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Mexico

AMLO inauguration – the old regime collapses and a new period in the class struggle opens

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From the first hour of 1 December, the Zócalo square in Mexico City saw the arrival of thousands of people to witness the inauguration of the new government, headed by Andrés Manuel López Obrador. AMLO spoke in front of 160,000 people who packed the main public square of the country.

These events are unprecedented in recent history, marked by electoral fraud and vote rigging. The atmosphere in the streets during the inauguration of the previous presidents was one of dejection, opposition and a deep malaise among large sectors of workers and youth. This time was different: the masses were jubilant and out on the streets in force.

A political earthquake that shook the system

The results of the elections of 1 July shook the foundations on which the Mexican political regime is founded. Millions of rural and urban workers; young people and women went to the polls to deliver a resounding blow to the parties of the right, submerging them in a crisis from which they have not been able to recover.

This granted a resounding victory to Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), who is the most voted-for president in the history of the country, with more than 30 million votes. He also enjoys a relative majority in the Chamber of Deputies and Senators (enough to pass laws, but not to modify the Constitution) and an undisputed electoral triumph in 30 of the 31 states of the Republic.

In contrast, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which governed for the last six years and headed government for more than seven decades, from 1929 to 2000, was the most severely punished, obtaining the lowest vote in its history. The party lost close to 10 million votes. For its part, the National Action Party (PAN), which has governed the country for 12 years, from 2000 to 2012, lost close to 3 million votes.

The crisis of the parties of the regime has continued after the election. According to a survey published on 28 November 2018 by the conservative newspaper *El Financiero*, the combined electoral support for the PRI and the PAN, at present, does not exceed 19 percent. On the other hand, the polls, even those that favoured the parties of the right, admit that the popularity of López Obrador and support for his government have grown. The same newspaper, in a recent poll on 3 December, revealed that 83 percent of the population feels optimistic; 80 percent believe AMLO inspires confidence from the people. Meanwhile, Mitofsky admits the new government has an approval rate of 63 percent, higher than the vote AMLO obtained on 1 July.

The rage against the regime and the deep desire for radical changes that we observed in the last election had been previously expressed in the streets through many demonstrations, which increasingly question the political regime and the economic system. This frustration with the status quo became more evident during the government of Enrique Peña Nieto. Decades of privatisation, poverty, and the collapse of the purchasing power of wages; combined with the wave of violence running through the country, and notorious corruption cases of government officials, were creating a tide of discontent and hatred against establishment institutions, the state, corrupt governments and right-wing parties.

As a result of the election of 1 July, for the first time in the history of the country, a president identified as on the

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margins of the political left has assumed the presidency, which has aroused great expectations among the working class, young people and women.

The mood on the streets on 1 December was one of joy and celebration, reaffirming and strengthening the sentiments that followed the election. Zócalo square was turned into an immense festival. The tens of thousands of attendees were filled with hope at some kind of radical change, and were aware that they were witnessing a historic moment.

Hundreds of times, Zócalo square has been filled by demonstrations: against privatisations, against violence, against enforced disappearances, against electoral fraud, and for the most immediate demands of the people and the workers – wage increases, healthcare, education, housing, etc. But this time it was different, the main square of the country overflowed with the feeling that this occasion should be celebrated as a strong victory over the hateful regime and its parties.

AMLO, from the Congress of the Union, announced the end of the neoliberal model, and the birth of a new historical stage called the Fourth Transformation, preceded by the revolutionary war of independence begun in 1810, by the Reform Laws promulgated by the government of Benito Juárez, and the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

The political earthquake of 1 July continues to send shockwaves that are still shaking the political regime and the very bowels of the system, as was clear on 1 December.

AMLO's speech

Andrés Manuel López Obrador delivered a speech in the Chamber of Deputies, after receiving the presidential sash and being sworn in. He denounced the ravages of the so-called neoliberal model, the failure of the so-called structural reforms, the cuts and privatisations, the acts of corruption and electoral fraud in elections.

On the energy reform he said:

"I say this with realism and without ideological prejudices: neoliberal economic policy has been a disaster, a calamity for the public life of the country. For example, the energy reform, which we were told would come to save us, has only meant the fall in oil production and the excessive increase in the prices of gasoline, gas and electricity."

