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Rigged elections will only encourage the mass rebellion in Egypt

Update from Cairo

José Antonio Gutiérrez D.

November 29, 2011

Friday saw millions of people come out once again to protest against the Military Council ruling Egypt since the fall of Mubarak (the SCAF), while they insisted the elections would go ahead. This, in spite of the fact that many liberals and progressive political parties were expressing doubts about participating in the electoral process, while announcing the formation of a new National Rescue Government headed by Mohammed El Baradei in order to explore a bourgeois alternative to military rule -the main idea, is that the masses need to be kept out of decision making, disempowered. The weekend also saw the clashes move to the Cabinet Palace, where more demonstrators' blood was spilled by the repressive forces of the regime. Today, Monday, it was elections day and on the first one hour, more than a hundred complaints of irregularities were made. Participation has been feeble. Many thousands said that they were voting with their protest in Tahrir. Many people under-

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stand that this vote validates the current regime and the eventual new regime being born in the shade of the SCAF.

The most likely scenario is that the Muslim Brothers will win these sham elections, but that will mean little or nothing. Such an irregular election, taking place in the middle of overwhelming violence, and organised by a regime with negligible credibility will do little to bring stability to Egypt. On the other hand, since February, the Muslim Brothers have allied with the corrupt SCAF and they have distanced from the revolutionary masses who rightly regard them as alien to their struggle. The people are tired and this will only mean that they will double their determination to fight this decisive battle. While the masses were expectant last night, there were already talks of workers and trade unions to go on strike after the electoral show is over.

Once again we were updated on the situation in Cairo by comrade Yasser Abdullah, of the Egyptian Libertarian Socialist Movement. This conversation took place last night (November 28th) nearly at 11pm.

What has happened in terms of the struggle since Friday (25th November)?

On Friday there were calls for “A Million People” protest in Tahrir square to end the military regime, and there were also calls for a small protest to back the Military regime in Abbasseya -this is an old trick to show that Egyptian people are divided, when they are clearly not, and that Tahrir is not the majority, when it clearly is the vast majority of the people. They went also to state that the revolution was over when Mubarak stepped down... here they're playing with the concept of revolution itself, because the new Arab Uprising redefines many concepts including the concept of revolution. For the Arab world has been for many decades under military regimes calling themselves “revolutionary”; Qaddafi used

to call himself “the leader of the revolution”, but this was all quite meaningless. As it happens, actually, this is the main theme in many movies about the July 1952 military coup in Egypt... for many generations that was the meaning of the revolution, as if it was something done by some saintly leaders, not by the masses, so they thought that the revolution was the army.

On the contrary, the real revolutionary forces note that revolution is against the military regime, not only against the Mubarak regime. In Tahrir the political power, the bourgeois power who fears the revolution as much as the Junta fears it, tried to calm down the revolutionary impetus by forming a National Rescue Government declaring it from a square, but how can you form a government that way? They have called it a Rescue Government without any votes, without calling for a general assembly.

The good thing is that on Friday the call for the National Rescue Government made some protestors move to the Cabinet Palace and occupied the front of it to prevent the SCAF-nominated prime minister Kamal El-Ganzoury from entering the cabinet. On Saturday, the Central Security Forces tried to storm the sit-in but retreated after killing one protestor by running over him with an armoured car... his name was Ahmed Sayed Souror (you can check www.youtube.com). The sit-in continues now in front of the cabinet.

What will happen with the elections?

We are on the eve of the elections and no one knows any details about the process... the SCAF have said that the process will take two days for every phase, and the whole process will be in three phases, so here comes the questions... what about the ballot boxes? How will they keep them for two days? The answer is they’ll be kept in the Ministry of Interior, what a joke! the Ministry of Interior is the main repressive force in Egypt, and this is supposed to keep an eye on the ballot boxes... and the people have to believe that the police will be honest...

In the past referendum which was held on March 19th, I witnessed personally many irregularities in the process, and I believe that the SCAF has made up the results to favour them. Some forces who allied with the Military Junta, like Ikhwan (the Muslim Brothers) and the Salafis, believe that the SCAF would give them the parliament, so they tried their best to prevent the sit in in Tahrir, and when they failed to do so, they started trying their best to accuse “anarchists” for inciting violence to prevent the parliamentary elections... one of them said that the anarchists are against Parliament for the parliament works only for the rich. In many forums and facebook pages, these charges have been held against our group. Yasser Abdelkawy, a comrade from Alexandria, and me, has been named, and they say we are responsible for inciting violence against police to prevent the elections from taking place.

I think the people should gain experience by themselves... in many cases you can just say what you think, but you can't impose it on people. So some people may have to vote to know the trick behind it, and the morrow will thus bring more impetus against the SCAF.

Is there any concrete arrangements for the National Rescue Government? What do you think of any such solution?

There's two National Rescue Governments. One has been formed by the SCAF, and one was formed by the bourgeois political parties. Our movement is against them both, because they're trying to keep the people out of the game, collect members by phone calls not by direct democracy and general assemblies, and they only represent people in Cairo. El Baradei's Rescue Government has been formed on Friday in Cairo without any democratic process... the same mentality lies behind the Military Junta and the political parties... there are experts, politicians, dissidents, who can form governments for not organised people... as my comrade Mohammed Jean Veneuese said to me once” the technocrats are fascists' best friends”, I think he was quite right.

If the people fighting on the streets are not organised, then what is the chance for a true revolution to succeed?

The revolution can not be succeed without self-organised people, without a grassroots movement, without mass participation from every sector in society, so sooner or later the people have to get organised in a new way. Now the people have lost faith in the old ways but have yet to recognize the new ways. Soon or later they will discover their way, as long as they are still fighting against the Military Junta.

What is the position of workers unions? They were crucial for the fall of Mubarak... are they coming out to the streets this time?

The workers unions have many of the vices of the old left... the workers feel that they're used by the parties only to get votes. Workers know they can give the electoral parties new impetus, but they have not yet discovered they can get organised for both economical demands and political ones. I've contacted some workers active in the unions to discuss a political strike with them but they said to me they will wait, I think they are waiting because of the elections, so let's wait and see what would happen tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.

The political crisis is not over yet. Egyptians will go to the elections without a government, without knowing anything... that uncertainty sometimes may help to plant revolutionary ideas in fertile soil.

*Long live the revolution
Glory to our martyrs, to our heroes
Long live anarchism*