

# For workers' power in Egypt!

Johannes Stern, Joseph Kishore  
30 January 2013

With the approach of the second anniversary of the February 11, 2011 overthrow of dictator Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian working class is again being driven into revolutionary struggle. Mass protests are shaking cities across Egypt, defying a murderous crackdown by the police and sections of the Egyptian army presided over by Muslim Brotherhood President Mohammed Mursi.

Summing up the revolutionary situation threatening the Egyptian bourgeoisie and its backers in Washington and the European capitals, Defense Minister General Abdul Fatah al-Sisi bluntly declared that the current uprising “may lead to the collapse of the state.”

The military is threatening to intervene directly with the aim of crushing opposition and drowning it in blood.

The democratic promises with which the ruling class initially responded to the working class uprising of 2011 are being exposed by bitter experience. “The fundamental political process of the revolution,” Leon Trotsky wrote in his famous *History of the Russian Revolution*, “consists in the gradual comprehension by a class of the problems arising from the social crisis—the active orientation of the masses by a method of successive approximations.”

In two years of struggle, the workers are weighing and testing the political forces that put themselves forward as alternatives to the Mubarak regime.

Initially, there were hopes that the Egyptian military, as a “people’s army,” would grant the workers democratic and social rights. Such hopes were soon dashed. Sponsored by Washington and representing the interests of the military brass, the army junta that succeeded Mubarak soon turned to banning strikes and crushing protests.

The first elections after Mubarak’s fall brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power. After only six months, the reactionary character of the Brotherhood stands exposed before the Egyptian masses. Since taking power last summer, it has continued the anti-working class, pro-imperialist policies of Mubarak. Mursi is in talks with the IMF to impose cuts in subsidies for bread and fuel that will devastate the working class. The Muslim

Brotherhood government has also supported the suppression of the Palestinians in Gaza and the US-led proxy war in Syria.

The nominal official opposition to the Brotherhood, the liberal factions of the ruling class grouped in the National Salvation Front (NSF), led by Mohammed ElBaradei, has absolutely nothing to offer. It includes within it Mubarak-era officials such as Amr Moussa as well as the Wafd and Tagammu parties, which collaborated closely with Mubarak.

The array of political forces in Egypt is a vindication of a central premise of the Trotskyist Theory of Permanent Revolution—that in economically backward and former colonial countries, there is no faction of the bourgeoisie that is capable of or interested in carrying through the most basic democratic tasks, let alone addressing the economic and social demands of the masses. Dedicated to the defense of the capitalist order and subordinated to imperialism, all factions of the bourgeoisie respond to social opposition with repression and dictatorship.

Underscoring this point is an analysis that has appeared in *Egypt Independent*. The author, Amr Adly, notes the deep economic crisis in Egypt and the country’s dependence on foreign finance, and writes of the precarious position of the Muslim Brotherhood government. Yet, “the NSF, the biggest opposition coalition, remains heavily reliant on the support of urban middle- and upper-middle classes,” Adly writes. “The front’s political platform barely contains genuine social and economic elements.”

While seeking to counter the Brotherhood’s Islamism with a vague Egyptian nationalism, the NSF has no independent program. “As for the deteriorating economic situation, the front’s stance has been by and large opportunistic and myopic, with very little alternatives given to austerity measures,” Adly observes.

The working class of Egypt is coming into direct conflict with all factions of the bourgeois elite, a conflict that is assuming an increasingly violent form. Under these conditions, a particularly reactionary role is played by the

“left” petit-bourgeoisie.

Chief among the organizations that operate in the orbit of the bourgeois establishment is the Revolutionary Socialists. After first praising the army junta for offering a “democratic space,” the RS then celebrated Mursi’s election as “a real victory for the Egyptian masses.” As Mursi’s counterrevolutionary role became clear, the RS shifted to promote the NSF and serve as adviser to the liberal bourgeois opposition.

A recent statement by the Revolutionary Socialists, cloaking thoroughly conformist politics in leftist verbiage, gives expression to its essential role. After criticizing the Brotherhood and Mursi for continuing the same policies as Mubarak—a devastating exposure of their own previous support for the Muslim Brotherhood—the RS goes on to make clear its intransigent opposition to an independent struggle of the working class for power.

Speaking on behalf of a privileged section of the upper-middle class, the RS offers counsel to the bourgeois parties. They bemoan the fact that the “Muslim Brotherhood is digging its own grave by following Mubarak’s policies.”

Unfortunately, they continue, the NSF “made an error by including remnants of the old regime in its ranks.” These “remnants” [of the Mubarak dictatorship!] are “known for their social and political bias against the revolution.” This is how the RS speaks of participants in a regime that for decades ruled with savage brutality on behalf of the Egyptian ruling class and American imperialism!

In a passage that sums up their perspective, the RS writes, “We call on the revolutionary youth in the Front to fight for the cleansing of its ranks.” That is, the bourgeois coalition must be refurbished.

They then call on the NSF to “participate with us and all the revolutionaries in building a genuine revolutionary front which can achieve the aims of the revolution of bread, freedom, social justice and human dignity.”

The RS advocates not an independent movement of the working class, but a reorganization of bourgeois politics. Absent in their demagogic proclamation is any reference to socialism, the overthrow of the bourgeois state, or a call for independent organs of working class power.

What underlies the bankruptcy of all the existing political parties is this: while they pay homage in words to the revolution, they base themselves on capitalist property and want no change in the basic forms of political power. They defend the established order.

Two basic tasks emerge from the social and political

logic of the Egyptian Revolution.

First is the establishment of independent organs of working class power. The foremost examples of fighting organizations of the working class and oppressed masses were the soviets established by the Russian working class that came to power in the October 1917 revolution. The working class cannot rely on the bourgeois state. It must develop its own forms of organization that will become the basis for the conquest of state power.

Second is the development of a revolutionary leadership that can provide the strategic direction necessary to guide these workers’ organizations in the struggle for power.

The entire experience of the Egyptian Revolution, from its initial eruption in January 2011 to the crossroads at which it stands today, has confirmed the fact that heroism and revolutionary fervor cannot by themselves overcome the crisis of leadership. The working class needs a party and a program of its own—independent of the bourgeois Muslim Brotherhood and National Salvation Front and their hangers-on among the petit-bourgeois organizations.

Since the initial uprising two years ago, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) has insisted that the working class of Egypt would not be able to realize its interests and aspirations outside of the conquest of state power and the socialist reorganization of economic life. This perspective has been confirmed. We call on workers and youth in Egypt take up the essential task of the day: the construction of a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**