

Massive rally in Mexico City condemns massacre of Oaxaca teachers

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One week following the police massacre of teachers and their supporters in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca, and with many of the CNTE teachers union leaders in jail, people all across Mexico continue to express their anger in waves of demonstrations, occupations and interruptions of highway traffic.

On Sunday, hundreds of thousands marched along Mexico City's main boulevard, the Paseo de La Reforma, in a "march of silence" that had been called by Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the bourgeois nationalist, former Mexico City mayor (2000-2005) who now heads the Morena Party (*Movimiento de Reconstrucción Nacional*).

The enormous demonstration was composed of students, teachers and workers. It extended for many blocks ending at the Angel for Independence monument. At the same time, in parallel with the Morena rally, hundreds rallied at the "Anti Monument," erected in April 2015 for the Ayotzinapa 43, the 43 teaching students who disappeared are believed to have been massacred in Guerrero state in September 2014.

In both acts, demands linking the massacre in the Oaxacan village of Nochixtlán with the 43 disappeared students were present on many banners, along with calls for the resignation of Mexico's president, Enrique Peña Nieto.

In his speech, the Morena leader compared the current regime, headed by President Peña Nieto's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)—of which Lopez Obredor was himself a former leading member—with that of Porfirio Diaz, overthrown by the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917). According to Lopez Obrador, the Peña Nieto administration is neo- *porfirista*, neo-liberal, and dictatorial. He accused the administration of giving away communal resources (a reference, in

part, to the privatization of oil and state-owned utilities).

"The greatest of irrationality," declared Lopez Obrador, "is to use fraud and violence to further economic policies and a regime of corruption that are rejected by the people, which is dictatorship."

That "face of dictatorship," said Lopez Obrador, "was what appeared with the terror in Nochixtlán. That is why we are here to call on the government: Refrain, authoritarian regime! Refrain, government hawks!, We will not allow dictatorship and authoritarianism in México!"

Lest anyone think that Lopez Obrador intended to make himself out as Peña Nieto's *Madero* —the man whose opposition to Porfirio Diaz triggered the civil war in 1910—his rhetorical denunciation of the current government was quickly followed by the request that the government of President Peña Nieto reform itself. He proposed that it make use of the last two years left in its six-year mandate to undertake cosmetic measures aimed at staving off a social revolution.

In particular, he is demanding that Peña Nieto fire those responsible for the Nochixtlán massacre, namely his chief of staff, Osorio Chong, and that he appoint a cabinet of national reconciliation to ensure a smooth democratic transition to the 2018 elections. As he was speaking, many in his massive audience were chanting for the removal of Education Secretary Agustín Nuño and of Peña Nieto himself. Many of the banners demanded the president's ouster.

"It is necessary today to overthrow the Pact for Mexico Regime and its hangers-on, as Porfirio Díaz was overthrown, but without violence, through the revolution in people's minds that has already begun," Lopez Obrador declared.

The Pact for Mexico was an agreement between the

three main bourgeois political parties that paved the way for so-called reforms to privatize energy, public utilities and education in Mexico. The PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party), which Lopez Obrador formerly led, was one of the pact's signatories.

Lopez Obrador's movement represents a section of the national bourgeoisie, and it reflects both its timidity with respect to US imperialism and its fear of the Mexican working class. He seemed to implore the CNTE teachers to continue to engage in dialogue with the government "to resolve your demands and to avoid repression and violence," suggesting perhaps that the June 19 massacre was in part the teachers' own fault. At other times, he implored Peña Nieto himself to "avoid a reckless collapse, ruinous and prejudicial for all."

Negotiations with CNTE leaders, which have been taking place on and off for several years, have restarted and now appear to hinge more on how to "find a place at the table" for the CNTE and its bureaucracy, rather than on any genuine defense of education or the rights of teachers.

Other than calling for a greater input on education reform by the CNTE, CNTE bureaucrats so far have been rather vague about what the results of these negotiations should be. A report on the march that appeared in the Mexico City daily *La Reforma* quoted a letter from a CNTE leader that was read at the Morena rally: "Our struggle is that of all Mexicans," said the letter by CNTE leader Rubén Núñez, "unity and defense of what is ours is our banner."

It is not known if Peña Nieto, currently on a state visit to Canada, heard Lopez Obrador's appeal. However, he emphatically made clear once more that his administration in its negotiations with the CNTE leaders has no intention of abandoning the education reform measures that are at the center of the dispute.

In a pro-forma statement dripping with cynicism issued on Monday from Canada, the Mexican president declared that his government "lamented the differences on education reform, deeply lamented that something had happened during which, lamentably, human lives were lost." Peña Nieto further asserted that this is not the first incident in which the state had used force to maintain "social order and social peace." He added, "Very lamentably this led to the Oaxaca events; this

will result in an investigation and in the punishment of those that are responsible."

The probability that a credible investigation will take place is nil. On the same day Peña Nieto made his statement, the Mexican courts issued their decision not to release army files to the press and human rights groups on the Tlatlaya massacre of June 2014, in which the army summarily executed 22 civilians and altered the scene of the crime to make it look like a shoot-out with a drug gang.

Two months later, the 43 students from Ayotzinapa were forcibly kidnapped with the involvement of the army and the federal police; it is expected that no one will be held accountable.

Demonstrations in support of the CNTE teachers took place over the weekend across Mexico. There were also protests and rallies at Mexican consulates throughout the world, in Los Angeles, Chicago, Buenos Aires, Madrid, Berlin, and many other cities.



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