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Peru

Elections in Peru

- IV Online magazine - 2001 - IV331 - May 2001 -

Publication date: Thursday 3 May 2001

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The first round of the Peruvian presidential elections on Sunday April 8, 2001 produced a major surprise - Wall Street's favoured candidate, Lourdes Flores, came third and was eliminated from the contest. The second round [on June 3] will now be contested between Alexander Toledo (who scored 36.46%) and Alán Garc a, the candidate of the APRA party, who was president from 1985 to 1990, who secured 26% of the vote.

Both candidates are determined to pacify 'foreign investors' and the capitalist class as a whole in the aftermath of the mobilisations that forced former President Fujimori from power at the end of last year.

Meanwhile, there was little sign of a Left that had been one of the strongest in South America. What has happened to it? Nobody has more authority to give his opinion on the question than Hugo Blanco, historic peasant leader and a veteran activist on the Peruvian Left.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/peru2.jpg>]

Lourdes Flores

The left and the popular movement

Hugo Blanco

Marx said a step was worth more than a thousand words. In Peru the popular movement is taking diverse ingenious steps; meanwhile the left is speaking a thousand diverse, though not so ingenious, words.

The Peruvian popular movement expelled the 'constitutional' dictator Fujimori within five months of his having been 'chosen' for five years. Of all the mobilisations against the dictatorship, the most remarkable was the 'March of the Four Suyos' called by Alexander Toledo, the candidate against whom Fujimori perpetrated his fraud.

The name of the Inca state (not empire) was Tahuantinsuyo, which means "the four regions" in which that state was organized; thus, the 'March of Four Suyos' was evoked by Toledo as a reference to indigenous identity.

Convergence

It was the greatest convergence in the history of Peru in which Peruvians from all over the country went to the capital. This march was preceded and continued by innumerable meetings, strikes, roadblocks, smaller marches, and so on, some of them specifically for the overthrow of the dictatorship and others raising sectoral demands, but accompanied by the slogan "down with the dictatorship!"

The dictatorship fell and its corruption has been brought to light. The mobilisation of the Peruvian people has not stopped: for punishment of the corrupt 'high society' figures who have been treated with kid gloves; against the privatisations that are planned; for the revision of privatisations carried out by the dictatorship; against centralisation of power; against the Fujimorista anti-labour legislation; against the dismissals of workers; for the rehiring of the dismissed; for wage increases; against environmental contamination; for the reappearance of the disappeared, and for many other causes also. Some of those movements have won their demands. Parallel to this, the people are

constructing embryonic forms of power. In many places, officials that according to law, should be named from above, are chosen by the people. Such is the wisdom that is emerging from the popular movement and we have more to learn from it than to teach it.

What about the Left?

Probably it accounts for 3% to 5% of all the mobilised multitudes. It has been reduced remarkably, in my opinion because we did not know to respond to the expectations of the people. To this was added verticalism, sectarianism, dogmatism and opportunism, not to mention the consequences of the fall of the Soviet Union.

The president of the General Confederation of Peruvian Workers, a member of the Communist Party, was candidate for the second vice-presidency on the list of the most notable candidate of the right. Neither his party nor the union dared to expel him.

The Maoist Patria Roja tried to register for electoral participation (under the name of Nueva Izquierda) but was found to be falsifying signatures in the Fujimorista style. The Partido Unificado Mariateguista, to which I belong, did not take a stance on the elections and its members took diverse positions.

There are Trotskyist groups and others that talk of "unifying the left" and discussing balance sheets, but their meetings are not attended by the main parties of the Left.

Panorama

We have then a panorama of, on the one hand, constant mobilisation of diverse sectors of the population, in a creative, political and very organised manner that is winning victories; on the other hand, the virtual disappearance of the left.

Faced with this panorama, some comrades, among them the Socialist Party of the Workers, Peruvian section of the International Union of Workers (LIT - Morenist) and others, have decided to form a grouping that gathers the current aspirations of the people who are fighting and to work for the unification of the struggles and the popular organisations.

We have formed La Lucha Continua, we participate in the daily combats and we publish a newspaper. We are advancing and already we have obtained many enthusiastic new members.

As far as the elections go these are a legacy of Fujimorismo, the popular movement did not have time to form its own list; some of their elements were with diverse electoral lists.

The candidates for the presidency are more or less neo-liberal. They do not reflect the aspirations of the people. There are comrades of the popular movement who identify with Alexander Toledo because he mobilised the people against the dictator.

Others prefer Alan Garc a, candidate of the Aprista party and ex-president, who was exiled from the country and persecuted by Fujimori and who has a less neo-liberal program. The vote for him came mainly from young people who did not undergo his previous government. Finally there were some who preferred abstention.

As we must choose whom to continue the battle against, I prefer to face Toledo, since he will face problems in opposing the demonstrations. Alan Garc a is expert in spilling the blood of the people, especially the indigenous people.

