

Political Stalemate in Egypt

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The Egyptian revolution's fight for life has reached a critical stage. The massive energy that toppled Egypt's hated dictator seems to have hit a wall after Egypt's Supreme Court dissolved parliament in what many are calling a "coup." The military then took further action to consolidate itself, putting a halt to their fake steps towards democracy. According to the New York Times:

"... the generals had shuttered the parliament and locked out its members, taken over legislative authority even after the election of a president, and unveiled a new interim constitution protecting their power and privilege. They also named their own 100-member panel to draft a permanent charter [constitution]."

The recent winner of the presidential election, the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi, now must operate within the narrow confines allowed by the military, which has seized all legislative power and nearly all real executive power. Martial law remains in effect. The new president has found himself surrounded by military officials who will not allow him to make a single independent decision.

How could this happen?

What the Egyptian revolution has thus far failed to do was to destroy the real basis of the old regime's power, ensuring that the regime would re-consolidate itself. The dictator was toppled, yes, but the institutions that upheld the regime are still in place; the state structures accustomed to a totalitarianism that serves the wealthy elite have finally made their intentions open to the public, now feeling confident that their positions are invulnerable to the revolution.

Consequently, the dictator's inner circle responsible for approving the killing of over 900 innocent protesters will not be imprisoned, nor will the ruthless police chiefs who carried out the orders. This is because the judiciary of the country was appointed by the old regime, and are using every power at their disposal - and creating new ones in the process - to turn the wheel of history backwards to pre-revolution Egypt.

After the dictator-appointed judiciary dissolved parliament, the Muslim Brotherhood's presidential candidate, Mohammed Morsi, downplayed the event, accepting the decision.

"It is my duty as the future president of Egypt, God willing, to separate between the state's authorities and accept the rulings [?!]"

The Brotherhood has vowed to respect "the law," when the law is merely the military's guns

combined with a sock-puppet Supreme Court. The bizarre response of Mr. Morsi is not only a symptom of the Brotherhood's political cowardice, but proof of its collusion with dictators; the Brotherhood is desperately attempting to integrate itself into the ruling spectrum of Egypt's pro-capitalist politics, having accommodated itself to the old regime long enough to eat its crumbs. The new president finds himself in a situation from which any honest person would instantly resign.

Thankfully the Brotherhood's half-hearted "opposition" has been mostly exposed to any half-conscious Egyptian. This fact is proved by the results of the first round of the presidential election: the Brotherhood received half the votes it received from the months-earlier parliamentary election.

Also, during the first round of the presidential election, the largest cities in Egypt voted for the 3rd place candidate, a Nasserite "socialist," who more closely resembles the striving of the average working person in Egypt. The more recent actions of the Brotherhood have further exposed their leadership for what they are: an unwitting prop for the military to remain in power.

Those who started the revolution and drove out the dictator are still in the process of funneling their revolutionary energy into an organizational form capable of destroying the political and economic power of the rich on which the old regime rests.

Once the revolutionaries re-establish themselves, they'll surely have learned that, in order to push the revolution forward the entire state apparatus of the previous regime must be shattered, especially the military elite, police, and judiciary, who are using their institutional power to strike blows against the revolution.

Equally important is the economic base of the state's power, which also needs to be taken from those who currently control it. Many of Egypt's big businesses are powerful because of their direct connections with the military, and are often owned by generals and their government friends.

The Los Angeles Times recently explained:

"... the [Egyptian] army controls a multibillion-dollar business empire that trades in products not normally associated with men in uniform: olive oil, fertilizer, televisions, laptops, cigarettes, mineral water, poultry, bread and underwear...Estimates suggest that military-connected enterprises account for 10% to 40% of the Egyptian economy. It is an opaque realm of foreign investments, inside deals and privilege that has grown quietly for decades, employing thousands of workers and operating parallel to the army's defense industries."

If the military's wealth isn't nationalized - and much of its wealth comes from recent privatizations of public utilities - the money will continue to fuel the power of dictators.

To reach these goals the revolutionary working people of Egypt need to act independently in massive numbers, as they did at the revolution's beginning. However, this independence needs to be organized enough to fully displace the existing powers of Egypt; the demands of "Mubarak must go" need to be replaced by new demands that address the deeper military and economic ties of the old regime.

To help give voice and organization to these demands, a revolutionary constituent assembly will likely remain a popular and necessary demand, so that a really democratic constitution can be created with the active participation of all working people. The demand for a constituent assembly has proved to be a revolutionary demand throughout the Latin American revolution, whose situations were very similar to Egypt's today.

The electoral process of Egypt has been proven a sham, and the working people will not so easily accept the same dictatorship with a slightly different face. Since the election failed to solve anything of substance, Tahrir Square will once again be the political venue of choice for working Egyptians seeking revolutionary political and economic change.

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