



Written by [James Heiser](#) on May 25, 2011

## Egyptian Socialists Form Common Front

Recent developments in Egyptian politics are revealing that not only Islamic militants are gaining power in the new regime: Communists are also preparing for a more active role in the new Egypt. According to Links — International Journal of Socialist Renewal, five self-identified “Communist” and “Socialist” parties in Egypt recently merged into a united front, and are becoming increasingly bold. Links author Mohamed El Hebeishy explains:



Five Egyptian political parties and movements unite to form the Coalition of Socialist Forces, they announced in a meeting on May 10, 2011. The newly formed coalition is made up of the Social Party of Egypt, the Democratic Labour Party, the Popular Socialist Coalition Party, Egypt Communist Party and the Revolutionary Socialists. It aims to include under its umbrella other socialist movements in Egypt, which are considered fragmented. “We [social political activists] are optimistic that the Coalition of Socialist Forces will bring a stronger socialist presence onto Egypt’s political scene”, said Gigi Ibrahim, a political activist. During the May 10 meeting, there were intense discussions regarding the recent turn of events in the country and how it impacts the revolution.

Many Western observers have been unduly shocked by the prominence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the aftermath of the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. That the Egyptian people would be denied any substantial movement toward a more representative form of government was predictable from the moment the uprising began — many of the forces which pressed for revolution were linked to those which have been actively persecuting the Christian churches of Egypt.

The formation of the Coalition of Socialist Forces is another indication that the future of Egypt may indeed be bleak. [According to the website Democracy Now!](#), 2011 was the first year since 1952 when Egypt’s Socialists were able to join the May Day celebration of their comrades around the world:



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In Egypt, thousands of workers and activists poured into Cairo's Tahrir Square Sunday for the country's first independent celebration of International Workers' Day since 1952. People in the square celebrated the formation of labor unions independent of state control and the newly created Egyptian Federation for Independent Unions. A group of labor leaders and activists also announced the formation of a new political party called the Democratic Labor Party. Party member and journalist Hossam el-Hamalawy laid out some of its main demands.

Hossam el-Hamalawy — *Democracy Now!*'s "hero of the hour" — made it clear that many of his party's "main demands" are simply the same old collectivist nonsense; in his words: "The main demand is definitely the re-nationalization of all the privatized factories, a complete halt to the neoliberal program."

The observation that "independent" May Day observances have not taken place since 1952 calls to mind yet another Egyptian revolution: [The July 23 Revolution of 1952](#). Earlier this year, [Workers World boasted](#) that the Soviet Union was linked with the military officers who carried out the 1952 revolution:

Soon after the Egyptian revolution of 1952, the Soviet Union and the socialist camp came to the aid of Egypt at crucial moments. This aid from the socialist camp evoked hostility from the imperialist camp headed by Washington.

After the overthrow of the feudal monarchy of King Farouk, a British puppet, by the Free Officers, pressure began to build to expel the British occupation forces. Israel then began menacing the Egyptian revolution. In 1955 the socialist Czechoslovakian People's Republic sent arms to Egypt.

The secularism of the Revolution Command Council (RCC), which ruled in the aftermath of the 1952 revolt, brought the RCC into conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood, which was outlawed in 1954. As regards the "independence" of the May Day celebrations in Egypt after the 1952 revolution in comparison to that which was observed this year, [Yassin Gaber explains](#) this year's celebration in terms of the Socialists demonstrating their independence from the Egyptian Trade Union Federation:

Absent from the festivities, however, will be the president of the republic and the chair of the official Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF), both under investigation for charges of corruption and illicit gains. May Day, celebrated by socialist and communists all over the world since the late 19th century, was officially embraced by the Egyptian state in 1963 under Nasser, following a massive wave of nationalisations in 1961, and the founding of the Arab Socialist Union in 1962.

Nasser's populist regime viewed Egypt's working class as a necessary partner in its attempt to economically break away from colonial dependency and achieve self-reliance. During the 1960s the conditions of the Egyptian working class witnessed a great improvement in terms of wages and social benefits.

Kamal Abbas, head of the Centre for Trade Union and Workers' Services (CTUWS) in Helwan, says this year's celebrations are "historic" as they mark a new era of independence from the state-controlled ETUF.

Whether or not the new Coalition of Socialist Forces will end up battling the Muslim Brotherhood for the future of Egypt remains to be seen. Certainly those who derided the "[conspiracy theory](#)" that Islamic militants were aligned with Egyptian Communists during the revolt against Mubarak are hoping that everyone will forget what they said. As Christian Gomez [wrote for](#) *The New American* back in March, "It is true that the communists and the Muslim Brotherhood have also battled each other, but the various factions of the communist and socialist parties also battle amongst themselves — and then



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come together to battle their common enemies.”

*Photo: An Egyptian worker holds the red flag of international communism and a banner that reads in Arabic, “workers of Egypt, unite,” at a May Day rally in Tahrir square in Cairo, Egypt, May 1, 2011.*



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