

Peru: Pseudo-left promotes anti-corruption protests to cover for anti-worker policies

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17 September 2018

On September 12, some 5,000 demonstrators marched through downtown Lima to demand the ouster of Peru's current attorney general, Pedro Chavarry. Leaked audiotapes have exposed his close ties with judges implicated in a wave of judicial corruption and his apparent attempts to stonewall investigations into these scandals.

The march, which assembled on San Martin Square (the traditional gathering point for such protests) and then proceeded down Nicolas de Pierola and Wilson Avenues to the Parque Universitario, was comprised of union members, "collectives" of radicalized and non-party-affiliated young people and members of the pseudo-left coalitions Frente Amplio (FA) and Nuevo Peru (NP).

Also participating in the march was the Partido Morado (PM), a new, explicitly right-wing party that claims to oppose corruption and the old establishment.

Since 2016, when high-ranking officials from Brazilian's construction giant Odebrecht confessed in plea bargains that they had bribed all the last four Peruvian presidents and their respective governments (the Lava Jato scandal), a crisis of governability has consumed Peru and destroyed all credibility in the political establishment.

In response to these revelations, thousands of young people have participated in rallies and protests demanding a reform of the entire system. Unfortunately, without a clear perspective, the pseudo-left parties have managed to impose their reactionary, opportunistic views upon the rallies.

When the right-wing *fujimorista* opposition—which controls an absolute majority in Congress—attempted to impeach ex-president and former Wall Street banker Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, who had been discredited by his ties to Lava Jato, Nuevo Peru (led by former

presidential candidate Veronika Mendoza) openly defended Kuczynski and accused the *fujimoristas* of trying to seize power by impeaching him.

This was an intensification of its already opportunistic view that Congress, dominated by the *fujimoristas*, is the main obstacle to the capitalist government "working" for the people. As a result, the marches have explicitly demanded that the executive shut down Congress, even though this is exactly what former President Alberto Fujimori did in 1992, establishing a repressive semi-dictatorship that lasted until its fall in 2000.

Kuczynski renounced the presidency amidst a vote-buying scandal in order to avoid another impeachment. Vice President Martin Vizcarra took office, and the pseudo-left continued with its completely conciliatory policy towards the government, while denouncing only the *fujimoristas* in Congress.

Then, the leaked audiotapes recording high-ranking officials in the judicial system—both judges and attorneys—negotiating verdicts, bribes and the control of state offices—once again shook the government and forced Vizcarra to announce a reform of the judicial system and a referendum for annulling the re-election in Congress (among other things).

Clearly, these measures are an attempt by the Peruvian bourgeoisie to prop up its state under conditions in which most of the population has lost any trust in capitalist institutions, threatening a collapse of governability. So far, the announcement of the measures has helped Vizcarra to recover 10 percent of his approval rating (from 39 to 49 percent).

The pseudo-left has adapted itself unreservedly to Vizcarra's proposals, praising his supposed new disposition to "listen" to the people. In particular, Mendoza declared that Vizcarra had finally assumed

his “historic role before the crisis”.

Chavarry, the Peruvian attorney general, has become the focus of outrage because, while implicated in the leaked tapes, he has been able to remain in power thanks to support from the *fujimoristas*, whom he has apparently helped with judicial maneuvers.

One of the organizations promoting September 12 rally (and others) calling for the ouster of Chavarry was the National Coordinator of Human Rights, a well-known NGO that has denounced many of the government’s human rights abuses during the last decades, but whose web site lists the Ford Foundation (accused of being a CIA front) as one of its supporters. Organizations like this support these rallies as a means of venting the anger of workers and young people, as well as promoting reformist illusions in the government.

The march demonstrated the continuing loss of support from workers and youth for the main union confederations, the CGTP and CUT, as well as the main teachers’ federation SUTEP, with very small numbers marching behind their banners. During a strike last year, SUTEP’s bureaucracy aligned with the government and denounced the rank-and-file teachers who initiated the walkout.

The most militant section of the march consisted of street cleaners from the Municipal Worker’s Union—SITOBUR—who came in their orange work clothes, carrying their brooms and chanting the slogans: “Out with the corrupt attorneys!” and “Let’s sweep, sweep, sweep... sweep corruption”.

A group of cleaners explained to a WSWs reporter that 200 had come, representing the more than 500 members of the union. They also said that 70 percent of them were women, and that they were paid just S/200 on top of the minimum wage, that is S/1,050 (approximately US\$330 a month.) One worker explained that it was a hunger wage, not even enough to buy her family food.

Maria, a cleaner, told the WSWs that they were “furious with [Lima] Mayor Luis Castañeda for breaking his promise of giving us benefits”. Castañeda currently has a minimal approval rating and is widely detested for his corruption, secrecy and neglect of the city.

Another contingent on the march was made up of textile workers who came from private businesses. Like

the cleaners, they told the WSWs that they received hunger wages, and that minimum wage should be S/3,000 (US\$930 a month).

The number of followers of the pseudo-left parties (FA and NP) along with the right-wing PM didn’t surpass 200 each. The main bulk of the protest consisted of young people coming from the so-called “Colectivos” whose main demand—apart from “Out with everyone!” (“¡Qué se vayan todos!”)—was for the calling of a constituent assembly.

This demand has also been put forward by the pseudo-left, who advance it from the standpoint of asking President Vizcarra to include it in his “reforms”.



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