



After Morsi's fall: no support for the generals or their civilian stooges

Dave Stockton Thu, 04/07/2013 - 16:41

Dave Stockton

The fireworks celebrating the 'cold' military coup that overthrew elected President Mohamed Morsi, however understandable, will prove shortsighted - and probably sooner rather than later. To return to the power of the military, with a government of technocrats, to let them impose their road map and timetable, to let their experts redraft the constitution and to leave them and the Mubarak era judges in charge of the election process, is a recipe for worse to come.

It should not be forgotten that the prisons still hold hundreds, if not thousands, incarcerated by military courts at earlier stages of the revolution. The current situation is an 'improvement' only in the sense that the masses are on the streets in their millions, and only as long as they stay mobilised. If the army, with the support of liberals like Mohamed El Baradei, once again being touted as a possible prime minister, can 'restore order', then austerity and repression will resume under the watchful eyes of the International Monetary Fund, the State Department and the US high command.

Many are saying that Morsi's downfall is the next chapter in the revolution that began with the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 but for that to become a reality the masses must seize the initiative themselves. Workers, youth and women must build their own democratic organisations to fight for their vital demands for social justice and political freedom. To allow new presidential and parliamentary elections under the supervision of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and to let its chosen experts redraft the constitution, is to leave democracy at the mercy of the capitalists, foreign as well as Egyptian, and their politicians and generals.

What is needed instead is a revolutionary constituent assembly, elected in the most democratic way possible. That means under the supervision of the organisations of the workers and the revolutionary youth. And democracy must not stop when the election is over, those elected should be regularly answerable to assemblies of their voters, and recallable by them, too, if they fail to act in the electors' interests. Only such an assembly would enable those suffering from rocketing unemployment, falling wages, the women, the youth, the religious minorities suffering from discrimination and oppression, to insist that their demands be addressed. It could put an end to austerity, make the rich shoulder the full burden of taxation, make the landowners and the military top brass give back the huge farms, factories and banks they have stolen over decades.

The crisis of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) which was riding high just a year ago after its victories in the presidential and parliamentary elections, is only partly a result of assaults on the democratic rights of workers, women, youth and the Christian minority. Its rejection has taken on a far more generalised character because of the growing economic privations of millions, including many who once supported or, at least, accepted, its rule. Just this year, the Egyptian pound has lost 12% of its value against the US dollar. This has meant not only a flight of capital out of the country but also rapid increases in the prices of basic commodities such as fuel and flour.

At the same time, the Egyptian economy is in decline. Factories lie idle and without orders. Only support from the dictatorial and reactionary Sunni regimes of the Arabian peninsula has kept Morsi's head above water this long. At the same time, he sucked up to the IMF and US imperialism, imposing the austerity measures and the privatisation programme they wanted in return for new credits.

Despite draconian attacks on the youth and mass movements, the imposition of anti-strike and anti-working class legislation, Morsi could not prevent the erosion of his social base and the rallying of the masses to the opposition. A campaigning bloc named Tamarod (Rebellion) was founded in April by the Kefaya movement, which has played an important role in sparking protest movements for over ten years. Tamarod adopted the very old-tech method of mass petitioning (going back to the British Chartists of the 1830's) and mobilised huge numbers of activists to collect signatures. This face to face mobilisation proved brilliantly effective. By 30 June, Tamarod was able to claim the petition had attracted 22 million signatures.

According to various sources, June 30 saw between 14 and 20 million Egyptians demonstrating throughout the country to "celebrate" the anniversary of Morsi's election by calling on him to resign immediately. However, the speed with which the Egyptian armed forces intervened indicates collusion at least between the main figures of the National Salvation Front within Tamarod and the Commander in Chief of SCAF, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. His 48-hour ultimatum to Morsi to "respond to the wishes of the Egyptian People" was plainly an ultimatum to him to resign.

As soon as the time limit expired, the armed forces arrested Morsi, seized control of the state TV and radio stations, shut down the Islamist stations and even (temporarily) Al Jazeera. The SCAF "road map" turns out to include the immediate suspension of the Islamist constitution and the dissolution of parliament as well as a government under Adli Mansour, Chief Justice and the head of the Constitutional Court, who was conveniently promoted to that position only on Sunday July 30.

The demonstrators in Tahrir Square and countless other mass assemblies, despite their understandable delight at the fall of the autocratic Morsi, will soon discover this outcome is not what they really desired. Once again, a civilian "technocratic" government, will prove to be a façade for the rule of the generals.

This is not in any way a solution favourable to the masses.

Egypt's powerful executive Presidency is an institution designed to ride roughshod over democratic opinion, as presidents Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak and Morsi have all shown. Moreover, the millions cannot indefinitely repeat such mass movements every time they are faced by reactionary measures. None of the candidates who might conceivably win a presidential election at the moment, Ahmed Shafik, who the military backed last time, Hamdeen Sabahi, a Nasserist who has much greater support on the streets, or the bourgeois liberal Mohamed El Baradei of the National Salvation Front, would put an end to the economic misery of the masses. Nor would any of them ensure democratic rights.

