

The elections in Mexico and the political tasks of the working class

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The national elections taking place in Mexico on Sunday pose vital issues before the Mexican and international working class.

After six years of the corrupt and brutal rule of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto, Mexico is mired in pandemic violence, unprecedented social inequality and staggering levels of unemployment as well as deepening poverty for the majority of the population.

The ruling PRI, which held undisputed power from 1929 to 2000, is so hated that it chose as its candidate a “technocrat”, José Antonio Meade, who is not even a member of the party. He is running third in the polls, and there is distinct possibility that the party will face a nationwide rout on the local, state and federal levels.

The candidate of the right-wing PAN (National Action Party), with which the PRI has alternated power since the dawn of the new millennium, Ricardo Anaya, is widely viewed as a representative of the corrupt system of bribes and kickbacks that he oversaw as the former president of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies.

With the massive popular repudiation of these two traditional ruling parties, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the former mayor of Mexico City and now three-time presidential candidate, running as leader of the MORENA (Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional) party, is projected by virtually every poll to win the July 1 election by an historically unprecedented margin.

The coming to power of López Obrador will yield not a way out of the current crisis, but its sharp intensification and new dangers for the Mexican working class. Sooner rather than later, a MORENA-led administration will betray the mass aspirations for an end to the social hardship and suffering that López Obrador has cynically exploited.

There are no doubt substantial popular illusions in López Obrador, or AMLO as he is popularly known. A 64-year-old professional politician, he began his career in the PRI, leaving it for the PRD (Democratic Revolutionary Party) and twice running as its presidential candidate. He went on to found MORENA after the PRD turned sharply to the right, signing on to Peña Nieto’s 2012 “Pact for Mexico”, which opened up Mexico’s labor market, its education system, and the energy,

financial, and telecommunication sectors to privatization schemes and so-called free-market “reforms.”

The closing of AMLO’s campaign Wednesday night, staged before a crowd that packed the Azteca stadium in southern Mexico City, provided an illustration of the sharp contradiction between the popular illusions in López Obrador and the reality of his class position and political program.

While vowing that the ruling parties of the past would lose the election, he promised that there “will not be reprisals.” This means that the crimes of the past six years, including the disappearance and presumed murder of the 43 Ayotzinapa teaching students, along with countless other massacres by state security forces, not to mention the wholesale corruption which AMLO has made the centerpiece of his campaign, will go unpunished.

He promised that “we will seek unity to the extent that we can.” Indeed, right-wing former PRI and PAN officials are already being integrated into AMLO’s prospective cabinet, guaranteeing continuity of the anti-working class policies carried out by both parties over the course of decades.

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He signaled his readiness to enter a dialogue and reach agreements with Donald Trump, who, after Peña Nieto, is the most hated man in Mexico for his undisguised anti-Mexican racism, persecution of immigrants and demands that Mexico pay up to \$15 billion to build a wall on its border. AMLO said that he would propose to Trump the creation of “something like the old Alliance for Progress,” the aid program inaugurated under US President Kennedy in 1961 with the aim of tying Latin America closer to US imperialism and forestalling left-nationalist revolutions like the one in Cuba.

As López Obrador has emerged as the all but certain victor in the July 1 election, he has moved steadily to the right, even as Mexico’s ruling oligarchy, which formerly denounced him as a demagogue bent on turning Mexico into a new Cuba or Venezuela, has moved to accept him.

Indeed, billionaire Carlos Slim, the richest man in Mexico and formerly the richest man in the world, warned recently that if AMLO failed to be elected president, the country would face economic instability.

In an appearance before the heads of Mexico's major banks in March, the MORENA candidate vowed that the "property regime" in Mexico would be respected, with no plans for "expropriations or nationalizations." He swore his fealty to the "market economy" and promised that his policies would not "affect the banking sector at all."

Similarly, his aides and advisors have walked back AMLO's previous denunciations of the drive to privatize Mexico's previously state-controlled energy sector and open it up to exploitation by international energy conglomerates, promising that all such contracts will be respected.

The markets have already factored in the victory of López Obrador, and by all accounts see no threat to the interests of Mexican and world capitalism.

"This stability is perhaps surprising," said the director general of the Mexican stock exchange, José Oriol Bosch. "There are always those who look for the negative, but what is being demonstrated in the markets is that the country is prepared for this process."

After his meetings with executives of major international banks such as Citigroup Inc. and JPMorgan Chase & Co. in recent months, Wall Street is similarly bullish on an AMLO victory.

It cannot be excluded, given the deep crisis and bitter divisions within the Mexican ruling class, that the 2018 election will be determined not by the popular vote, but by electoral fraud. Such was the case in 1988, when the election was stolen from Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in order to install the PRI candidate Carlos Salinas.

This has been the most violent election year in Mexican history, with over 120 politicians murdered since campaigning began. These killings take place in the context of a continuing wave of violence, claiming 8,000 lives in the same period, in a country where at least 35,000 people are classified as disappeared.

The passing of an Interior Security Law last year has given the president the authority to impose what amounts to martial law, deploying the army to the streets. An attempt to impose a president under such conditions, however, could quickly plunge volatile Mexico into violent social upheaval.

The international working class has undergone bitter experiences with bourgeois parties like MORENA, resting on affluent layers of the middle class and employing vaguely left phrases, while promising "hope" and "change." Just across Mexico's northern border, American workers made such an experience with Democrat Barack Obama, hailed by the pseudo-left as a "transformational president," who, once in power, imposed policies that expanded war, accelerated the transfer of wealth from the bottom to the top and increased mass deportations to record levels.

Then there was the election of Syriza in Greece. Hailed by petty-bourgeois left parties throughout the world, it came to power in 2015 on the basis of promises to end EU-imposed

austerity measures, only to capitulate within months, trampling underfoot a referendum rejecting austerity by a landslide and imposing the cuts demanded by the international banks.

There is a striking similarity between the campaigns waged by Syriza and MORENA. Syriza formed a coalition after the 2015 election with the Independent Greeks, a right-wing nationalist party that advocates anti-immigrant policies and support for the Greek Orthodox Church, while engaging in open anti-Semitism.

AMLO's Morena is running in Sunday's election as part of a coalition that includes the Social Encounter Party (PES), a right-wing party comprised mostly of Evangelical Christians that campaigns against gay rights, same-sex marriage and abortion.

This remarkable symmetry is by no means coincidental. In both cases, the alliance of these supposed "left" bourgeois candidates with parties of the extreme right represents an unmistakable signal to the ruling establishment that they can be entrusted to defend the interests of both national and foreign capital, including through the support of the most right-wing policies.

MORENA and AMLO represent the interests of capitalism. It is notable that López Obrador has not embraced or welcomed the explosive struggles of the Mexican workers and oppressed, from the *gasolinazo* protests against the hiking of energy costs to the strikes of teachers and the ongoing struggles of victims of state violence.

While promising the cheapest form of populism, a struggle against corruption—while guaranteeing impunity for the corrupt—and minimal increases in social assistance programs for the poor, it can be certain that a López Obrador administration will respond to pressure from the working class not with concessions, but with ferocious attacks in defense of the interests of the financial elite that has embraced AMLO.

The acute crisis in Mexico and the lack of an independent political alternative for the working class underscores the urgency of building a new revolutionary leadership, a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, fighting to unite the struggles of the Mexican working class with those of workers in the United States and throughout the Americas to put an end to capitalism.



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