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MEXICO: THE POLITICAL VOLCANO RUMBLES

On Friday, September 1, the army and police surrounded the Congress building in Mexico City and locked down the area around it. They shut down metro stations, and snipers patrolled the rooftops. Soldiers with water cannons stood around miles of steel fence, intimidating the protestors who gathered in the streets and hassling and harassing opposition legislators trying to make their way in.

It was time for Vicente Fox, the president of Mexico, to give his yearly address to the Mexican Congress.

He never did. Opposition legislators seized the podium, waving Mexican flags. Fox left the building, and the government broadcast a recording of the speech, with a video of happy, smiling people. But neither the phony video images nor the threatening insinuations in Fox's speech could hide the fact that Mexico has erupted in an enormous political crisis, a nation divided in two.

Over the past weeks, millions have taken to the streets, and the army has issued dangerous threats. Many different forces are involved in this, and the outcome is extremely uncertain.

On the one side is Felipe Calderón, the candidate of PAN (National Action Party). Calderón claims to have won the election, and he is backed up by the governmental structure, the army and the U.S. Calderón will almost certainly be officially declared president on September 6. But according to the September 1 National Public Radio business show *Marketplace*, most people in Mexico now believe Calderón's election was fraudulent.

On the other side is Andrés Manuel López Obrador—known as AMLO—who is the candidate of PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution). AMLO has called out millions to protest against the government's refusal to allow a recount. And specifically, plans are proceeding for a mass National Democratic Convention on September 16, Mexican Independence Day, in the Zocalo in Mexico City, the traditional site of official government celebrations, including a military parade. The purpose of this Convention, according to the Coalición Por el Bien de Todos (Coalition for the Good of All) is to institute a national resistance movement and to debate and decide if this movement will recognize AMLO as President—in effect, refusing to recognize the legitimacy of Calderón.

Like Calderón, AMLO too is backed by sections of the Mexican rulers; at the same time, there are many, many masses who see their interests at stake in this election and who have flooded into political life to contest the outcome. The fissures at the top of Mexican society have created an opening through which mass discontent has begun to burst, in extremely significant ways. How this plays out—including the possibility of this getting beyond the control of the powers-that-be and of the masses increasingly recognizing and fighting for their own interests within this upheaval—could have huge effects in Mexico, in Latin America, in the U.S. and, indeed, in the world as a whole.

The polarization and divisions are sharp and increasingly bitter. This is going on in the midst of, and affecting, much broader tumult in Mexican society. The city of Oaxaca has been virtually shut down by striking teachers and many other people, demanding that the current PRI (Party of the Institutional Revolution) governor Ulises Ruiz step down. In the Distrito Federal (Mexico City), Federal Police have moved in to erect a fence around San Lazaro, the buildings where the Congress meets, backed up by tanks.

Meanwhile, the *Los Angeles Times* has demanded that AMLO back down and renounce his plans to "proclaim himself president and establish a parallel 'people's government' on Sept. 16." In their August 30 editorial, "Coup D'Etat in Mexico?", the *LA Times* said that "A coup d'etat is brewing in Mexico...López Obrador's supporters have shut down much of Mexico City in acts of civil disobedience and they appear intent on making the country ungovernable." They go on to say that it is time for "democratic voices on the left in Mexico"—they specifically mention Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas of PRD—"to distance themselves from López Obrador's destructive coup attempt." These are arrogant words coming from a major

U.S. newspaper, which has no business bossing around the Mexican people; more than that, they show the volatility of the situation—and the ways in which the U.S. ruling class perceives its own interests to be very much in danger.

A Volcanic Situation

The struggle in Mexico takes place within a volatile international situation. Globalization has accelerated the overnight breakneck changes in how hundreds of millions of people live and work. The U.S. empire is attempting to impose its will as the unchallenged—and unchallengeable—ruler of the imperialist roost, especially through bitter wars of aggression in the Middle East. In Latin America, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, allied with Castro and others, is attempting to counter what they consider the unipolar dominance of the U.S. in the world, and they have tried to build a pole of resistance to the neo-liberal economic policies that have been imposed on countries in Latin America.

