

The MAS victory in Bolivia and bourgeois nationalism's betrayals in Latin America

Tomas Castanheira
27 October 2020

Last Friday, Bolivia's Supreme Electoral Court officially declared the first round victory of Luis Arce of the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) in the presidential elections held on October 18. Arce will take office on November 8, one year after former MAS president Evo Morales was overthrown in a US-backed military coup.

The coup regime led by self-proclaimed President Jeanine Áñez had already recognized Arce's sweeping victory, even though before the elections she declared that a win for MAS would mean "the return of the dictatorship," and had mobilized military forces to prepare for a possible new electoral coup.

The ultra-right presidential candidate, Luis Fernando Camacho, who maintained for a few days that he would not take the same "cowardly" attitude as Áñez, ended up recognizing Arce as president on Friday. The Santa Cruz Civic Committee, a fascistic organization connected to Camacho, saw itself isolated in its denunciation of a supposed electoral fraud. In turn, the Civic Committee dissociated itself from the call for a 48-hour strike for the annulment of the elections, which was weakly carried out only by the "shock group" Cruceñista Youth Union (UJC).

The return of the MAS to power in Bolivia is being celebrated by its Latin American counterparts, the demoralized bourgeois nationalist parties that led the so-called "Pink Tide" governments of the 2000s, as a political turning point in the region.

In Brazil, statements of this character were issued by several leaders of the Workers Party (PT), which governed the region's largest country from 2002 to 2016, when President Dilma Rousseff was overthrown through an impeachment based on trumped-up charges.

The PT's iconic figure, former president Luis Inácio "Lula" da Silva, declared on Twitter: "May Bolivia return to the path of development with inclusion and sovereignty." His successor, Rousseff, wrote in Spanish: "May this victory inspire the peoples of our continent who suffer under neoliberal and authoritarian regimes."

The national president of the PT, Gleisi Hoffmann, witnessed the Bolivian electoral process as an international observer and concluded that "there were no relevant incidents," despite reporting a massive presence of the Armed Forces in the streets,

which she justified as "a bit of a tradition here."

In Venezuela and Cuba, countries with which the Áñez regime cut off official relations, the MAS victory was celebrated by the heirs of Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro. Chavista President Nicolás Maduro exclaimed: "Great Victory! The Bolivian people, united and conscious, defeated the coup d'état that was carried out against our brother Evo." Arce has already declared that he will immediately reestablish relations with both countries.

The Peronist Alberto Fernandez, president of Argentina, where Evo Morales has been in exile since December, declared that the victory of the MAS "is good news for those of us who defend democracy in Latin America." Morales said that Fernandez "offered to personally take me to Bolivia," a return that he is said to be scheduling with Arce for as early as next weekend.

The former president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, sentenced to eight years in prison for corruption, and Fernando Lugo, president of Paraguay overthrown by a coup in 2012, also celebrated the victory. Lugo declared: "This enormous triumph is a beacon of example and hope for all of our America!"

However, what these political forces seek to characterize as the return of democracy, of policies to reduce social inequality and even a new era of economic prosperity, contrasts with the real situation of extreme instability in the country.

Áñez will hand over to the MAS the presidency of a country riven by class struggle. The rebellious protests that have shaken Bolivia over the past few months, and even the overwhelming vote for the MAS against the right-wing candidates who supported the coup, have expressed the hatred of the workers and peasants for the repressive and illegitimate regime.

But the fundamental reasons for these social conflicts lie in the repudiation by the Bolivian masses of the conditions of deepening misery, which, contrary to what the MAS and its supporters affirm, were not resolved by the "economic miracle" under the Morales government. The final period of his presidency was confronted by growing social struggles and strikes by the working class, whose demands were denied by the government, and were answered with state repression.

The program of the new MAS administration will be centered on the promotion of "pacification throughout the country" and

the construction of a “national unity government,” in the words of President-elect Luis Arce himself. That is, it will work for the suppression of class struggle and conciliation with the fascist sections of the Bolivian bourgeoisie that overthrew Morales in the first place.

