

Mubarak falls! The victory of the Egyptian revolution

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Mubarak falls! But now the revolution must be made permanent, writes Simon Hardy

11 Friday 2011 is a historic day in the Arab world, in fact the whole world. The dictatorial presidency of Hosni Mubarak, one of the most stable in the region, collapsed as millions upon millions of Egyptians filled the streets of every town and city. The state TV, the presidential palaces, the parliament ? all of them were surrounded by protesters.

The emotional release was incredible ? the images of Egyptians celebrating their victory will be repeated on TV screens across the world, not just today but in the future. It is the image of a people who have struggled and won a tremendous victory. Alongside footage of the collapse of the Berlin wall and the fight for civil rights in the US will be Tahrir square.

The disappointment of the Thursday presidential speech, where everyone had expected Mubarak?s resignation and he cruelly clung to power for an extra 24 hours, was replaced with relief and hope.

Everyone who has ever lost hope in the struggle, anyone who has ever felt that the power of governments and dictators was too strong must draw hope and sustenance from what the Egyptians have achieved. As one woman told Al Jazeera ?I have been waiting for this my whole life, not just as an Egyptian but as a woman. Now anything is possible, even freedom for Palestine.?

Indeed, there were times when the revolution seemed too slow; perhaps even loose its direction ? but the sheer determination of a people to free themselves become the single most powerful force in Egyptian politics. In the face of it the regime fractured and split ? the army became paralysed ? the hated police forced from the streets. The Egyptian revolution is proof that it is the people who can force regime change ? and in the face of that even the mighty US imperialists can be left dumbfounded and unable to stop it.

Clearly it was the entry of the working class into the struggle in an organised way which forced the manoeuvres of 10 February and the presidents subsequent speech. It was Mubarak?s intransigence, his refusal to resign in the face of the complete collapse of support even from the military, that galvanised even greater numbers to come out on 11 February after Friday prayers.

Mubarak has gone ? and now millions across the Middle East will look to the events of Egypt for inspiration. Who will face mass protests next? Who will fall next? Surely the monarchies of Jordan and Saudi Arabia cannot be far behind. The Iranian regime must be trembling with fear tonight.

But the Egyptian revolution is not over

As Mubarak resigned he did not hand over power to Suleiman, he gave it to the Army. Now the Supreme Council for the Armed Forces runs the country. Many of the pro-democracy demonstrators have deep illusions in the army. "The people and the army are united" is a common chant on the protests at Tahrir square. As a statement to win over the rank and file soldiers this is commendable, but when it comes to the high command, it is not true. The army as an institution does not have the same interests of the people. Of course the rank and file soldiers are recruited from working class families and the urban poor, often economically conscripted through unemployment. But the generals at the top are absolutely part of the old regime. The downfall of Mubarak was caused by a revolution, which forced one faction of the regime to sacrifice another; they are at least as corrupt as the other officials of the regime.

The role of the military in politics is almost universally a negative one. In Pakistan the military has often intervened into politics to restore order, putting generals in charge of the government and refusing to give up power. In Turkey the army has regularly intervened into politics either through hard power (an actual military coup) or soft power (the threat of a coup). In Portugal after the 1974 revolution the military took power and established an interim government which lasted for two years before the first constitutional elections happened.

The army desires order above all. It is a highly centralised machine of repression. It is a central component of the capitalist state. The army must be cracked in two just as Mubarak, the NDP and regime was cracked.

And this is the next question that faces the revolution. The president is gone, but the army remains. The captains of industry remain. The capitalist class remains. The western embassies staffed by spies and diplomats intent on securing their interests remain untouched.

The sheer energy and numbers of the protesters can force even more change ? the working class must continue its strikes, must push forward its economic and social demands and consolidate their power. Only a constituent assembly elected by all the people and whose delegates are answerable to the people can legitimately rewrite the constitution. Power should be put in the hands of the working class and poor, through their own committees of struggle. The army has promised to remove the state of emergency - it should be cancelled immediately and full democratic rights restored.

The League for the Fifth International stands in total solidarity with the Egyptian people, and with all people fighting oppression. We stand in solidarity with all the working class in Egypt who are fighting back ? now the task of the day is to form a revolutionary party. Many more will join the Egyptians, turning the resistance into revolution. The future belongs to the billions not the billionaires.

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