This sets the stage for the explosive contradictions in Mexico. The 1994 NAFTA (North American Free Trade Act) has caused extreme dislocations within Mexico itself, driving many more peasants off the land. The strategic oil industry in Mexico is declining in profitability, and there is struggle at the top of Mexican society over what to do about that bulwark of the Mexican economy and government. Foreign companies which once opened up low-wage factories inside Mexico, known as maquiladoras, are now often shutting down in the quest for even lower wages, in places like China. Then there is the question of what to do about the huge numbers of impoverished Mexicans whose interests do not coincide with the programs of "development" being implemented and who in fact are being driven more deeply into poverty and desperation. All these form the economic underpinnings of the current political crisis.

In addition, Mexico is undergoing a transition from the previous PRI-dominated state structure to a multiparty form of rule by the same class forces. But this new form of rule is far from consolidated. As signaled by the election of the PAN candidate Fox in 2000, major changes at the top of Mexican society—among the rulers—have been taking place, and these are being reflected in the struggle to come to agreement over who will be President next. There are differences between PAN and PRD over the role of religion and education and traditional morality, the role of the unions and social welfare measures, and other questions concerning the character of the institutions and broader social relations of society.

And there is the question of what posture the Mexican government will take in relation to the international panorama, and in particular how this will impact the U.S. agenda. All of these are involved in a complex multifaceted way in the current crisis that has emerged in relation to these Presidential elections.

Both Calderón and AMLO are representatives of the Mexican rulers and both are arguing for programs which they believe best serve the interests of the Mexican nation, as viewed through the prism of their class. There is no disagreement between them that the path for Mexico's development can only pro-



Anti-government demonstrators fill the Zocalo in Mexico City, August 28, 2006. (AP photo)



Opposition legislators prevent President Fox from delivering the state-of-the-union address, Sept. 1, 2006. (AP photo)



Demonstrators at the barricade constructed around Congress in Mexico City, August 31, 2006. (AP photo)

WHO IS AMLO, WHAT IS HIS PROGRAM, AND WHERE WILL IT LEAD?

Many honest people who want to fight for change have put their faith in the calls for resistance and the militant words of AMLO, and see in him an option for change, or at least as the lesser of two evils. He calls his coalition “For the Good of All, the Poor First.” But who is AMLO and what does he represent?

The PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) has its roots in the PRI (Party of the Institutional Revolution), the party that was formed (under the name of Party of the National Revolution—PNR) in 1929 to consolidate the defeat of the 1910 Mexican revolution and to “institutionalize the revolution.” In fact, PRI represented the landlord and big business capitalist classes, and held power in Mexico for 70 years. Once the regime fell into political crisis, some of the leaders of the PRI formed the PRD, to provide a more democratic-seeming alternative. Most of the leftist parties in Mexico also joined the PRD. Since its creation, the PRD has served the rulers as an instrument to control the masses, and channel their revolutionary sentiments into a dead-end electoral path.

AMLO joined the PRI in the mid-1970s after it had been in power for over 40 years and had carried out the massacre of students in Mexico City in 1968, as well as a “dirty war” to crush guerrilla groups and rural resistance. He served as a PRI official for over 10 years before joining the PRD and running for governor of Tabasco. In his presidential campaign, his closest advisors are high-level former PRI officials who served in the regimes of Echeverría (1970-1976), López Portillo (1976-1982), de la Madrid (1982-1988) and Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) administrations. How can AMLO represent a new order when he is so deeply enmeshed in the old oppressive one?

