rights together with figureheads of the Mubarak regime like Amr Moussa, are reactionary and absurd.

The Sawiris family is the richest in Egypt, controlling a fortune of \$20 billion, including 40 percent of the market capitalization of Egypt's stock exchange. Naguib Sawiris himself—the founder of the Free Egyptians Party—is Egypt's second richest man, worth \$ 3.1 billion according to *Forbes*.

That the RS promotes an alliance with such figures as "progressive" speaks to their privileged class position. The RS represent layers of society indifferent to democratic rights and to social equality, principles

bound up with the working class, the driving force behind the Egyptian Revolution.

The RS articulate the interests of affluent middle-class layers—academics, lawyers, better-off students, NGO-activists and officials in the Western-backed independent trade unions. These layers are hostile to an independent movement of the working class against Mursi, seeking instead to consolidate their position inside the state machine through alliances with various bourgeois figures.

The RS are turning back towards secular layers in the bourgeoisie as it appears increasingly likely that they will not get substantial influence under Mursi, whom they had previously supported. On October 12, MB members attacked protests by liberal and pseudo-left groups, including the RS, against the Islamist-dominated Constituent Assembly, which is drafting a new constitution.

This comes after months of escalating repression against workers by Mursi's security forces, which attack strikes and protests, raid workers' homes, and jail strikers on a daily basis. Leading MB members such as Sabry Amer or Sobhi Saleh routinely denounce strikes as "treason to the country" and strikers as "enemies of the people."

Such Islamist repression directed against the working class did not noticeably change the line of the RS and similar pseudo-left forces. The Islamists' control over the drafting of the constitution has stoked the RS's fears, however, that their social interests and political influence may be disregarded, should Mursi continue to monopolize power in Egypt.

Characteristically, they have given no explanation of why they supported the Islamist MB—which unsurprisingly proved to be a right-wing, repressive regime—or why they are now changing their line.

Five months ago, during the presidential elections, the RS campaigned for Mursi, presenting him as a “revolutionary” and a vote for Mursi as a way to defend the revolution’s “democratic and social gains.” After Mursi’s victory, they wrote that “our revolution has achieved an important victory,” praising him as “the right wing of the revolution.”

In a July 11 statement they claimed that Mursi could even be pressured to complete the revolution: “The movement of the masses and their pressure on Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood is just what will drive their decision in the right direction, the direction of completing the objectives of the revolution and overthrow the rule of the military and purge the state.”

As the RS shift alliances within the ruling elite, they are cynically trying to cloak their maneuver with left-sounding phrases. On October 18, the same day the RS issued the joined statement, they published an article by a leading RS member, Sameh Naguib, titled “Towards a second Egyptian Revolution.”

Their calls for a “second revolution” are a fraud. The RS opposed a second revolution when masses of workers demanded it during the massive June-July 2011 sit-in against military rule on Tahrir Square, which was accompanied by a powerful strike of Suez Canal workers. Fearing a revolutionary overthrow of the junta, the RS intervened with a statement explicitly opposing a second revolution.

The character of the “second revolution” the RS now envisage has nothing to do with the revolutionary overthrow of Mursi or a struggle for a workers’ government fighting for socialism. Carried out in alliance with old Mubarak-era officials and the most powerful sections of finance capital, it would have more the character of restoring the Mubarak regime rather than creating a new political order.

Naguib and the RS apparently sense that their alliance lacks any “revolutionary” credentials and therefore use terms drawn from the lexicon of Marxism, trying to make their right-wing alliances appear more progressive.

In the article, Naguib claims that “any front or alliance we are entering is guided by the strategy of the United Front.” He writes that “any temporary joint work” is based “on specific program points, without lowering our independent flag or waiving the right to criticize the forces that are working with us, of course,

to the extent not to blow the joint work itself.”

On October 28 the RS published an Arabic translation of the article “On the United Front,” written by Leon Trotsky in 1922, on their web site. The invocations by the RS of the Bolshevik strategy of the United Front and of Trotsky—together with Lenin, the leader of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia—are both absurd and made in utter bad faith.

The RS’s new right-wing alliance has nothing in common with the tactic of the United Front as it was established by the Communist International in 1922. The United Front tactic was an initiative to win over workers inside the social-democratic parties, which were then mass parties of the working class, to the Communist parties for a common struggle for the overthrow of capitalism by a working class revolution.

The latest coalition of the RS with elements of the ruling class is clearly nothing of the sort. It is an alliance of parties of the financial aristocracy and of the affluent middle classes completely alien and hostile to the demands of workers. They seek to somewhat reorganize Egyptian capitalism only to the extent that it benefits their privileged social interests.

A government led by Sawiris, Moussa, Baradei or Sabahi would in the final analysis defend the power and wealth of the Egyptian ruling elite against working class opposition as ruthlessly as the Islamists.



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