

The downfall of Hosni Mubarak

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The *World Socialist Web Site* hails the downfall of Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak. There is justified jubilation in the streets of Cairo, Alexandria and other cities, as millions of Egyptian workers and youth celebrate their historic victory.

These extraordinary events are a turning point not only for Egypt, but for the entire world. They have shown the immense social power of the working class, unanswerably refuting claims that the collapse of the Soviet Union signified the “end of history”—that is, the end of class struggle as a factor in human affairs. The victorious heroism of the masses of Egypt in the face of torture, arrests and repression are an inspiration for workers and youth around the globe.

Mubarak’s resignation was a humiliating about-face from his speech, delivered less than 24 hours earlier, in which he provocatively refused to step down. It was also a blow to the military brass, which issued a statement on Friday morning supporting the transfer of authority to Vice President Omar Suleiman, the longtime head of the Egyptian intelligence agency.

It is a devastating setback for the Arab bourgeoisie, which fears the spread of revolution beyond Egypt; for the Israeli state, whose policies of repression and military terror depend on the suppression of working class struggle both in the Arab countries and in Israel itself; and above all for US imperialism, which for 31 years was the main financier and backer of the Mubarak dictatorship. Washington has been complicit in all the regime’s crimes, including the widespread use of torture against political opponents.

The revolutionary upheavals gripping North Africa are the first major response of the world working class to the conditions created by the global economic crisis of capitalism. In bringing down Mubarak, workers in Egypt have launched the first salvo in a world struggle against economic exploitation, the suppression of democratic rights, and social inequality defended by governments not only in Egypt, but around the world.

As significant as the resignation of Mubarak is, however, it is only the beginning of this struggle. Mubarak may be gone, but the regime remains, with power in the hands of the officer corps that has been the linchpin of the capitalist dictatorship in Egypt for decades. The masses know they have only begun to settle accounts with the exploiters—the secret police, the venal Egyptian generals, and Mubarak himself.

In its struggle to hang on to power, the Egyptian regime will find its most ruthless allies in the financial aristocracy of the imperialist powers. For weeks, the Obama administration has worked behind the scenes to bolster Mubarak, insisting that he should oversee an “orderly transition.” Obama’s perfunctory speech Friday afternoon acknowledging Mubarak’s resignation came on the heels of a Friday morning statement in which the administration pointedly did not call for Mubarak to step down.

Washington is undoubtedly engaged in intense discussions with the Egyptian military to ensure that whatever regime replaces Mubarak will equally be committed to US imperialist interests.

No confidence can be placed in the military or in Egypt’s official “opposition”—which has indicated its complete support for the military government—to oversee a “democratic transition.” One “opposition” leader, Mohammed El Baradei, has suggested that this could take place in a year’s time, leaving the military free to do what it wants for an entire year.

US imperialist strategists hope that in the meantime Washington will be able to shower its favored stooges in Egypt with cash, and arrange a “transition” that returns the working class to where it was before the overthrow of Mubarak. Speaking on CNN, former CIA director James Woolsey said the US should “work with the forces of stability and change in a democratic and law-abiding direction” and “help them economically, help them politically.”

Such comments are a serious warning to the working

class. The jubilation tonight at Mubarak's departure is as it should be, but the initial gains of the revolution must not be lost. The question of class strategy and the formation of a new revolutionary leadership in the working class will determine the fate of the next stage of the revolution.

The International Committee of the Fourth International calls the attention of the Egyptian workers to the writings of Leon Trotsky—the co-leader with Vladimir Lenin of the 1917 October Revolution, the founder of the Fourth International, and the foremost practitioner and theoretician of international socialist revolution. As explained in Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, the struggle for democracy is inseparable from the struggle for workers' power and the socialist transformation of Egypt and the entire world.

The backing given by Washington and El Baradei to the military government is not an accident, but a reflection of the interests of the capitalist class. Every attempt to improve the conditions of the masses—raising wages, reducing prices, or defending political freedoms—inevitably puts workers in conflict with the representatives of this elite, who oppose any change that impinges on their economic or strategic interests.

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.

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