The masses and popular organizations that support AMLO are doing so because they think that he will stop the devastation to the land and people of Mexico wrought by NAFTA and globalization. But in fact AMLO supports globalization, and expanding maquiladoras through the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). He says that Mexico has to find the way to make globalization work to their advantage and become competitive in the world market. (See “50 compromisos para recuperar el orgullo nacional” at www.lopezobrador.org.mx. This point is found under #25.) He points to China as a positive example of this, where the wages for the workers are *four times lower than Mexico*—because China has been able to build up development on top of this super-exploitation and invest in other countries, (including Mexico). Many of the maquiladoras (assembly plants), which had come to Mexico to exploit the low-paid workers, have now moved to China where they can pay the workers even less, and where the costs of doing business are cheaper. AMLO proposes to give maquiladoras tax breaks and incentives to attract them back to Mexico. How will this represent the true interests of the workers exploited and worked to death in these maquiladoras—and then cast out when capital moves on to suck the blood of its next victim?

AMLO says that he is against the provision of NAFTA that will flood the country with U.S.-produced corn and beans, since this is the staple food in Mexico. In reality, Mexico has already been flooded with corn and beans from the U.S. for years, and to stop this practice would require overturning NAFTA and free trade. Instead of ending NAFTA, he told the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that he proposes renegotiating certain clauses “using, of course, the mechanisms that are set forth in the treaty itself,” and promoting investment in agriculture for export and agro-industry and “cooperation for development” with the U.S. This type of “development” depends on desperately poor migrant laborers to do the seasonal work on the farms. The owners of these export and agro-industry businesses are a few imperialist corporations, such as Monsanto and Cargill, together with their “business partners” in the big capitalist and landlord classes in Mexico.

For example, in Baja California Sur the farms that export fruits and vegetables to the U.S. are owned in partnership between U.S. corporations and Mexican capitalists. These farms are the “success stories” of NAFTA, and their need for labor has increased five-fold since NAFTA went into effect. They exploit migrant laborer who are trucked in from the indigenous south of Mexico by labor contractors promising good wages and nice living quarters. The indigenous population of Baja California Sur was exterminated in the conquest of Mexico, but now indigenous people speaking at least 7 different languages compose 75% of the labor force on these farms—including thousands of children who work without access to schooling. Very near to the luxury tourist resorts of Cabo San Lucas and La Paz are the slums of migrant workers whose children under 5 years old die of diseases like malaria, cholera, diarrhea, and tuberculosis—diseases that have been wiped out among other sections of the population. How are the interests of *these masses* represented by either AMLO or Calderón?

AMLO supports a huge development project in southern Mexico which has been fought against for many years by the indigenous people who live in the affected area. The Megaproject of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec is said to be a “detonator of development,” part of Plan Puebla-Panama and the FTAA—a plan which has even been rejected by many governments in Latin America and has been the target of heroic protests. AMLO says that the Isthmus project would “convert the country into a strategic position in the globe.” The Isthmus of Tehuantepec is the narrowest land mass between the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. Part of this development area would destroy the Chimalapa rainforest which contains a unique mix of animal and plant species found nowhere else in the world and is homeland to five indigenous groups.

The Zoque Indians have lived in the Chimalapa wetlands in Oaxaca, on the border with Chiapas, for 2000 years and have applied a complex plan to preserve the jungle ecosystem. The development project would build an eight-lane superhighway through this jungle area which, together with the Lacandona jungle, is known as “the Lungs of Mexico”—the last of the tropical rainforests in Mexico, 80% of which have already been lost forever. The project is envisioned as replacing the overcrowded Panama Canal, with deep-berth ports on either side of the isthmus, where huge freight ships could dock and the freight containers would be transported overland by railroad or trucks. How can the wanton sacrifice of the Mexican environment, all in the service of capitalist profit, represent the interests of the Mexican masses, or humanity as a whole for that matter?

