

International Socialist Organization backs Egyptian coup

Alex Lantier
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On July 5, the International Socialist Organization's (ISO) leader Ahmed Shawki gave an interview on the ISO's *Socialist Worker* web site, backing the July 3 military coup in Egypt.

The ISO is serving as a pseudo-left front group for the foreign policy of the Obama administration, which pushed for a coup against Muslim Brotherhood (MB) President Mohamed Mursi as a pre-emptive strike against mass working class protests against the regime. It has not taken long for the coup's counterrevolutionary character to emerge. After massacring 51 protesters on Monday, the junta on Tuesday nominated a prime minister who plans to slash bread and fuel subsidies and carry out other austerity measures demanded by international capital.

The ISO's current position is all the more grotesque in that—from the 2011 mass protests that toppled the army-backed regime of hated dictator General Hosni Mubarak until quite recently—the ISO supported the MB as the “right wing of the revolution.”

Turning 180 degrees, Shawki now praises the army and the Tamarod (“Rebel”) coalition that supported the army's ouster of the MB. Shawki says, “The Tamarod movement set out to reclaim what organizers considered to be the aims of the revolution: bread, freedom, and human dignity. These are slogans that mean a better life for most Egyptians.”

These are lies. The new regime aims to give less, not more, bread to the people. As for Tamarod, it mobilized a disparate coalition of reactionary forces including General Ahmed Shafik, Mubarak's last prime minister; the liberal National Salvation Front of Mohamed ElBaradei, whom the army just installed as vice president; and the ISO's affiliates in Egypt, the Revolutionary Socialists (RS).

Shawki opposes any warning to workers in Egypt of

the risk of counterrevolution posed by the coup. The *Socialist Worker* interviewer notes that a military coup is “often the most extreme representation of the counterrevolution,” and asks Shawki directly whether this coup is a victory for counterrevolution in Egypt. Shawki flatly replies, “Absolutely not.”

He explains, “In Egypt, the army did not intervene to help the revolutionary movement make bigger gains or radicalize further, of course. The aim was to contain the movement. But in a certain sense, this was also an acknowledgement of the fact that the popular will of Egypt will not tolerate the Mursi government anymore. *So while the military is in the streets and has overstepped the constitutional limits to its power, I believe that it will seek some means to quickly return power to a civilian authority. I don't think it wants to hold state power*” (emphasis added).

Such statement could come directly from US state department officials. Washington is refusing to call the military's seizure of power in Egypt a coup, fearing that this would trigger a cut-off of \$1.3 billion in yearly US aid to the Egyptian army. Obama is backing the army while pressing the coup leaders to “move quickly and responsibly to turn full authority back to a democratically elected civilian government as soon as possible.”

Shawki even points to US influence in the Egyptian army as proof that the Egyptian army will seek to carefully “guide” subsequent developments, asserting: “Today, the people leading the [Egyptian] army have been trained and educated in US military academies. So on the whole, Egypt's military forces now tend to identify with American institutions of power.”

With this comment, Shawki is covering for the policies of American imperialism. The US-Egyptian military alliance does not defend basic democratic

rights; it tramples them underfoot. Washington uses the Egyptian army to help the CIA torture suspects illegally “rendered” to Egypt for interrogation, to police the Egyptian people, and to enforce the isolation of the Gaza Strip in the interests of US and Israeli policy.

Shawki tries to justify his support for the army by briefly summarizing the Egyptian revolution, pointing to the army’s role in setting up a transitional constitution and presidential elections in 2011.

He says: “Once the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces [SCAF] took over political leadership after Mubarak in 2011, the army quickly moved to get a constitution ratified. This constitution largely benefited the third force in Egyptian politics other than the military on the one hand and the remnants of the Mubarak regime (*feloul*) on the other—namely, the Muslim Brotherhood. Since then, the military has relied on the Muslim Brotherhood to contain the revolution.”

Revolutions are merciless in tearing masks off political organizations, and the events in Egypt have unmasked the ISO. While the army relied first on the SCAF junta and then the MB to “contain” the revolution and block it from developing into a struggle against capitalism, the ISO and the RS supported it.

They first praised the army as a “people’s army” in the initial months after Mubarak’s downfall, opposing calls for a “second revolution” against the SCAF junta in the summer of 2011. A *Socialist Worker* article at the time claimed that the SCAF “aims to reform the political and economic system, allowing it to become more democratic and less oppressive.”

Once Mursi was in power—that is, when Shawki claims the army was using the MB to “contain the revolution”—the ISO enthusiastically promoted the MB, as well. At the ISO’s Socialism 2012 conference, the RS’ Sameh Naguib praised Mursi’s election as “a great achievement in pushing back the counterrevolution and pushing back this coup d’état.” By citing the risk of a coup d’état, Naguib was referring to the threat of a victory by General Shafik against Mursi in the presidential race.

The support of the ISO and the RS for the right-wing MB was in line with their long-standing orientation to Islamism. The RS even advanced a slogan: “Sometimes with the Islamists, never with the state.”

Though they presented this policy as revolutionary, according to Shawki’s current interview, such

promotion of the MB was in fact bound up with moves to “contain” the revolution. Now, the RS and the ISO have aligned themselves to the army and figures like ElBaradei.

This record underscores that the *World Socialist Web Site*’s designation of groups like the ISO as “pseudo-left” is not a casual phrase. The ISO’s pose of affiliation with socialism is utterly fraudulent. The sudden unexplained oscillations in its political orientation between various Egyptian bourgeois factions reflect the contradictions and shifts of US foreign policy, which the ISO markets with various cryptic and misleading phrases.

By openly supporting the current coup, however, the ISO is unmasking itself politically. It is a counterrevolutionary organization supporting a military dictatorship directed against the workers, and it bears full political responsibility for the crimes this junta will commit.



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