

Andrés Manuel López Obrador inaugurated as new president of Mexico

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Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) was sworn in as president of Mexico on Saturday. The new administration is being characterized, and hailed in many quarters, as the first “leftist” government in the country since 1940. Popular expectations are that his administration will reduce widespread poverty, as well as end endemic violence and corruption.

AMLO delivered a two-hour inauguration speech in Mexico’s Congress. He vowed to preside over a “radical and profound change” that will bring about a “rebirth of Mexico,” in which “the poor come first.” His administration would bring to Mexico a “fourth transformation,” likening it to the fight for independence from Spain (1810-1821), the liberal *Reforma* period under Benito Juárez (1858-1866) and the Mexican Revolution (1910-1921).

AMLO characterized the “neoliberal” economic model that has prevailed in the country for decades as a catastrophe that resulted in the concentration of income in a few hands and the impoverishment of the majority of the population, with many risking their lives to emigrate to the United States or taking the road of criminal activity.

Growth, he said, had averaged only 2 percent a year during this period, and public debt (presently 46 percent of GDP) rose without substantial accomplishments in infrastructure. AMLO contrasted this with the period from 1940-1982 (that is, before the rapid onset of globalization of the world economy) when growth averaged 6 percent per year without producing an increase in government debt. In contrast to a time period when Mexico was “self-sufficient,” it now was forced to import petroleum and corn, he said.

The privatization of Mexico’s oil industry under the energy reform of outgoing president Enrique Peña Nieto had not, AMLO said, saved the country as had

been promised, but instead resulted in meager foreign investment and a decreasing rate of oil production, with excessive increases in the prices of gasoline, diesel, gas and electricity. He said his administration will “recover our oil like General [Lazaro] Cárdenas [Mexico’s president from 1934-40 who expropriated foreign oil holdings].” “I am a *Cardenista*,” he proclaimed.

The crisis in Mexico originated, López Obrador stressed, not only in of the failure of the neoliberal economic model, but also because of the predominance of corruption. During that period nothing “harmed Mexico more than the dishonesty of the rulers and the small minority that has profited from influence. That is the main cause of economic and social inequality and the insecurity and violence that we suffer.” His administration’s prime objective thus would be to end corruption and impunity.

As for ending the reign of violence that has plagued the country, in his speech López Obrador reiterated his proposal made over the last two weeks to modify the restrictions in the constitution on the military’s involvement in domestic policing and to create a new national guard composed of units from the army and the marines who would report to the military brass.

This was an about-face from his campaign promises to take the military off the streets and turn them back to the barracks—reversing a campaign launched in 2006, ostensibly to fight the drug cartels, that resulted in hundreds of thousand killed or disappeared.

López Obrador laid out a series of measures that amount at most to modest increases in public spending to alleviate poverty and “bring social justice.” All Mexicans ages 68 years old or older (63 years in impoverished indigenous areas) would receive a pension of 62 dollars a month—double the current rate. Persons with disabilities, in extreme poverty, and

young people who neither study nor work, would receive benefits or scholarships. One hundred new universities will be built.

A recent poll by the newspaper *El Economista* showed that 45 percent of Mexicans believe that real change will be seen within a year under the new administration, and about half said that they expected AMLO to keep all or most of his campaign promises. The day of the inauguration, some 150,000 people attended a celebration in Mexico City's central square, and 30,000 lined up to visit the presidential palace, which AMLO said would not be his residence, but a public museum.

However, these widespread expectations will soon come crashing up against AMLO's program and the interests of the bourgeoisie that it embodies.

Although AMLO says Mexico will build new oil refineries, he also said the previous administration's energy privatization reforms would not be undone, and foreign investment contracts will be honored.

As for the scourge of corruption, there would be no new prosecutions of former government officials, who will be allowed to keep the hundreds of millions of dollars they looted. He will only prosecute officials for future acts. Presumably, officials could return to business as usual after AMLO's six-year term.

As for funding the reduction of poverty and unemployment, López Obrador declines to increase government debt and says an "austerity" budget will prevail.

Nor will his administration raise taxes, not even on the oligarchic sliver at the apex of Mexican society that benefited disproportionately from the neoliberal political economy he decries. They, like corrupt officials they trafficked with, can keep their ill-gotten wealth. Nor will AMLO pursue any restrictions on the banks or the financial sector, he says.

Most dangerous to the Mexican populace is López Obrador's proposal for a new national guard, which will effectively result in the further militarization of the country. That is something his voters did not support or even contemplate; quite the contrary.

In his speech AMLO went to considerable lengths to conceal the real class character of the military as the armed representatives of the ruling class. They instead were defenders of democracy because they had not carried out a coup since the end of the Mexico

revolution! In Mexico, he said, "we do not have military members that are part of the oligarchy, and they are backed by public opinion. ... They have been nourished by the people, they are the people in uniform."

The danger of such conceptions, and of increasing the power of the military at a time of growing social unrest, cannot be overstated. The new national guard will be used to repress social opposition just as ruthlessly as under previous governments, if not more so. The purpose of portraying the military as allies of workers is to chloroform their class consciousness with nationalist poison ahead of the violent upheavals that will inevitably come when illusions in AMLO's government are shattered.

AMLO attempts to depict the deepening crisis of Mexican society as a product of misguided policies by corrupt leaders rather than as the objective trajectory of the capitalist system. But he is only sowing illusions that "honest" leadership and better policies can relieve the oppression of the Mexican population.

As long as the financial oligarchy is allowed to dictate every aspect of life for the working class, there can be no real improvement in living conditions, under AMLO or any other capitalist politician.

The reality is that López Obrador's new "leftist" government will mark a new stage in the crisis of the ruling class. All the formerly dominant bourgeois parties lie in tatters. Millions of workers, who have looked to AMLO and Morena to reverse their losses over the past four decades, are certain to be vastly disappointed.

These shattered illusions and the continuation of intolerable conditions under capitalism can only lead to social explosions on a scale not seen since the Mexican revolution.



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