AMLO says he is for “...the Poor First.” But when he has been in power his program toward these masses has been to criminalize, beat and lock them up. In 2002, while mayor of Mexico City, AMLO contracted the firm of Rudolph Giuliani, ex-mayor of New York, to help Mexico City police apply Giuliani’s so-called “Zero Tolerance” program that had criminalized the poor of New York and given the police a free hand in attacking them. In Mexico City, millions of people survive through street vending, and there are thousands of street orphans. “Zero tolerance” and combating delinquency under AMLO meant arresting street orphans and attacking street vendors. Squadrons of hooded undercover police in unmarked cars patrolled the city to “combat street crime” and “drug dealing,” and many cases of innocent people being kidnapped by these police are documented. AMLO also oversaw the renovation of the Historic Center, bringing in millions of dollars to investors, principally the Mexican multi-millionaire Carlos Slim, who is the fourth wealthiest man in the world, while “cleaning” the area of street vendors and windshield cleaners.

AMLO has repeatedly proven his loyalty to U.S. imperialism and the Mexican rulers by repressing important social figures and movements that come to the capital to protest government crimes. The Justice Department of Mexico City was in charge of the investigation of the murder of Digna Ochoa, a famous and beloved people’s lawyer who for many years defended peasant ecologists in Guerrero and political prisoners from guerrilla groups. She had received numerous death threats and was murdered in Distrito Federal in 2001. The government of AMLO helped to cover up and protect her murderers by declaring that Digna Ochoa had committed suicide. In 2001, when campesinos from Atenco came to Mexico City to protest the government plan to take their land and build an airport on their land, they were attacked by 150 police; in 2003 when students from 17 rural schools (rurales normales) came to DF to defend education and to protest the closing of a school in Chiapas and the imprisonment of the students who had resisted this closing, they were beaten by the police and 108 of them were arrested. In the spring of 2003, on two occasions when thousands protested the invasion of Iraq in front of the U.S. embassy, the PRD government sent the police out to surround, beat, and arrest the protesters. After a demo of 50,000 people, the police attacked it when it dispersed. They said, “We have orders from above to fuck them up.” How does any of this repression of the people’s right to protest represent the interests of the people?

The people are correct to go into the streets to demand a full recount and to oppose the program represented by Calderón, as well as the repression now being threatened. But as they do this, they also need an alternative that truly represents their interests. And while this article is not a thorough analysis of the PRD/AMLO program, it is thorough enough to say that this is not the alternative that people need. What is needed, urgently, is leadership and a program that do get to the root of the problems resulting from the domination of U.S. imperialism and the classes in Mexico that ally with and serve those interests, and that find revolutionary alternatives that break out of those relations. This is a debate that needs to happen, even as the people forge forward in their resistance. □

MEXICO: THE POLITICAL VOLCANO RUMBLES

ceed and advance by attracting increased imperialist investment to Mexico. Neither can escape—and *neither argues that they should try to escape*—from the framework of imperialist relations which dominate Mexico. There is, however, sharp disagreement over what particular laws and political structures and social institutions will serve certain changes they view as necessary, and at what pace these laws should be implemented and changes made. And as we have said, the masses are extremely, and righteously, angry over what they see as the theft of the election and the whole direction posed by Calderón.

The Mexican Economy

Very much involved in all this, and in a certain sense at the foundation of it, is the economy. Mexico is under the economic domination of U.S. imperialism, and this is the determining fact of Mexican economic life. To get a sense of the extent of U.S. domination of the Mexican economy, the following recent quote from the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations is very telling: “Mexico understands that its future is inevitably intertwined with its northern neighbor, since from [the U.S.] it obtains two-thirds of its capital flows and virtually all of the 20 to 25 billion dollars in remittances from the migrants. Besides this, it sends to [the U.S.] almost 90% of its exports and more than 80% of the tourists that visit are from the U.S. Mexico cannot tolerate a deep alienation from the U.S.... As a matter of fact, behind the scenes the relation has become even more institutionalized and stable, no matter who occupies the presidency of either country.”

