

Mexican government, trade unions mobilize against protests to pave the way for Trump

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Mass protests in Mexico and the looming inauguration of Donald Trump as US president are adding to uncertainty in the Mexican ruling class and among foreign investors over fears of growing social unrest and economic crisis. Ongoing demonstrations continued across Mexico this weekend as Mexicans continue to reject the government's gas subsidy cut.

As protests continued yesterday, Fiat Chrysler announced that it will shift production of two Jeep models currently being assembled in Mexico to the United States. The announcement came after Ford Motor Company said last week it was rescinding plans to build a new plant in Mexico.

The response of the Mexican government has been to violently repress demonstrations and lay out the welcome mat for Trump. Even though Trump has pledged to deport millions and has called Mexicans "rapists" and "criminals," President Enrique Peña Nieto appointed Luis Videgaray as foreign minister last week in a direct signal to Trump that the Mexican ruling class is willing to overlook his fascistic, xenophobic program in order to make a profit.

Videgaray is seen as an advocate of close collaboration with the US government and is widely hated in Mexico for organizing a visit by Donald Trump to Mexico City last summer. The anger at this fiasco was so fierce that he was forced to resign as finance minister.

The representatives of US imperialism are thrilled with Videgaray's appointment and see it as an opportunity to intensify the corporate exploitation of Mexico's workers and resources.

When Videgaray resigned in September as finance minister, then-candidate Trump tweeted: "Mexico has lost a brilliant finance minister and wonderful man who I know is highly respected by President Peña Nieto.

With Luis, Mexico and the United States would have made wonderful deals together."

This spells disaster for the working class, which is demonstrating by the tens of thousands because they cannot afford the rising cost of living.

On Saturday, protest demonstrations took place in scores of Mexican cities. The demonstrations include teachers, oil workers, and other sections of the working class, despite the fact that there has been no endorsement from the trade unions. Demonstrators clashed with heavily armed police in the Northern border city of Rosarito, with the government forced to fly in federal police from elsewhere in the country. Dozens were wounded in fierce fighting that ensued. The US government decided to close some border crossings this weekend as protests flared.

Common to all the protests has been the demand that Peña Nieto resign together with many of the state governors. There is a widespread feeling that the government, the parties that signed the Pact For Mexico in December 2012, and the trade unions are rapidly losing legitimacy.

Combined with violent repression, the Peña Nieto administration cobbled together a new "pact" over the weekend, called the Economic Strengthening and Family Economic Protection Pact (*Acuerdo para el Fortalecimiento Económico y la Protección de la Economía Familiar*). Economic Minister José Antonio Meade announced on Monday that the pact was reached with Peña Nieto's partner parties and with the corporate sector, allegedly to strengthen "four economic poles" which include "the household economy, employment, economic stability and the rule of law."

The plan includes minor social investments for construction and transport plus austerity policies aimed

at cutting the federal budget by 190 billion pesos (US\$8.9 billion). The new pact includes the corporatist Union-Management National Productivity Committee (*Comité Nacional de Productividad*). Under the terms of this new agreement, big business agrees to restrain price increases and the trade unions agree to provide the program with cheap labor.

The leaders of several of Mexico's major trade unions shamelessly signed the deal, which will result in further cuts to Mexico's social programs and will be used to advance the government's privatization plans. The leader of the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) was joined in signing the document by several other union leaders representing the National Auto Workers union and the misnamed Revolutionary Workers and Peasants Confederation (CROC).

The phony pact is aimed at duping protesters and striking workers to return to their jobs so that the reform plan can be successfully carried through. Mexican workers know the worthless value of promises made by the ruling class when faced with opposition from the working masses.

The protests and strikes are at a turning point. The trade unions are working to suffocate the protests with hollow promises, and the forces of the "left," including Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, are telling the working class and youth that they must calm down and vote for him in the 2018 presidential elections. In the absence of a revolutionary leadership of the working class, the government and its supporters will succeed in stifling the protest movement and forcing through the diktats of the banks and corporations.

There exists in the Mexican working class a long tradition of militancy, hardened over the years by the deep poverty that pervades Mexican social life. But the whole of Mexican history also shows that spontaneity is insufficient for the overthrow of capitalism, which is the root cause of the poverty, inequality and violence dominating Mexico.

The history of the 20th century shows that the working class requires political leadership and historical perspective. Mexican supporters of the *World Socialist Web Site* must come forward to help establish sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International and to provide the leadership that will be required to guide the explosive struggles ahead in the direction of world socialist revolution.



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