

panied by its alliance with the Muslim Brotherhood which represents reactionary segments of the population. Thus the elections gave birth to a two-party system which maintained the ruling party in the majority and allowed the Wafd limited representation as the «legal opposition».

From the beginning, Mubarak proclaimed his commitment to the principles of honor, honesty and decency in the electoral process. The reality of the campaign and voting process represented something quite foreign to decency and honesty.

Violence and coercion

The election process this year was accompanied by many violent events. In the city of Luxor, members of the ruling party killed Mrs. Nimat Hussein, the Socialist Labor Party candidate. In Deir Shbein, the wife of the National Progressive Unionist Party candidate, Ahmed Barakat, was seriously wounded by supporters of the ruling party who thus prevented NPUP representatives from entering the voting centers to observe the voting process. In the eastern province of the Nile, the body of Hussein Murad of the Wafd Party was found; he had been kidnapped on May 27th by supporters of the ruling party.

In the city of Giza, supporters of the ruling party prevented the representatives of the Wafd Party from entering three election centers and terrorized the voters. This led to the injury of three Wafd members, who were taken to hospitals.

These incidents took place when police authorities had received strict instructions, reportedly from Mubarak, to stay neutral. This shows how the ruling authorities benefited from the state apparatus. The role of the police was limited to protecting the election polls, and they had orders not to counter the violence of the supporters of the ruling party against the opposition parties. Lutfi al Khouli, a candidate of the National Progressive Unionist Party, stated on election day, «When we say free elec-

tions, we must put the word *free* in parenthesis».

Similarly, the state-controlled media was used by the ruling party. On election day, the government «national» papers urged the voters to vote for the ruling party. Musa Sabri of *Al Akhbar* directly asked people not to vote for the National Progressive Unionist Party and the Wafd, calling the first «communist» and the second «extremist, that attempts to bring us back to the old days».

A high rate of abstentionism was a feature of this year's elections. According to the numbers announced by the Ministry of Interior, only 43 percent of those eligible actually voted. This means that more than half of those eligible to vote stayed away. Proceeding from this point, no one can be fooled about the legitimacy of these elections of the assembly which is supposed to represent the people.

In several areas, thousands of people were not allowed to vote. According to *Al Ahali*, the organ of the NPUP, «tens of thousands of voters were kept from voting in several places when they did not find their names on the election lists. Upon the persistence of some people in searching for their names with different committees, it was discovered that the election lists given to the committees were different from the announced ones.» In Sabra el Khanina, a workers' district, Lutfi al Khouli announced that 70,000 names on the election list were those of dead people. This is 23 percent of those registered in that district.

From the results announced by the Ministry of Interior, it was clear that in the capital and other big cities, 25% of the eligible voters voted, while in the rural areas, 61% voted. This calls into question the practice of ruling party members who supervised the elections committees in those areas, because it is well known that illiteracy, political apathy, disease and poverty are more widespread in rural areas than in the cities of Egypt. It is unthinkable that a higher percent of the rural population votes.

The authorities can claim that they allowed a reasonable portion of the opposition to sit in the People's Assembly and that they allowed freedom of expression prior to and during the election process, insinuating that this is real democracy. But the practices of the ruling party clearly show the fallacy of these claims. A great feeling of disenchantment was spread among all opposition parties due to the results and practices by the National Democratic Party. The Wafd Party claims that the ruling authorities prevented them from winning more seats in the Council. Fouad Serrajeddin, leader of the Wafd, called the elections «the funeral of democracy». He added, «What is called the democratic experience in Egypt has failed and will have bad effects on the people.»

Al Ahali, the NPUP paper, described this process as the ruling party telling the people that democratic change is an illusion and our rulers speak in the language of violence. It went on to say in its editorial; «Some people thought our rulers became aware of the lessons of September, 1981, when Sadat was killed, but it seems that they learned only to change their tactics.»

Therefore, there is no real change in Egypt. The elections proved that the same ruling class will remain in power. The representatives of the Egyptian working people are deprived of representation in the People's Assembly which means the continuation of Camp David and the open door policy initiated by Sadat and continued by President Mubarak. This also means the continuation of instability and the economic crisis that entails high prices and a low standard of living for the Egyptian masses.

In spite of the left forces' losses in these elections, they were able to use their election campaign to spread their program among a broader section of the population. This is a necessary step to mobilize the people of Egypt on a national program and prepare them for the next national and class battles in the coming stage. ●