In a long interview broadcast on Saturday by *Piedra Papel y Tinta*, Arce clearly expressed the reactionary content of his capitalist policies. With a nationalist rhetoric of “reactivating the economy” based on “import substitution,” he defended the attacks promoted by the bourgeois governments against the working class throughout the world.

Asked if, in the face of challenges like “the pandemic, the crisis, the relationship with Brazil,” he considered implementing economic “shock measures,” Arce answered: “No, the correct measures.” The “correct measures” defended by Arce chillingly resemble the brutal policies promoted by Brazil’s fascist President Jair Bolsonaro against the working class of this neighboring country.

Quoting a World Bank report on the pandemic, Arce said: “Bolivia is the country that has most strictly followed a quarantine and everything else. In other countries there was a balance. The health issue is important, but there was also flexibility with the economic issue, so that the fall would not be so hard.”

Arce attacked the government of Añez, not for imposing violent starvation policies against the Bolivian masses, but for having “prioritized health over economy.” “On the other hand,” he said, “other countries, like Peru and even Brazil ... were more flexible from an economic point of view, so that the impact would not be so strong on the economy. And they were successful.”

The criminal governments of Brazil and Peru, chosen as models by Arce, succeeded exclusively in obtaining the most devastating results of the pandemic.

Peru is the country with the highest per capita COVID-19 death rate in the world. Brazil, with almost 160,000 victims of the disease, has the second highest death toll on the planet. The working classes of both countries are suffering from an extreme increase in unemployment and a drastic lowering of living conditions.

As advocates of the interests of the Bolivian capitalist class, the MAS is incapable of promoting progressive politics. Last year’s military coup was a political reaction of this social class to the profound contradictions that undermine its rule over society, driven by the global crisis of capitalism and the growth of imperialist pressures on the Latin American region.

These crisis conditions have only intensified over the past year, marked by the impact of the global pandemic. These developments will necessarily produce new and greater explosions of the class struggle, which will be desperately fought by the new MAS government, while the fascistic forces prepare for new dictatorial assaults.

The fundamental problems of the Latin American working

masses—state violence, misery, and imperialist oppression—cannot be addressed by supporting any party of the national bourgeoisie, no matter how “left” its pretensions. The working class must relentlessly fight these bourgeois nationalist forces and all their apologists among the pseudo-left.

Expressing the social interests of the upper-middle class, which seeks the stability of capitalist rule, the Morenoites of the so-called Trotskyist Fraction (FT-CI) argued, like countless other groups of the same character, that the MAS victory in Bolivia represents a “setback for Bolsonaro and the continental right,” in the words of their Argentine parliamentary leader Nicolás Del Caño.

A featured article on their website, *La Izquierda Diario*, celebrating the “defeat of the coup plotters in Bolivia” stated: “This defeat of the continental right could be extended if, as everything indicates, Trump loses the elections on November 3.”

They follow their support for the MAS in Bolivia to the logical conclusion that the interests of the Latin American working class are bound up with a victory by Joe Biden in next week’s US elections, replacing one capitalist party with another at the helm of US imperialism.

Never mind that Biden as a senator was one of the architects of Plan Colombia, the police-military operation that claimed the lives of thousands of Colombians and displaced hundreds of thousands. Nor that he was vice president in an administration that orchestrated a coup, very much like the one in Bolivia, a decade earlier in Honduras, with the overthrow of President Manuel Zelaya. This same Democratic administration introduced the punishing sanctions regime against Venezuela and earned for its head, Barack Obama, the title “deporter in chief.”

That the Morenoites are effectively supporting the election of such a veteran imperialist politician as a means of defeating “the continental right” makes it clear that they have nothing whatsoever to do with the struggle for socialism.

In implacable opposition to these gross attempts to divert workers into the dead end of bourgeois electoral politics, and subordinate their interests to those of domestic and international capital, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) advances the perspective of the independent political mobilization of the working class based on a socialist and internationalist program.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)