In today’s era of “lean and mean” free market imperialism, capital whisks in and out of countries, and entire regions of the world, searching for the highest profit. Even though Mexico has very low wages relative to the imperialist countries, the pay is much lower in China and other parts of Asia. The capitalists have shut down many factories in Mexico and reinvested the capital involved in Asia. Meanwhile, the price of electricity in Mexico is double that of the price in the U.S., because the plants are inefficient and the labor costs are too high. The Federal Labor Law in Mexico impedes certain forms of foreign investment. Mexico is roiling with struggle and the path (which both candidates advocate) of greater integration with the U.S. market will only further squeeze and uproot the masses of people, and will only heighten their suffering. There is disagreement between Calderón and AMLO over how and what kind of mandate for increased exploitation should be forged, what mix of deception, illusion, and repression will enable the rulers to keep control of the masses, without causing a social explosion that could result in losing the whole thing.

In either case, attracting foreign investment is a cornerstone of the program. But foreign investment promotes neither the all-round development of the economy of the country, nor the welfare of the majority of the people. The growth it promotes is strictly to serve increasing its profitability, and the capitalist development it brings about is based on super-exploitation. There may be industrialization and jobs, but for the masses it will bring on increased suffering and deprivation. Investment capital is not some sort of miracle growth hormone—when capital can more easily move from location to location, what this actually leads to is a contest to offer up the lowest wages, cheapest



infrastructure, and worst standards of social and environmental protections—all in order to attract capital. This is not the kind of economy and development that represents the interests of the broad masses of Mexican people. (See “Imperialist Globalization and the Fight for a Different Future: Investment for Whom, Development for Whom?” by Raymond Lotta, *Revolutionary Worker* #935, December 7, 1997—online at revcom.us.) AMLO’s program, which calls for more imperialist investment, in no way challenges these existing relations. He may make promises to the poor, but how will he fulfill these when they conflict with the need for workers to work for low wages in order to attract and keep industry and capitalist investment in Mexico?

However, on one major strategic economic question there do seem to be real differences with the PAN and with the dominant view in the U.S. ruling class. This revolves around energy policies (both oil and natural gas). Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex), is the fifth largest oil company in the world and last year produced record profits (greater than Exxon). Eighty percent of its exports are to the U.S. The energy sector of Mexico is already deeply penetrated by U.S. capital (for example, the profits from the oil industry were directly turned over to the U.S. Treasury in 1994 as collateral for the loan from the U.S. needed to prevent the collapse of the economy during the sharp devaluation of the peso). But as it stands, the Mexican government owns and controls the oil industry, with very tight restrictions on any foreign investment. At the same time, Pemex now pays 60% of its revenue in taxes (\$30 billion per year) to the Mexican government; it accounts for more than 40% of the Mexican government’s annual revenues.

But according to the *Latin Business Chronicle*, international oil experts deem Pemex to be one of the most inefficient oil companies in the world, plagued by inadequate equipment and corrupt unions. Calderón, and the sectors of the Mexican rulers grouped around and backing him, argue for a more thorough and streamlined exploitation of Mexico’s oil. In essence, they demand that Mexico remove the barriers to private/foreign investment (which are currently written into the Mexican Constitution). They want to institute joint production agreements between U.S. capital and Pemex to find new sources and drill for oil. They see this as the key link attracting capital into the further industrialization of Mexico and, together with this, the development of the infrastructure of Mexico. (Mexico has some of the highest telephone rates in the world, and only one-third of the roads are paved; it also must ship its own natural gas to the U.S. and then import it back, in order to supply electricity.) These, not so coincidentally, are all changes favored by the U.S., as they directly serve the U.S. drive for ever

greater profits through the ruthless exploitation of the resources and people of the oppressed nations.

