

Revolt and “dialogue” in Honduras

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With this week’s return of ousted President Manuel Zelaya to Honduras, pressure is mounting on the coup regime headed by fellow Liberal Party leader Roberto Micheletti to bring an end to the country’s three-month-old crisis.

The Organization of American States and the European Union have announced that their ambassadors are returning to Tegucigalpa along with some foreign ministers to promote a settlement, former US President Jimmy Carter called the coup leader to urge him to negotiate, the International Monetary Fund announced that it has “paused” its relations with the country, and Standard & Poor’s has downgraded its credit rating.

The aim of this pressure campaign was spelled out most bluntly in a *Washington Post* editorial Thursday entitled “Honduras Gets Messier.”

The editorial denounced Zelaya for seeking “to foment ... populist revolution” from the confines of the Brazilian Embassy, where he has been given refuge.

“Such behavior ought to deter any responsible member of the Organization of American States—starting with Brazil—from supporting anything more than a token return by Mr. Zelaya to office,” the *Post*’s editors insisted. “The Obama administration has backed such a restoration (as have we) so as to void Mr. Zelaya’s illegal removal from the country by the army in June and thus uphold the larger principle of respect for democratic order in the region.”

The editorial continued: “Now the United States ought to make clear that any further attempt by Mr. Zelaya or his supporters to cause public disorder or violence will mean the reversal of the US position—leaving him as a permanent ward of those in the Brazilian government who cooperated with his caper.”

This is the authentic voice of Yankee imperialism, dripping with contempt for the lands to its south and

seething with anger at any sign of popular revolt against the conditions of oppression and poverty to which hundreds of millions are condemned. Restoring order is the sole concern of the *Post* and the US ruling establishment for which it speaks. It fears a continuation of the crisis will make Honduras ungovernable and raise the specter of a genuine revolution.

The charge that Zelaya is fomenting revolution is a false one. The upheavals that have erupted in Honduras following his clandestine return on Monday have been provoked by the coup regime and its security forces in their attempt to enforce a series of curfews that effectively condemned a population of 7 million to house arrest.

Workers and youth in the poorer suburbs of Tegucigalpa as well as in other parts of the country defied the curfews, spontaneously erecting street barricades and battling soldiers and police. In a country where people are compelled by poverty to buy food on a daily basis, those who have left their homes in search of something to eat have faced the prospect of beatings and worse.

Whatever Zelaya’s populist rhetoric, he has not led a revolt, nor does he share the social and class interests of those who have taken to the streets. He has not sought the popular overthrow of the dictatorship, but rather has relied on pressure from Washington, in the first instance, and that of the OAS, Brazil and others to put him back in office.

Zelaya returned to Honduras appealing for “dialogue” with those who overthrew him and with the ruling oligarchy of which he himself is a product.

He has accepted as the basis of this discussion the so-called San José accord drafted by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, Washington’s hand-picked mediator. This proposal calls for the formation of a government of “national unity” between Zelaya and the coup leaders,

the renunciation of any proposal to amend the country's reactionary constitution, and a blanket amnesty for the political and military leaders who have unleashed a wave of killings, disappearances, torture, beatings and arbitrary detentions in the 90 days since Zelaya was bundled onto an airplane and forced out of the country.

The Obama administration's aim in promoting this plan is to solidify the goals of the coup while maintaining the appearance of a commitment to "democracy." Washington's halfhearted criticisms of Zelaya's ouster are belied by the failure to this day of the US State Department to formally declare it a coup. Meanwhile, the US military base at Palmerola, Honduras continues operations as normal, and Washington has taken no steps to impose trade sanctions.

The Arias plan would relegate Zelaya to the status of a figurehead for the little more than three months remaining before a successor takes office. His acceptance of this miserable accord appeared to bear fruit on Thursday, as first a representative of the Catholic Church hierarchy, which enthusiastically supported the coup, and then the four candidates for president in the elections scheduled for November 29 came to the embassy to greet him.

As the Spanish daily *El Pais* put it, "The images of shootings and beatings were replaced by those of smiles and embraces." For many of the Honduran workers and youth on the receiving end of the shootings and beatings, the image of the smiling Zelaya embracing the four candidates—all supporters of the coup—in an election that masses of people have vowed to boycott provoked disgust.

Whatever Zelaya's intentions, or for that matter those of his visitors, a peaceful resolution of the crisis on the terms proposed by Washington, Arias and the OAS is far from assured. On Friday—just hours after the UN Security Council condemned the harassment of the Brazilian embassy by Honduran security forces—it was reported that troops laying siege to the embassy had fired gas grenades into the compound, causing those holed up there together with Zelaya to bleed from the nose and vomit blood.

Zelaya's life is clearly in danger, and the prospect that the killing and repression of the past 90 days will be massively expanded is a real one. This is, after all, a

regime that rests upon a military trained by Washington in the use of death squads and brutality to defend the interests of the US multinationals and the local oligarchy.

The events of the past three months have exposed the bankruptcy of bourgeois nationalist politics. The attacks on the basic democratic rights and social conditions of the masses of Honduran working people will continue, even if Zelaya is briefly restored to the presidential palace.

The strivings of workers, peasants and youth expressed in their sustained resistance to the June 28 coup can be fulfilled only through a revolutionary struggle, independent of all sections of the ruling elite, aimed at taking power and establishing a socialist Honduras as part of the struggle of working people throughout Central America, the entire hemisphere and internationally.

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