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Mexico

Against Trump and Peña: unity from below and without borders

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The following statement was published by the Revolutionary Workers' Party, PRT, Mexican section of the Fourth International, as the U.S. President, Donald Trump, signed his executive order to begin work immediately on a wall along the border between the two countries, and repeated that Mexico would have to pay for it. As a result, the Mexican president, Enrique Peña Nieto, was forced to cancel his planned visit to the White House on 31 January.

After the dramatic increase in fuel, electricity and water prices throughout the country and a month of uninterrupted, massive protests across the country that have deepened the crisis of legitimacy – which is increasingly a political crisis – of Mexico's oligarchic regime, we are now beginning to see the first steps of the new, extreme right, xenophobic, macho, racist and anti-Mexican administration in the White House. This can only bring further complications, contradictions and possibilities of struggle to the Mexican political scene.

The timid response of the Peña government once again shows its inability to cope with the country's crisis, including now the measures taken against Mexico by the Trump government and its continual threats. The protectionist turn of the new US government is underway: it has not only blocked investments in Mexico and liquidated the Trans-Pacific Partnership free-trade agreement (TPP), it has also threatened to "renegotiate" the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in its favour (virtually cancelling it), and to impose 20% tariffs on Mexican exports to finance the wall of shame on a border that is already militarized, not to mention the massive deportations that are around the corner. All of this, which is an expression of the crisis of neoliberalism, could destroy the foundations on which decades of neoliberal economic policies were erected to secure Mexico as the United States' back yard. Indeed, Peña Nieto's most recent structural reforms, especially in the energy sector, were designed and imposed on the assumption of the Mexican economy's deep and almost exclusive dependence on the imperialist interests of its northern neighbour.

It was on this neoliberal assumption that NAFTA destroyed the Mexican countryside, dismantled the incipient domestic industry to favour the "maquiladora" model (of export processing plants), gave away to US (and Canadian) companies the country's minerals, destroyed labour rights and spread precarious work, to name but a few of the clearest effects. At the same time, since the time of Miguel de la Madrid [\[1\]](#) both PRI and PAN governments have justified their submission to US interests, saying that it was better to have them as "allies" than as "enemies." These technocrats never imagined, when they prostrated themselves before the White House, that a future tenant might turn round and play with them. For these Mexican rulers and officials never saw themselves as statesmen, as representatives of an allied, sovereign nation, but as mere subordinates. That is why we cannot expect the Mexican government, or the parties that signed up to the "Pact for Mexico", to represent the interests of the Mexican people in any "new NAFTA negotiations," or in the face of abuses against Mexicans in the US and the imminent construction of the Wall.

There will only be a new form of subordination, more bowing and scraping, which will only bring worse consequences for workers on both sides of the border. The discomfort of Peña Nieto's government is not only an expression of his own personal incapacity, although that is real enough. Above all, it is because for decades they have faithfully subordinated themselves to the dictates of neoliberalism – most fully expressed in the structural reforms imposed by Peña and the parties of the Pact for Mexico. And now that Trump is giving a more right-wing and protectionist turn to imperialist politics, the neoliberals in Mexico have been left in the lurch, with no alternative to the crisis. They can offer no alternative because they dug Mexico's grave by following the imperialist dictates, which is all they know how to do, and now those dictates are in contradiction with the ones they followed so faithfully.

It is important for the left, the social movements and for working people, not to fear a renegotiation of NAFTA, which

had only terrible consequences for working people. The worst mistake now would be, as the PRD did, to "defend NAFTA" against Trump. On the contrary, peasants, democratic unions, and the left in general, have for decades been fighting NAFTA and its consequences. We fight for a sovereign and independent nation that uses its natural resources to build a strong economy that benefits the majority, who are us, the workers.

Trump's "protectionist turn" does not imply that the United States no longer has an interest in grabbing our natural resources and taking advantage of cheap, precarious labor to overexploit it. From the perspective of workers' interests, faced with Trump's protectionist trade policy, it is no alternative to "look to other countries" (such as those proposing China or the European Union), which would mean remaining a semi-colonial and dependent country. These unequal and subordinate relations will not improve the situation of the country or of the workers, but they will certainly maintain the privileges of the ruling caste. We need to break the model, not just change master. The end of neoliberal Mexico should be the opportunity to unite all of us from below, starting with the working people, organizing and fighting to remake an independent and sovereign Mexico, one which is fair and democratic, free and egalitarian, ecological, without exploitation or oppression of any kind. That is a revolutionary political perspective.

Everything indicates that the "renegotiation favourable to the United States", which Trump proposes in relation to NAFTA, means more destruction of Mexican infrastructure and greater subordination of the Mexican economy to the needs of its northern neighbour. In this restructuring of US production, the empire will try to secure the basic inputs it needs to do this at the lowest possible cost.

Given the economic and political collapse of the Mexican neoliberals with this protectionist turn by the new US government, the calls by Peña and other political figures like Andres López Obrador, to forge a "national unity" against Trump, are desperate attempts to overcome their crisis of legitimacy.

National unity? What do we Mexican workers have in common with the magnates who, faced with a changed political landscape, are seeking to accommodate themselves and their interests to the new master? What do the corrupt, xenophobic, and billionaire members of the Trump cabinet have in common with the millions of black, Latino, and white workers whose situation has been made more precarious by both Democratic and Republican policies in recent years? Nothing can be more poisonous than supposed calls to national unity with those who were the first to plunge us into this crisis.