A few weeks before the election, the Energy Secretary—a member of the PAN party and Vicente Fox’s government—signaled this intention to investors by publishing a catalog of 817 opportunities for investment in exploration in the continental platform of the Gulf of Mexico. Technically, to carry these out would require the reform of the Constitution, but legal mechanisms have been designed to circumvent it if it proves too politically costly. Mexican businessmen grouped in the Council for Empresarial Coordination (Consejo Coordinador Empresarial [CCE]), recently met with their counterparts in the U.S. to reach a deal in the next two years to permit large Mexican companies to directly buy energy from U.S. companies and to leave the Mexican national electricity system out of the picture entirely.

The sectors of the rulers grouped around AMLO are vehemently opposed to the privatization of Pemex and the electricity sector. They too see their program bound up with their vision for the future of the country. As the president of Board of Directors of Energy of the National Board of the Industry of Transformation, Gilberto Ortiz, stated: “This is what is at stake because if this petroleum wealth and the possibility that Mexico would be a factor in the energy security of North America ends up being given over to private investors, mainly foreigners, as a country we will lose the historic possibility of having a solid position in the region and the continent.”

AMLO has advanced a plan to maintain Mexican government control of the energy sector. He says that he will integrate the oil and electricity sectors and develop an overall strategic plan for their rational development. He stresses that the Mexican Constitution’s protection of the strategic energy sector must be maintained and advocates the Mexican state (rather than private/foreign investment) give more revenue back to Pemex to invest in building more refineries and petrochemical plants. AMLO claims that this would create the basis to increase exploration for, and development of, more oil and natural gas fields. AMLO’s plan is also ultimately to use Mexico’s huge untapped resources to develop the economy and on that basis negotiate the best terms for Mexico’s subordination to imperialism, especially U.S. imperialism. His difference with Calderón is over how best to maneuver within the framework of imperialist domination, not over whether and how to rupture with it.

Another element in buttressing Mexico’s position within the imperialist framework, especially in relation to other oppressed nations, is bound up with maintaining its stability. Privatizing the energy sector would result in further disarticulation of the Mexican economy and more upheaval in the situation of many of



A 17-year-old worker on an onion farm in Sonora, northern Mexico, 2003. (AP photo)



Garment workers make clothes for Wal-Mart and Sam’s Club in Guadalajara City, Mexico, Dec. 2003. (AP photo)



Men seeking work in Mexico City advertise their trade, June 2006. (AP photo)

the masses. The Mexican government is very dependent on the revenue from taxing Pemex, and without it the government would be hard pressed to finance social programs, education, and pensions for teachers and other state workers. So the question of how to maintain and enforce “social stability” enters into both side’s calculations—and their disagreements—as we shall see in more detail later.

Mexico’s Role as U.S. Underling

Beyond the direct investment in Mexican oil resources, the U.S. sees Mexico as an important “stabilizing” element in its effort to continue and remake its domination of Latin America. One element of this is the U.S. attempt to integrate the Western Hemisphere into one trade zone, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Colin Powell (when he was Secretary of State) declared that the purpose of FTAA “is to guarantee North American companies free access without any obstacle or difficulty for our products, services, technology and capital in a territory from the North Pole to Antarctica.”

But the FTAA has been the object of ferocious protest, and even many governments in Latin America are opposed to it.

Hugo Chavez in Venezuela is promoting an opposing trade agreement for the hemisphere called ALBA. Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, and Chile are forming regional alliances and seeking to broaden their trade beyond the U.S., especially with China and even Iran. From the point of view of U.S. imperialists, this challenge must be met! And Mexico has a role to play in helping the U.S. meet it. In their view, the president of Mexico has a mission to consolidate the U.S. imperialist pole of development in Latin America; he must be the most staunch promoter of free trade, as embodied in NAFTA.

In June 2005, Mexico signed an accord called Alliance for the Security and Prosperity of North America (ASPAN) (Alianza para la Seguridad y la prosperidad para América del Norte) together with Canada and the U.S. The point was made at the time that this accord would be binding on whoever became president of Mexico in the upcoming elections. Included in the “security and prosperity of North America” is guaranteeing the energy needs for the U.S. market, as well as measures toward forging “a common theory of security” to allow U.S. Homeland Security measures to be implemented in

Mexico.

