Amid national strike wave

Mexican ruling class responds to Matamoros: Militarization and alignment with Trump's attacks on immigrants

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The national strike wave in Mexico—including 70,000 maquiladora workers in Matamoros, teachers strikes in five states, and the threat of a walkout by 90,000 Walmart workers—has exposed the growing radicalization of the masses after decades of deepening inequality and militarization. The Mexican ruling class has responded to the upsurge of the class struggle by seeking to reassure finance capital that it can be trusted to maintain their flow of profits.

The defense of US business interests can be seen most nakedly in the Mexican government's alignment with the Trump administration's crackdown on immigrants and a near unanimous vote in the Mexican Congress to create a new National Guard.

The Mexican ruling class recognizes that what is at stake in the aftermath of the Matamoros rebellion is its strategic partnership with US finance capital and its military-intelligence apparatus, which is the source of its wealth and privilege. The conflicts between different sections of the Mexican ruling class—including between Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (known as "AMLO") and the more openly right-wing parties, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the National Action Party (PAN)—are over the most effective tactics to stifle social discontent.

The drive to defend the US-Mexico alliance has led to a historically unprecedented level of collaboration between AMLO, a supposed "leftist" who is leading a "Fourth Transformation" of Mexico, and the fascistic Donald Trump, who slandered Mexican workers as "rapists and criminals." A front-page article in the Saturday edition of the *New York Times* details how the Mexican government has been physically preventing asylum seekers from reaching the US border, detaining immigrants against their will, and blocking them from receiving visitors and legal counsel.

The Mexican government made it clear that what is at stake are the geopolitical ties between the two countries. "What we really want to avoid is a public fight with Trump," one Mexican government official told the *Times*. "Mr. López Obrador has not wanted to jeopardize other aspects of the deeply interconnected relationship between the two countries."

The fate of immigrants is intimately linked to the impact of the strikes by maquiladora workers across the border in Matamoros. The state apparatus that the AMLO government is mobilizing today against Central American men, women and children fleeing poverty and war will be used tomorrow against Mexican workers who threaten the US business interests that AMLO is desperate to protect. Moreover, the fact that AMLO has so quickly sold out immigrants in Mexico is an indication that he will not defend Mexican immigrants living in the US against Trump's attacks.

Workers should be warned: the ruling class is creating a vast state apparatus with a conscious eye to the social upheavals that are on the horizon. Last week, every single member of the Mexican Senate—controlled by AMLO's Movement for National Regeneration (Morena)—voted to approve the 60,000-member National Guard proposed by AMLO. In the lower house of Congress, which is also controlled by Morena, 463 deputies voted "yes" on the militarization proposal with only one voting "no." The result of this policy will

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be tens of thousands more deaths, extrajudicial killings, and human rights abuses. The chief target is not organized crime but the organized movement of the working class.

The faction of the ruling class that AMLO speaks for advocates for the use of unions to contain and dissipate workers' anger. Faced with the mass discrediting of the trade union apparatus, AMLO has sought to create illusions in new "democratic" unions through labor reform legislation introduced earlier this year, as well as the "International Labor Confederation" (CIT) created by Morena senator Napoleón Gómez Urrutia in February.

The formation of new unions is aimed at preventing workers from taking their own independent initiative to launch strikes like the ongoing movement in Matamoros. As AMLO said, "My recommendation is that salaries should rise, but at the same time people should consider the companies' situation, there should be balance. We have to preserve jobs." In other words, workers should subordinate their own needs to the bosses or accept mass layoffs and plant closures.

More openly thuggish sections of the ruling class argue that a crackdown is necessary to intimidate workers and subject workers to arrest, prosecution and physical attack. The head of Mexico's main business organization COPARMEX has proposed legislation to make work stoppages like the ones occurring in Matamoros illegal under federal law.

On March 3, the national leader of the PAN issued a public statement blaming the strikes for a fall in expected GDP growth. "We have to say that the 1.6 percent economic growth foreseen by the Bank of Mexico is mediocre and insufficient. This is in good part due to work stoppages and strikes. ... It is deplorable that the federal government is not generating certainty for investments and labor peace in companies," said PAN leader Marko Cortés. He demanded that the secretary of labor "deactivate," i.e., declare illegal, ongoing work stoppages and over 380 ongoing legal petitions for strike action.

The openly right-wing sections of the ruling class are similarly demanding that AMLO bow to the US regime-change operation in Venezuela. "By siding with Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia and Nicaragua — what's left of Latin America's Jurassic left—López Obrador is isolating himself from the rest of Latin America, and from key US allies," wrote *Miami Herald* columnist Andrés Oppenheimer.

In a country that saw half of its territory stolen by the US government, the AMLO administration is exploiting a deep anti-imperialist sentiment and its own fear that a coup would set a precedent for a forceful removal of other strategic allies, or perhaps even AMLO himself.

When confronted with the defense of private property and the sanctity of companies "creating jobs," AMLO has similarly shown the class character of his administration. Activist Samir Flores Soberanes was shot outside his home on February 20 after organizing opposition to government plans for new thermoelectric plants in Morelos. He was murdered just one day before the Morena-sponsored public consultation on the plants. Several signs at a mass protest in Mexico City following his death read: "Samir did not die, the government killed him." The state government has since claimed to have lost files related to his case.

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