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Mexico

Mexico: “The right-wing parties are practically in the worst phase of their history”

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What's the situation in Mexico after Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) and more recently Claudia Sheinbaum came to power as presidents, and after Trump's attacks?

Latin America has been the scene of strong struggles against neoliberal policies. The independent struggles waged by teachers, peasants, students, indigenous peoples and so on have not achieved their goals. There were even major defeats. This meant that social and popular discontent with neoliberal policies in Mexico was channelled into elections. The discontent was channelled first through the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (Party of the Democratic Revolution - PRD) and more recently through the *Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional* (National Regeneration Movement - MoReNa). The former was led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. It emerged from a nationalist break within the ruling party. The changes culminated within the party, with the arrival in power of AMLO as mayor of Mexico City. His term in office was characterized by a number of progressive reforms, such as the granting of a universal pension for people over 65 in Mexico City and other social policies.

This led the right to try to prevent him from becoming a candidate for the presidency in 2006 by means of a legal-political manoeuvre. People saw this as an anti-democratic attack. The country became polarized, and mass mobilizations took place to allow López Obrador to become a candidate. The electoral process raised many doubts, so much so that we claim there was massive fraud. A right-wing politician, Felipe Calderón Hinojosa, came to power. What followed was a process of resistance to the neoliberal policies of Felipe Calderón Hinojosa and Peña Nieto. The discontent was very strong: there was a high level of corruption within the Mexican government, which was entirely at the service of the interests of the wealthy who were subservient to the United States. This context explains AMLO's victory with over 50% of the vote.

In 2018?

Yes, in 2018. AMLO came to power with strong popular support, enabling him to carry out some very important transformations, to improve the standard of living of the masses. One of these is the nationwide extension of the right to a universal pension. People over the age of 65 received support of \$160 a month, which in Mexico means they can live more or less comfortably. Minimum wages were increased by almost 100%. Although this did not completely catch up with wages, the wage policy benefited several million Mexicans.

Later on, the Mexican bourgeoisie was also forced to pay taxes, because they were experts at tax evasion, thus broadening the tax base. He also waged a relentless battle against the corruption that was eating away at the state, and which has not ended.

Do you think these reforms became more anti-capitalist than anti-neoliberal, or did they have their limits?

There were many limits. We would have preferred a complete renationalization of state-owned energy companies like Pemex (Petróleos Mexicanos). But at least fuel prices have been stabilized. In-depth tax reform is also needed, as Mexico's wealthy pay very little in relation to their enormous profits. AMLO also had a very “caudillo” leadership style. His MoReNa party is no more than an electoral apparatus, imposing candidates undemocratically, particularly from

the right wing.

How do you explain the fact that López Obrador still had over 50% support at the end of his mandate, and that his candidate, Claudia Sheinbaum, was very successful?

There has been an undeniable improvement in the standard of living of the masses. Otherwise, the masses wouldn't have voted so massively to elect Claudia Sheinbaum. She won almost 60% of the vote.

When did this happen? In 2024?

Yes, Claudia Sheinbaum has been president since October 2024 after her victory in June of that year. There was a strong ideological and cultural battle. In Mexico, the right-wing parties are practically in the worst phase of their history. They are very weakened and divided, and the ultra-right is an insignificant minority. Currently, even in the process of confronting Donald Trump's threats to impose tariffs, Claudia Sheinbaum, according to recent polls, has the support of 85% of the population.

Trump's statements and threats are provoking reactions not only from the government and Claudia Sheinbaum, but also from the general public...

What we're seeing is a global problem, which doesn't just concern Mexico, although it is part of the problem. We are faced with a declining imperialist power that is trying to pass on the cost of its crisis to the rest of the world, through taxes, tariffs and so on, and to put pressure on Europe to rearm and share the cost of NATO.

The crisis is deep: the US public debt crisis, the budget crisis. The US is also losing out, with technological deterioration, in competition with China. It is therefore trying to reposition itself. Donald Trump is threatening his closest partners, Mexico and Canada, with an increase in the cost of imports into the United States, on the pretext that these governments are doing nothing to combat drug smuggling, particularly fentanyl, and the migration problem.

The aim is in fact to seek a renegotiation, on how to produce, particularly within the framework of the free trade agreement. They want to recuperate many of the investments made in Mexico, and bring them to the United States, particularly in the automotive industry. It's quite complicated, because there are value chains that have been in place for decades, and they can't be changed overnight.

But the pressure is on. So far, Claudia Sheinbaum's government has reacted firmly, denouncing the pretexts and sheer hypocrisy. Basically, what's happening is blackmail, it's the start of a trade war against Canada and Mexico, and if this government insists on maintaining these taxes, there will be a response on its part, to apply similar measures to other products, to compensate for what the United States is doing.

If the situation becomes tense, do you think there will be a lot of support from workers and the Mexican people?

Yes, yes, because the Mexican people strongly reject these aggressive, crude and authoritarian attitudes on the part of the U.S. government, and this has awakened nationalist resentment... and progressive resentment.

When there's a confrontation between a strong, imperialist nation and a weak one, it's clear that we're with the weak nation, to confront it, especially when the leader of that nation not only acts in an authoritarian and imposing manner,

but also has a whole far-right political agenda against migrants, a xenophobic, misogynist, anti-gender diversity, warmongering agenda and so on. In other words, here we are in a struggle that is both anti-imperialist, but must also be anti-fascist, because Trump represents the global ultra-right, which is acting in an increasingly openly united and coordinated manner with other ultra-right forces, both in Europe and Latin America. So we need to be clear that there are many issues at stake beyond the trade question, which is very important.

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