

The way forward in Egypt

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The Constitutional Decree of Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi—by which Mursi claims all legislative, constitutional, executive and judicial powers—poses basic questions of political perspective before the working class.

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) president declared last week that he has extraordinary powers “to take any measures he sees fit in order to preserve and safeguard the revolution, national unity or national security.” References to preserving “the revolution” are a fraud. The principal target of Mursi’s measures is the working class, and he is asserting the most far-reaching antidemocratic measures in the effort to consolidate bourgeois rule in Egypt, in close alliance with the United States.

Mursi’s actions have exposed deep fissures in the Egyptian state, with sections of the old state apparatus coming out in opposition to the moves of the MB. Mohamed El-Baradei, once a contender with the Brotherhood over succeeding the deposed dictator Hosni Mubarak, has denounced Mursi as “the new pharaoh,” seeking to capitalize on widespread popular hostility to the actions of the president. For the working class, however, no faction of the bourgeois establishment offers a way forward.

Mursi’s actions confirm the basic perspective of Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution: that the tasks of the democratic revolution, including independence from imperialism, cannot be resolved except through the independent mobilization of the working class in socialist revolution.

Mursi’s actions have sparked significant mass protests, and the demonstrations in Tahrir Square recall the initial revolutionary struggles of January 2011

against Mubarak. One of the most popular chants is, “Down, down, Mursi-Mubarak.”

What is above all needed, however, is a clear appraisal of the experiences of the Egyptian Revolution so far. The revolutionary upsurge last year succeeded in forcing out Mubarak, but it did not resolve any of the basic problems confronting the Egyptian masses. Absent an independent perspective and leadership of the working class, the Egyptian bourgeoisie was left free to bring Mursi to power and continue its basic policies: the super-exploitation of the workers, collaboration with American imperialism, and dictatorial rule.

The role of the United States—Egypt’s main imperialist backer—has been central. The timing of Mursi’s decree is no accident. The declaration came the day after US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton thanked him for his role during the Israeli regime’s brutal assault on Gaza. While rockets rained down on civilians in Gaza, Mursi put himself forward as a reliable stooge for US imperialism. He vowed to tighten the blockade of Gaza and deepen his relations with Washington and Tel Aviv.

At least for the time being, the Obama administration sees the Muslim Brotherhood as a central ally in its overall strategy in the Middle East, including the imperialist-backed civil war in Syria against the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and plans for war against Iran.

At the same time, the financial elite is relying on Mursi to push through drastic anti-working class policies. Last Thursday Mursi secured a \$4.8 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—which is now brutally impoverishing the Greek proletariat, across the Mediterranean from

Egypt—predicated on devastating austerity measures against Egyptian workers. On Wednesday Mursi approved the first gasoline subsidy cuts.

The *Financial Times* cited one unnamed “Cairo-based western observer” who expressed the underlying sentiments of the American ruling class. “Somebody has got to cut through the political infighting and to take decisions”—that is, the decisions demanded by the global banks and financial institutions.

Mursi’s assumption of dictatorial powers has exposed the counter-revolutionary role of pseudo-left groups, such as the Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists and their international allies, the US International Socialist Organization (ISO) and the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP). These forces advance the perspective that bourgeois politicians can build democracy in Egypt. After claiming that the military junta that took power after Mubarak’s downfall could be pressured for more reforms, they then backed Mursi’s election, claiming he would begin to carry out the tasks of the revolution.

In July, the ISO’s *SocialistWorker.org* published a report from a leading RS member Sameh Naguib that declared Mursi’s victory “a great achievement in pushing back this counterrevolution and pushing back this coup d’état.”

These groups also provided political cover for Washington’s collaboration with right-wing Islamist forces, its traditional allies in the Middle East, to wage proxy wars to install pro-US regimes in Libya and Syria. This has set the stage for a regional military conflagration, centered on a potential US war of aggression against Iran.

There is no path to genuine democracy and social rights outside of a struggle for socialist revolution. The working class must organize its fight independently from all bourgeois forces, overthrow the bourgeoisie and assume state power. This is inseparably bound up with a common struggle with workers in Israel, the Arab world, and internationally against imperialism and its bloody war drive throughout the region.

The recent struggles in Egypt vindicate the perspective of the *World Socialist Web Site*. We wrote on the day after Mubarak’s downfall: “The central task facing the working class is the formation of popular organs of power, based on the working class, to fight to overthrow and replace the surviving sections of the Mubarak regime with a workers’ government. The victory of this revolution depends on its extension beyond Egypt, uniting Egyptian workers with their class brothers and sisters throughout the Middle East and in the advanced capitalist countries.

“It is the struggle to build parties fighting for the perspectives of Trotskyism that will arm the workers in Egypt and internationally for the intense class conflicts that the downfall of Mubarak portends.”

The nearly two years that have elapsed since the publication of this statement have proved both the possibility and the necessity of such a struggle. The overthrow of Mubarak inspired mass struggles of the working class internationally, from the United States, to Israel, to Europe and Asia. The urgency of common struggles by the international working class becomes ever clearer, as the war drive against Gaza, Syria and ultimately Iran accelerates after Obama’s re-election.

Such struggles can only be victorious, however, as revolutionary struggles for socialism, led by parties guided by the perspective of Permanent Revolution. To take up the struggle for social equality and for genuine democracy against figures like Mursi, workers must draw the lessons of the past struggles and fight to build sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Egypt and internationally.

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