

Mexican ruling class working out response to López Obrador's lead in election polls

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Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), the presidential candidate of the electoral coalition “Together we will make history”—comprised of AMLO’s Movement for National Regeneration (Morena), the Labor Party and the socially conservative Social Encounter Party—is polling in the high 40s and maintains an 18-20 point lead over Ricardo Anaya Cortés, candidate of the coalition “For Mexico to the Front”—comprised of Anaya’s right-wing Authentic National Party (PAN), the formerly “center-left” Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the Citizen’s Movement (MC). In third place with under 20 percent is José Antonio Meade Kuribreña of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and his “Everyone for Mexico” coalition.

AMLO’s commanding lead in the winner-take-all election reflects popular rejection of the violence, corruption and economic policies carried out by the current government of PRI President Enrique Peña Nieto and the past two PAN administrations of Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón.

With AMLO projected to win handily on July 1, and with Meade given virtually no chance to turn his campaign around, last week witnessed an extraordinary series of heated charges, denials, intrigues and maneuvers as the Mexican ruling class works out its strategic response to the rise of AMLO.

Less than two months ago, Anaya insisted he might seek to jail the current President Enrique Peña Nieto for corruption should he prevail. But last week AMLO charged that Anaya met last month with a group of prominent businessmen from the Mexican Business Council (Consejo Mexicano de Negocios, CMN), which includes Mexico’s 10 richest magnates, to discuss “impunity” for the president in exchange for the PRI supporting Anaya in order to defeat AMLO.

Anaya denied this, but a video had surfaced of him meeting the prior Friday with high-level executives of

Mexico’s second largest bank, Citibanamex, global giant Citibank’s Mexican subsidiary, in which he said that he is willing to “build” an alliance with Peña Nieto so that Meade would step down to prevent AMLO from winning.

Anaya then clarified that he was not seeking a “pact” with the president involving impunity for the latter, nor was he asking Meade to call it quits. Instead, Anaya was just seeking what he called “useful votes,” that is, votes from the PRI’s coalition that would not be wasted if they could stop AMLO.

The spokesperson for the Meade presidential campaign, Javier Lozano, acknowledged that there is a lot of pressure from the business sector for Meade and Calderón’s former first lady Margarita Zavala, who is running as an independent, to step down. Meade, he insisted, would not give up his campaign. Zavala has also not ended her campaign. She is polling at most around 4 percent.

But reflecting its mounting internal tensions, the PRI then cashiered the party’s president, Enrique Ochoa, replacing him with René Juárez Cisneros, who was formerly undersecretary to former Interior Minister Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong. Chong had long been thought to be the most likely PRI presidential candidate, but he opted not to run because he did not think that the PRI had a chance to win.

On Thursday morning, the CMN published an article in several Mexico City newspapers complaining that AMLO had slandered them by saying that their attempt to have Anaya approach Peña Nieto for support amounted to unlawful intervention in the electoral process.

The president of the larger Mexican Employer Coordinating Council (Consejo Coordinador Empresarial, CCE) then defended its members, demanding that AMLO stop attacking the captains of Mexican industry.

Gustavo de Hoyos, the president of Coparmex, the giant Mexican Employers’ Association (Confederación

Patronal de la República Mexicana, CPRM), asserted its power in a thinly veiled threat to AMLO:

“We are not going to allow under any circumstances to have a return to authoritarianism. We will not allow what we saw in 1970, where society became polarized. We will not allow or accept in any way that Manichaeism that wants to divide Mexican society between rich and poor, between the people and the fifis [playboys], between businessmen and workers, between güeros [blondes] and morenas [dark-skinned people].”

In a wide-ranging interview Thursday on the Televisa network, Mexico’s largest, AMLO responded by calling the CMN bigshots a “power mafia” who had obstructed democracy and waged a dirty war against him to derail his political project. He was not anti-business, he insisted, noting that he only sought to end the reign of this small group of “influence peddlers.”

In fact, in the interview López Obrador went out of his way to once again assure Mexican business that he is not advancing a left-wing program. He favors a free market, he said, with an independent central bank and free fluctuation for the peso.

AMLO insisted there will be no persecution of politicians or businessmen, there would be no expropriations of businesses, nor would anything that past governments sold or privatized be taken over by the government. He said he would not waste his time in such “useless” battles.

AMLO also reversed his previously-stated intention to cancel construction of the new multi-billion-dollar Mexico City airport—the biggest public works project in the country’s history, and a gold mine to those like Carlos Slim, Mexico’s richest man, who were awarded major construction contracts. The massive project would not be automatically canceled, AMLO said, but only reviewed for corruption, cost effectiveness.

Despite attacking the North American Free Trade Agreement in the past as unfair to certain layers of Mexican business and small farmers, López Obrador said nothing to undermine the recent assurances of his top aides that he would respect the terms of a renegotiated NAFTA if the US, Mexico and Canada reach a deal before the July election.

AMLO’s assurances once again demonstrate that he is at most a tepid social democrat, albeit a somewhat nationalist throwback, who would be at home, like Bernie Sanders—although without the latter’s pretenses to socialism—in the American Democratic Party. In reality, López Obrador represents little threat to the capitalist

order in Mexico. If there is an explosion of mass opposition by the Mexican working class AMLO may be in the best position to contain it, much as Syriza did in Greece.

But important sections of both the American and Mexican bourgeoisie oppose even AMLO’s mild proposals for reform. The US is also concerned that in the face of Trump’s aggressive trade policies AMLO would be more likely to turn to China for economic development should he be elected. Propaganda campaigns linking AMLO to Venezuela and Cuba, and even to specious charges of Russian attempts to meddle in Mexico’s election, have already been attempted, although those efforts seem to have fallen flat for lack of traction in the public.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has recently reported that Google, Facebook and Twitter, which are increasingly integrated with the American state and its intelligence agencies, have entered into contracts over the last few months with Mexico’s National Electoral Institute (INE), which runs the elections. (See [here](#) and [here](#)). Already able to manipulate and censor social media in order to favor one or another party or candidate, these corporations have effectively been handed over the keys to INE’s computers with the possibility they will manipulate election results on a real-time basis if the ruling class so decides.

Such extreme measures could lead to large-scale protests that may trigger an emergency government or the imposition of martial law. Mexico’s new Internal Security Law enacted in December gives the president the power to order the Army and Navy to intervene in response to “threats to internal security.”



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