It is urgent, of course, to forge the broadest unity against the policies of racist hatred, denial and oppression of the other. But that means unity from below and without borders. Trump and Peña represent the enemy, the same enemy, regardless of momentary insults. U.S. workers, the Sioux, Mexican migrants (our brother and sister workers across the border) and Latinos in general, the Black Lives Matter movement, the millions of women who flooded the streets of the United States, these are our main allies.

Although the outlook is grim, it is also true that these draconian blows (of Trump and Peña) are already facing the obstacle of mobilized resistance. On the one hand, Trump's inauguration was welcomed by mass protests, with women in the front line, and new mobilizations and struggles are promised. These are a starting point. On this side of the border, the massive mobilizations against the petrolazo (fuel price rises) and the structural reforms herald a new period of struggle and resistance. Struggles that again will be screaming, Out with Peña! It is urgent for people in struggle on both sides of the border to reach out so that together we can face the capitalist monster. We need to take up again the exemplary international solidarity with the cause of the Ayotzinapa 43, who disappeared in September 2014. This is not about the scam of national unity, but of unity without borders, unity from below, unity in diversity, of the unity to resist and win.

In the Mexican case, it is urgent that the social discontent that has been expressed in massive and spontaneous mobilizations across the country, which in a few cases like that of Baja California, have won partial though not yet

consolidated victories, can be channeled and organized into more permanent and democratic fronts of struggle – fronts which different organisations can promote and where they can come together. Almost a month of spontaneous daily protests across the country against the fuel price increases, have begun to see greater participation by forces that had previously organized against neoliberalism. This Thursday 26th a decisive sector of the working class, represented by the New Workers' Central, the Mexican Electricians' Union (SME), and the National Assembly of Electricity Users (ANUE), supported by the Political Organisation of the People and the Workers, has taken part in a very large mobilization through the streets of Mexico City, marking the presence of an organised proletarian wing within the framework of the spontaneous, popular, citizen protests of recent days. The mobilisation of 26th was preceded by dozens of occupations and protests at gas stations and workplaces of the former Mexico City Electricity Company, organised by the ANUE and SME.

On 31 January, another big mobilization has been called in Mexico City, by another important pole of reference, involving peasant organizations and the UNT (National Workers' Union), including most importantly the union of telephone operators and university students. The scale of the crisis and the protests poses the need and responsibility to develop an organized pole of the working people in struggle, independent of the calls for "national unity" from the government and all the institutional parties (now not only the parties of the Pact for Mexico, but also Morena [2]). This demands a conscious and responsible effort to create a genuinely unitary space, to be able to coordinate all the struggles across the country and to raise the protest and struggle to the level needed at this moment and to carry through to their conclusion the three mobilizing slogans of recent days: Against the fuel price hikes, Against the structural reforms, Out with Peña. This means raising the protest to new levels of struggle, including a possible, nationwide civic strike. But that cannot be just a propagandistic call. It means above all creating and coordinating the social forces capable of making it reality.

In fact, getting rid of the structural reforms, especially in energy and education, cannot be separated from the political objective of getting rid of the Peña government now (not by the smooth and institutional route proposed by López Obrador, of waiting until a few elections scheduled in 2018, which would mean a negotiated transition). Indeed, in the medium term, getting rid of the structural reforms can not mean simply returning to the Constitution as it was before 2013 (or 1994, when NAFTA came into force). It requires a new Constituent Assembly to redesign the country. This is even more true now that Yankee imperialism, represented by Trump, is imposing a new turn on the neoliberal globalization that the parties of the Pact for Mexico and its governments enthusiastically imposed on our country, destroying rights and historical conquests which may or may not have been reflected at some point in the Constitution.

Building unity from below, of all the movements and expressions of resistance, certainly faces many difficulties. But the continuation and deepening of the crisis could propel it forward in the coming weeks. On 4 February, there will be new petrol price rises, already approved in the Fiscal Income Law by the parties of the Pact for Mexico. And the practical implementation of Trump's plans will hardly bring a period of peace and stability, despite the calls for "national unity". Again, just think of the social consequences of building the wall and charging for it, along with the possible mass deportation of Mexican workers from the US.

Today, as perhaps never before, it is urgent that social movements on both sides of the border seek spaces to meet and discuss and develop joint campaigns. Solidarity is crucial to curb racist hatred. The internationalist spirit is the only way out to defeat xenophobic nationalism. There are many possible meeting points. The hundreds of movements that for years have been resisting ecocidal mega projects in Mexico, now see themselves in the mirror of Standing Rock; the dozens of political prisoners in Mexican prisons and the protesters recently detained in the US, who could face up to ten years' in prison, are part of the same repressive policy; the women who, since last year, have taken to the streets throughout Latin America against violence against women and femicide, find their sisters in the millions of "pink pussy hats".

Peña and Trump: They will not pass !

United we will win!

Mexico City, 25 January, 2017

[1] Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado was a member of PRI who served as the 52nd President of Mexico, 1982 -1988 and introduced many neoliberal policies.

[2] Morena is the party of López Obrador.