Morsi's supporters in the MB, and other Islamist political groups, have threatened to launch a mass mobilisation for Morsi's re-instatement but, until now, their demonstrations have been smaller than those of their opponents and are now being hemmed in by the military. It seems, too, that the MB have lost the support of some of the Salafists – specifically the Al Nour party. Nevertheless, clashes between pro- and anti-Morsi forces have left dozens dead and numbers of MB offices, including the headquarters in Cairo, have been firebombed. It is not clear by whom, but agents of the old regime are widely suspected.

The effects of the 1991 military coup in Algeria, when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was blocked from winning an election by a military takeover, should not be forgotten. That resulted in a civil war in which as many as 200,000 people died. It should not be imagined that, in Egypt, the military could simply clamp down on Islamism. If it is again denied democratic rights, and the new government is blamed for the economic hardship, we could see a renaissance of the MB. Or, if an electoral road is blocked, many, especially young, Islamists may turn to jihadi terrorist methods. All in all, suppressing the MB would be a mad gamble and a future compromise with them at the expense of the liberals is still a possibility.

Nevertheless, the unprecedented size of the mass mobilisations demonstrates beyond doubt that, despite all the setbacks, such as the installation of the SCAF military regime after Mubarak's fall, the election of Morsi's conservative and religious obscurantist regime and now another "popular" military coup, the revolution could be moving into

another powerful upward stage. This year has already seen a big increase in workers' mobilisations and strikes. The millions on the streets indicate that, once again, a stage is developing in which the question of power for the popular classes, that is, the workers and peasants, the youth and the women, in other words, the whole future direction of the revolution, is posed yet again.

The masses must not follow the leaders of the liberal and secular nationalist opposition in a new alliance with military and state forces. Millions did not take to the streets just to see Morsi replaced by a disguised SCAF regime. That would mean that the repressive state apparatus and the economy would be put under the management of the liberal (and neoliberal) elite, which would continue the IMF's social attacks on the masses. Such a government would use its power to suppress the mass mobilisations and to impose its policies against the economic demands of the unions, and the social and democratic demands of the millions.

The liberal opposition leaders have avoided calling for any tactics like a political general strike. They clearly always planned to appeal to the generals, not to the workers.

So, how can the masses ensure that this time they are not swindled? The crucial step is the creation of elected assemblies or councils of action in the towns and countryside and amongst the rank and file soldiers. Had these existed, the masses could have overthrown Morsi on their own. Of course, such a policy could not have been expected from the bourgeois oppositions leaders, but the left and socialist organisations also did not campaign independently for this.

However, there is still time for them to do this and to urge the millions on the streets to take control of the situation by their own means and under their own slogans.

No support for another SCAF puppet government, with or without elements of the old regime !

Prepare for a general strike against any repression by the new government of the freedom to demonstrate, to strike, to publish or to broadcast. Consolidate the many existing trades unions into industrial unions democratically controlled by their rank and file members.

Start the process of building of councils of delegates chosen by workers, peasants and soldiers ? with defence guards in all the workplaces and popular quarters.

For free elections, with equal voting rights for all over the age of 16, with proportional representation and no threshold, of a sovereign Constituent Assembly - whose delegates must be recallable by those who elect them.

For a provisional workers' and peasants' government based on workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils.

Such a government should:

- * Protect the constituent assembly and ensure it carries out its functions without threats or coercion.
- * Immediately cancel the IMF-austerity programme and the foreign debt.
- * Nationalise the major industries and banks under workers' control.
- * Implement an emergency plan against poverty, with a minimum wage and income, and a sliding scale of wages to protect them against inflation.
- * Expropriate the large landlords and hand the land over to those who work it, the peasants and agricultural workers.
- * Legalise all working class parties, trade unions and democratic organisations.
- * Repeal all legislation limiting the equality and rights of women.
- * Disarm the fighting gangs of the Islamists, the riot police, the Mukhabarat and break the control of the commanders of the armed forces over the rank and file soldiers by the election of officers and of soldiers' committees.
- * Build a workers' and popular militia.

These measures would open a new chapter of the Egyptian revolution. They would fulfil in the only way possible the

democratic hopes and desires of the revolution of February 2011 and open the transition to a socialist page. The reactionary Islamists, the military and the liberal bourgeois leaders have all proved incapable of fulfilling a single key democratic or social demand of the millions of workers, poor peasants, women and youth. They must all go. But in order to make them go, the masses need a new, alternative leadership, a revolutionary working class party, which fights to make the Egyptian and Arab revolutions permanent and international.

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/after-morsis-fall-no-support-generals-or-their-civilian-stooges>