

MAS inaugurates right-wing government in Bolivia

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Luis Arce, of Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), assumed the presidency of Bolivia last Sunday. The inauguration ceremony was attended by world leaders, including Spanish King Philip VI and the Spanish deputy prime minister, Pablo Iglesias of Podemos, representatives of the US and Iranian governments, and various Latin American leaders.

The ceremony also brought thousands to Plaza Murillo in the capital La Paz, including delegations of trade unions, social movements and indigenous peoples from different parts of Bolivia.

In his inaugural speech, Arce mentioned those who had died in the Senkata and Sacaba massacres a year ago, who were abandoned by the MAS as they fought against the coup that overthrew President Evo Morales. He also saluted his voters, in his words, the “heroes of the people who have recovered democracy.”

The president-elect, who was the minister of economy in the Morales government from 2006 to 2017, attacked the coup regime of Jeanine Áñez for plunging the Bolivian economy into a “deep recession.” He said she had led Bolivia from the “leadership of economic growth in South America” to “the strongest fall in the economy in the last 40 years.”

He concluded his speech by reiterating his commitment not only to an amnesty for the bourgeois sectors that headed the coup, but to governing together with them:

“Despite our differences, we have an obligation to live up to the people’s demands for unity, peace and certainty ... I believe in and support the strengthening of the state institutions and the creation of a safe and stable environment where the only ones who have to fear are the offenders, the criminals, the violent and those who commit acts of corruption.”

Vice-president David Choquehuanca evoked the

country’s indigenous traditions and employed pseudo-radical phraseology to defend the blunt right-wing orientation of the new government. Affirming that “our revolution is the revolution of ideas, it is the revolution of balances,” he stated: “We are going to promote the coincidence of opposites to look for solutions between the right and the left.”

Synthesizing the corrupt political line of the MAS, Choquehuanca declared: “Our truth is very simple, the condor takes flight only when its right wing is in perfect balance with its left wing.”

Since Arce’s election victory, the return to Bolivia of ousted president Evo Morales, criminalized by the coup regime, was a controversial question. Significantly, the deposed president was not invited to participate in his successor’s inauguration ceremony, and he was not mentioned in the speech given by Arce.

Morales returned to Bolivia on Monday, a day after Arce’s inauguration. He left Argentina, where he had been in exile since last December, in the company of Argentine President Alberto Fernandez, who accompanied him to the Bolivian border. There, Morales was received by hundreds of Argentines and Bolivians, and joined a caravan around the country together with former vice president Alvaro Garcia.

The same day Morales entered Bolivia, the new government introduced its ministerial cabinet. The 16 ministers chosen by Arce were praised by the Bolivian press as a group of technocrats who shared little in common with Morales.

Arce’s choices revealed his commitment to advancing the interests of Bolivia’s capitalist ruling class. In a brief speech, he pointed out: “This will be an extremely austere government.”

The cabinet choices have generated criticism and protests within MAS itself. David Apaza, a MAS

representative from El Alto—a city with a record of major working class struggles, and an important center for the party—said the party’s base was taken completely by surprise by the choice of Arce’s ministers.

Apaza stated, according to *Página Siete*: “Unfortunately, the list wasn’t closed in consensus nor with consultation.” The MAS leader also warned: “El Alto won’t serve as a staircase [for the government to step over] again. If anything happens, they will be the ones to blame for not attending to the people of El Alto.”

The relatives of the murdered miners’ union leader Orlando Gutierrez also protested the appointment as minister of mining of Ramiro Guzmán, a former general manager of the Vinto Metallurgical Company, demanding that the ministry be handed over to Gutierrez’s brother. According to Mario Cruz, a rank-and-file delegate of the Colquiri miners, the population supports the family’s request and may march to the government headquarters if the demand is not met.

The Bolivian Workers Union (COB), which committed itself to the election of Arce, also criticized the cabinet. Its president, Carlos Huarachi, stated: “The people had an expectation of seeing a man in a poncho, a *chulo*, a *guartatojo* or a woman in a *pollera* skirt. That is the request of the people, of people who have fought, ordinary people who have been in the streets, on the highways, fighting to recover democracy.”

Weeks before his inauguration, Arce had already signaled that he would go against the interests of sectors of his own party and allied organizations in handing out control over slices of the state machinery. He had stated: “I have met with several social organizations and have calculated that I would have needed 149 ministries, [because] they all ask for ministries.”

Beside their petty interests, these organizations’ protests against the new ministers expresses the strong pressure they are feeling from the masses. Over the last few months, they have engaged in a betrayal of the mass struggles against the Áñez coup regime. MAS, the unions, and the social movements of the Unity Pact have worked to divert the revolt of Bolivian workers and peasants into an electoral channel, which resulted in the bourgeois “national unity” government headed by Arce.

The right-wing character of the new government is already emerging within the first few days of the Arce administration. The leaders of MAS and its affiliated organizations have every reason to believe that they will soon be confronted with a new upsurge in the revolutionary movement of the Bolivian working class.



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