Under his government more people disappeared than under any other, including Fujimori. We cannot forget that one of his massacres was carried out against incarcerated political prisoners, among who were Sendero Luminoso [Shining Path] supporters and many innocents.

The comrades of La Lucha Contin a have not squabbled over electoral differences. What unites us is the program of popular demands, the conviction that no Presidential candidate represents them, and the view that only by means of collective struggle against the government will our demands be met. Our people do not stop their struggles for electoral reasons, we will continue fighting, against Toledo or the bloodthirsty Garc a.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/peru1.jpg>]

Alexander Toledo

“There was a shift to the left”

Interview with Juan Abugatas

Juan Abugatas, a political analyst and professor at the University of Lima, analysed the results of the first round of the Peruvian elections and what could happen in the second round between Alexander Toledo and ex-president Alan Garc a (from P gina/12).

What are the implications for the future, of the election results?

In the first place it has been a rejection in all its dimensions of Fujimorismo, both the authoritarian system that he had imposed and his economic management. Secondly, this has produced a kind of shift to the left, because if we equate the right with neo-liberalism, there has been a distance from this model that has been to the benefit of the Alan Garc a candidacy. Thirdly, there is a very clear message from the citizens to the political class saying that they do not want any longer an over-powerful government. They want policies of negotiation, conciliation, search for consensus and for that reason they have not given a first round victory to Toledo and they have not given anybody a majority in Congress.

How do you explain the success of Alan Garc a?

If one sees the results of the regime of Fujimori, that of Garc a has been minimised. The youngest people know the Fujimorista disaster but not the Alanista disaster. Partly also it is explained by this pendulum reaction whereby, when one model fails, people tend to return to the previous one. Another factor is the good campaign mounted by Alan Garc a.

What have been the main successes of the Garc a's campaign?

To have made a sort of act of contrition, it was not very convincing, but sufficient for the majority of people. He is the one who has raised the key themes of the campaign, against candidates who were afraid to mention points of social and economic policy affecting most of the population.

What would Toledo have to do to be able to win the second round?

He needs to outline better his proposals, to present himself as somebody more reliable to get the country out of crisis. In this field he has the advantage of not having a record of catastrophic government, as is the case with Garc a. He must avoid a personalisation of the fight, because Alan Garc a is a more charismatic candidate. Finally, Toledo would have to put pressure on Garc a so that the latter demonstrates that he really has changed.

And what would have to be the central points of Garc a's campaign for him to win?

Alan would have to try to individualise the fight. He is going to have to face the criticism he should make a clearer apology for his previous government. Thirdly, he needs to obtain a team, which he does not have now. I suspect that one of the surprises could be the appearance of Hernando de Soto alongside Garc a. That would be a message that he will not be going the way of Populism. The ideas of De Soto can be presented as compatible with those of Alan, a kind of popular capitalism.

[<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/peru3.jpg>]

Alan Garcia

The Peruvian Pinochet

Hugo Blanco

If Pinochet entered an electoral competition with another neo-liberal, of course the Chilean people would prevent him coming to power. If Videla did the same, the indignant people of Argentina also would close the way to him. Why? Naturally because our Chilean and Argentine compatriots repudiate genocide.

Nevertheless in Peru, that does not happen. The people who will vote against Alan Garc a will do so in long queues because of the corruption of his regime. Those were not errors. They were a gangster method of government.

Nevertheless the terrible thing about Alan is the terrible thing about Pinochet and Videla: they are perpetrators of GENOCIDE. He has assassinated 3,000 Peruvians; why does that not horrify people, as is the case with the Chileans or the Argentineans?

Because the dead were mainly only Indian.

Racism is pronounced in these elections in macabre, chilling form. In fact, not only in that form: the radio, the written press and the television show no mercy in their 'humour' against Paulina Arcasi (an Aymara Indian who has the audacity to run for parliament).

Alvarito is moved by the plight of the alleged daughter of Toledo but neither he nor the majority thinks about the hundreds of indigenous women who were brutally violated by the troops of Garc a, because they were Indians. Unfortunately this is not only true for the reactionary sectors, even the progressive sectors underestimate the most terrible facet of the Aprista candidate. The fault is not theirs. The fault is ours - the indigenous by blood and/or soul.

In Mexico this could not happen because our comrades in Chiapas have shown that the men and women "of the colour of the earth" are also people. Nor could it happen in Ecuador where the indigenous with pride have

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demonstrated to the world how much they are worth. In Bolivia there would not be this scorn either for the massacres of indigenous peoples. Alan, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, acted personally to order the massacre in the prisons, ordered the assault against a peaceful meeting in Pucallpa, where I was present and saw Quechua and Shipibo fall by my side. And there are many cases more, reaching or exceeding the 3,000 assassinated.

The Peruvian indigenous must learn from our Mexican, Ecuadorian, Bolivian sisters and brothers, from the Mapuches of Chile; all of them are making their compatriots understand that they are also human; in Peru we have still not achieved this.

Let us work to incorporate the indigenous force that is surging in Latin America, without showing hatred, but rather fraternity towards the non-indigenous.