Later, he continued:

"The damage caused to the national energy sector during neoliberalism is so serious, that we are not only the oil-producing country that imports the most gasoline in the world, but that we are now buying crude oil to supply the only six refineries that barely survive. A new refinery has not been built in the country for 40 years.

"Corn originates from Mexico, that blessed plant, and yet we are the nation that imports the most corn in the world. Before neoliberalism, we produced and were self-sufficient in gasoline, diesel, gas, electric power. Now we buy more than half of what we consume."

In addition, he pointed to the collapse of the purchasing power of wages, which during the last 30 years has deteriorated by more than 60 percent.

Another fundamental aspect of his programme concerns the relationship between political and economic power:

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"The other hallmark of the new government will be the separation of economic power from political power. The government will no longer be a simple facilitator for looting, as has been happening. The government is no longer going to be a committee in the service of a rapacious minority."

A central aspect of AMLO's rhetoric and programme focuses on combating corruption:

"According to the latest Transparency International measurement... we occupy the 135th place in corruption, among 176 evaluated countries, and we pass to that place after being in the place 59 in 2000, up from 70 in 2006, climbing to 106 in 2012 and arrive in 2017 in this shameful position."

In the afternoon, in Zócalo square, he again outlined his government programme, in a symbolic temple covered with thousands of tomoxtle leaves (corn leaves) and before thousands of people from different parts of the country, who filled the square.

He promised support to indigenous groups; scholarships for young people and children who are studying; the creation of 100 public universities; support for the victims of the 2017 earthquakes; medical care and free medications; increased pensions for the elderly; support for farmers; a freeze on the price of gasoline, fuel and electric power beyond inflation; frugality and honesty at all levels of government; the implementation of several megaprojects such as the Mayan Train, that will be built in the Yucatan Peninsula; the creation of a refinery and investment to the production of more gas and oil; internet coverage throughout the country and free Wi-Fi in public places; an increased minimum wage; a thorough investigation into the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa abductees; the creation of a controversial National Guard, with the Navy and the Army to take charge of public security tasks; promoting public consultations to guide government decisions; lowering the high salaries of government officials; no new taxes; the cancellation of the so-called Educational Reform and instead, preservation of historical memory through literature and promoting culture, among other proposals.

He said that the government will be close to and will not betray the hopes of millions of people who trust and sympathise with the cause of the Fourth Transformation:

"Let's not stop meeting, but always keep in communication. There will be no divorce between people and government. I need them, because, as Juárez said, 'with the people everything, without the people, nothing'. Do not leave me alone because without you I am worthless or almost nothing; without you, the conservatives would easily overwhelm me. I ask for your support, because I reiterate the commitment not to fail you; I will die before I betray you."

Following in the tradition of the liberals of the 19th century, of which López Obrador is a fervent follower, the Fourth Transformation focuses its programme on the fight against corruption and the implementation of an austere government, eliminating unnecessary and sumptuous expenses, and fighting for a government that serves all social classes and sectors of society, without being subject to the pressure of economic power and finance capital. It is based on a fight against the neoliberal economic model, not against the system that gives rise to it: capitalism. It aims to implement a series of reforms and concessions to the most vulnerable sectors: the unemployed youth, the elderly, etc. It also strives to maintain the economic and political independence of Mexico with respect to foreign governments.

The reform package that Andrés Manuel López Obrador proposes has certainly found a broad social support base, in contrast to the policy of austerity, privatisations and elimination of social and labour rights that have been implemented in the last 30 years or more.

AMLO's rhetoric on fighting corruption finds a wide echo given the scandalous cases of illicit enrichment by high public officials, opacity in contracts for public works between all levels of government and private companies, and the link between organised crime and heads of state. Mexican capitalism drips corruption from its every pore.

And although explained in an abstract way, without much detail, the idea of separating political from economic power implies to the masses that the government is no longer a committee in the service of the interests of bankers and big businessmen.

The desire for profound changes has gripped the minds of millions of people: workers, peasants, housewives and young people. They know very well what they do not want: corruption, violence, poverty, unemployment, low wages, structural reforms and government submission to imperialism. The development of consciousness they have undergone is a product of political struggle and the experience that they have acquired in recent years. The masses have assimilated and support, for now, the programme of López Obrador, because he is the only one that promises not to continue with the odious state of things. We recognise that class consciousness is a contradictory process, and that millions of people have broken with traditional parties and question the existing regime, which is an important step. However, this is not the end of a long political process that awaits us.

