

The Egyptian junta's fraudulent elections and the tasks of the working class

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The Egyptian elections have exposed the sham character of the so-called “transition to democracy” organized by the Egyptian ruling class in conjunction with its allies in Washington after the overthrow of longtime US stooge Hosni Mubarak by mass working class protests in February of 2011.

With the last votes being counted, the elections have set up a run-off between Ahmed Shafiq, the last prime minister under Mubarak, and Mohamed Mursi, the candidate of the right-wing Muslim Brotherhood.

Neither of these candidates speak with any political legitimacy for the aims of the Egyptian revolution. They are both deeply hostile to the aspirations for an end to poverty and dictatorship that drove millions of Egyptian workers into the streets last year to bring down Mubarak.

The elections were marked by low voter turnout, reflecting the widespread sense amongst the masses that the junta's elections have nothing to do with their revolutionary struggles, but are rather directed against their social and democratic aspirations.

The elections were held at gunpoint under the dictatorial auspices of the SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) junta with emergency laws in place, but without a constitution. As Mubarak's generals called upon the Egyptian people to vote for one of their handpicked candidates, they had not even decided what powers they intend to cede to the winner of the elections.

The utterly fraudulent elections were hailed by US imperialism and its stooges. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton claimed that the vote in Egypt marked “another important milestone in their transition to democracy” and cynically announced that she and other

US officials “look forward to working with Egypt's democratically elected government.”

Mustafa Abdel Jalil, the chairman of the ruling National Transitional Council (NTC) in Libya, which was bombed to power in a brutal US-led imperialist war against the defenseless country last year, praised the elections as “superb,” stressing that a “a stable Egypt means a stable Arab world.”

The elections set the stage for intensifying power struggles between two bourgeois factions amid expectations of a renewed explosion of working class anger driven by a deepening social and economic crisis as well as rumors that ousted dictator Mubarak could soon be released.

The military and the Muslim Brotherhood both control large portions of the Egyptian economy, posing the threat of a violent fight over which faction of the bourgeoisie is to control the vast resources of the country. Egyptian workers have no real choice in the elections, as the voting is merely designed to give a false veneer of legitimacy to a regime that is preparing for an intensification of the suppression of the working class.

In order to confront the threat of an intensifying counterrevolution, Egyptian workers and youth must draw a balance sheet. Despite the most heroic sacrifices, the revolution could not triumph without a revolutionary leadership and perspective. The working class, the force that drove the revolution, remains totally disenfranchised and without any political representation.

This is mainly due to the role of the petty-bourgeois “left” parties in Egypt that claim to speak in the name of the revolution or even “socialism,” but are in fact allies of the counterrevolutionary forces. Representing the interests of more affluent layers of the middle class,

they are financially and politically tied to Western imperialism and various sections of the Egyptian ruling class.

Organizations such as the misnamed Revolutionary Socialists (RS) opposed any struggle at any stage of the revolution to overthrow the army and replace the Mubarak regime with a workers' state fighting for socialist policies against imperialist rule in the Middle East.

Initially, the RS and their international co-thinkers supported the SCAF junta and claimed that "the council aims to reform the political and economic system." They offered their services in controlling the working class in order to receive an "enlarged democratic space" under military rule in which they could prosper and enrich themselves.

When their collaboration with the junta was threatened by mass protests against the military, they opposed popular calls for a "second revolution." Instead they entered into an alliance with Islamist forces, thus paving the way for the army's crackdown on the June-July sit-in in Tahrir Square. Their alliance with the Islamists also foundered on mass protests against the parliamentary elections in November-January, in which the Islamists won the majority.

Having at every critical point of the revolution intervened to prop up to bourgeois forces, their call for a general strike together with the Western-backed independent trade unions on February 11 of this year drew no popular response amongst workers. Shocked by the indifference and hostility of the workers to their maneuvers, the RS moved even further to the right. Having promoted the presidential elections as an achievement of the revolution, they bear political responsibility for a situation where the Islamists and officials of the old Mubarak regime dominate political life in Egypt.

This dangerous outcome has vindicated the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which sought to clarify the social antagonism between the working class and the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois layers represented in the political establishment.

The counterrevolutionary support of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties and groups for the US-backed transition is a stark confirmation of Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution, which

holds that in backward countries such as Egypt, only the socialist struggle of the working class in alliance with their international class brothers and sisters can achieve any of the revolutionary aspirations of the masses.

To fight back against the counterrevolution and regain the revolutionary momentum, the main task for the working class remains that of establishing its political independence through the building of sections of the ICFI in Egypt and throughout the Middle East to fight for victory in the coming class battles.

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