Millions of people will have to go through the political school of AMLO's government, before beginning to draw openly revolutionary conclusions. 1 July and 1 December were key steps in this process, although they will not be the end of the story.

A government subjected to two great social forces

The government of López Obrador will be subject to two major social forces, which represent the fundamental classes of the current capitalist system.

On the one hand, the big capitalists and bankers will press to moderate his proposed package of reforms and prevent fundamental changes for the benefit of the working class and wider masses. The desire of these parasites – of what we call the "mafia in power" – is to maintain their profits, based on the exploitation of the working class, with low wages (without benefits or social rights) and the ruthless plunder of natural resources. They will try to make AMLO's changes cosmetic, while preserving the same social and economic policies. In fact, they have already begun to exert pressure. Let's take three examples.

As a result of the cancellation of the construction of a new airport in Mexico City, a group of businessmen has begun to withdraw their funds and investments, which has weakened the Mexican peso against the dollar. This has led the new government to buy a series of bonds invested in the construction of the airport, acquire debt and open a new round of negotiations with the capitalists interested in the airport being built in Texcoco, to avoid an open conflict, which could reach the international courts.

Secondly, in recent days, an initiative was presented in the House of Representatives to regulate the high bank fees charged to users. The response was a resounding fall in the stock market, and pressure from senior managers of Spanish-owned banks. As a result, the initiative had to be withdrawn.

Finally, a proposal was presented by some deputies (identified with the left) to review the contracts of mining companies, and another initiative to return to the old pension regime and review the current 'Afores': a

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privately-run retirement fund, which is in the hands of banks. In response, there was a rabid response from bankers and big businessmen, who have also threatened the withdrawal of investments.

Bankers and businessmen will use their economic power – based on the private property of large companies, banks and large tracts of land – to pressure and even boycott the economy. In this way, they seek to block the package of reforms proposed in the new government's programme, even those that seem to be minor initiatives. And they will prevent the so-called structural reforms (such as those to energy and labour), from being reversed at all costs.

On the other hand, there are millions of people who make up the social base of the movement around López Obrador, with a strong desire for change, who want a different direction in the economic, political and social field. They want structural reforms to be reversed, the minimum wage to be raised, benefits and social rights taken over by the state, corrupt and repressive politicians punished, political prisoners released, and they long to live in peace – no longer fearing violence on the streets or from the state.

However, in order to advance this minimum program, we have to confront the interests of the big businessmen and bankers, who want to maintain the current state of affairs, and who were represented by the governments of the PRI and the PAN.

The strength of the millions of workers lies in their capacity to organise, which we will have to test and prepare before the great historical events to come. As we mobilise in the streets, we must not doubt that the "mafia in power" intends to derail the project of change. In any correct political programme, we will have to discuss and democratically debate moving from an anti-neoliberalism and anti-corruption stance to an openly anti-capitalist programme.

The AMLO programme should propose a tactic of reversing structural reforms (including energy and labour reforms), and the state taking over the mining, oil and electric industry; and recovering the benefits and social services privatised in the past. For these proposals to be lasting, we must go from a struggle against neoliberalism and discuss the need to struggle against capitalism: the origin of exploitation and inequality.

The Fourth Transformation is a worthy heir to the revolutionary movement for independence in 1810, the revolutionary war of reform and against foreign intervention, and the 1920 revolutionary movement in which hundreds of thousands of peasants and workers fought against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. Now, our task is to fight for true independence and to free ourselves from the yoke of imperialism; to end the old regime, controlled by the new conservatives who refuse to wither away. Our task is to fight, here and now, against those who exploit and oppress us; against the new dictatorship of the oligarchs, bankers and bourgeois.

The Fourth Transformation cannot only be anti-neoliberal and anti-corruption, it will have to be anti-capitalist and revolutionary so that any real change will endure. Only with the expropriation under democratic control by workers of the major national and multinational companies can we begin to transform Mexico for the benefit of the majority of workers, peasants and the poor. The Fourth Transformation can only be carried out through the struggle for socialism.

Source [In Defence of Marxism](#).

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