The U.S., then, had great interests in the outcome of this election. This was illustrated in an “audition” held in November 2005 in Mexico City, before members of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. All three candidates were asked about whether they would open the energy sector in Mexico, especially the nationalized oil company, Pemex, to U.S. exploitation.

Felipe Calderón received resounding applause when he answered that he is in favor of private investment in Pemex, and of weakening the labor unions. He also received applause when he stated that he supported George Bush’s guest worker program and that he agreed the border needed to be secured or militarized. AMLO said that he would not allow risk capital investment in Pemex—but hastened to add that other sectors *would* be opened to investment. He emphasized there should be “cooperation for development” between the U.S. and Mexico, which is another way of saying that Mexico would be subordinate to U.S. interests since that is the only kind of “cooperation” that the U.S. will participate in.

Calderón won the audition, but AMLO was granted the role of understudy. Former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Jeffrey Davidow, who ran the show, told AMLO that “if you win the election, we will support you.” But when AMLO appeared to be the front runner in the election, PAN allied with forces in the U.S. to launch a feverish campaign against AMLO. They contracted election advisers Rob Allyn and Dick Morris—who boast of helping Bush to his fraudulent 2000 and 2004 victories. They developed a media campaign to foment fear among sectors of the upper and middle strata that AMLO is a “leftist” with ties to Chavez and Castro who would bring socialism to Mexico. They claimed that his proposed reforms would cause instability and bring down punishment from the colossus of the north, and/or cause investors to pull out. Calderón charged that any concessions to the poor that AMLO would make would be brought about by taxing the middle class and spread rumors that middle class people would lose their homes. This campaign did have its effect, together with whatever outright fraud was committed.

It would be wrong to reduce the U.S. stance in favor of Calderón *only* to oil. As noted before, this takes place against a backdrop of the “counter-pole” around Chavez (which includes Cuba as well as the election of Evo Morales in Bolivia). AMLO has not declared himself in the Chavez camp by any means, but the very existence of that camp constitutes a potential wild card in any future U.S.-Mexican disagreement. And while some voices within the U.S. are concerned about the social turmoil if the Mexican economy goes further down the tubes, the dominant imperialist forces from the U.S. seems to be more at ease working with PAN, where they will have tighter control and cooperation on all matters that they deem to be in their interests. At the same time, they tried to keep up an appearance of “not interfering” by not officially endorsing Calderón before the election.

Calderón’s Repressive Program

If he succeeds in gaining the office, Calderón is expected to create a climate of repression, religious obscurantism and torture in order to control the rebellious masses and impose further restructuring to attract imperialist investment. And he will definitely enhance the role of the Catholic church in the functioning of society. Calderón opposes abortion and gay marriage, and abortion is expected to be criminalized even in the case of rape and/or incest.

A harbinger of things to come can be seen in PAN-governed states. For instance, in Guanajuato secondary school children are beginning the school year this month without science textbooks. Why? Because the Catholic church objected to



Anti-government protesters, Mexico City, August 31, 2006. (AP photo)

their treatment of human sexuality. In Jalisco, the Secretary of Education is distributing materials developed by a religious parents’ organization to try to counteract the effects of independent thinking that might be generated by this same textbook. Fifty organizations in Jalisco are fighting against this science textbook while promoting the revision of the history textbook to glorify the role of the Cristero forces—religious fanatics that carried out an armed struggle against secular government in the 1920s and were very strong in Jalisco. Calderón himself is closely allied with El Yunque, a religious fascist organization, whose members reportedly include the president of the PAN party and former governor of Jalisco, Sergio Ramirez Acuña. (Ramirez Acuña announced his sponsorship of Calderón’s candidacy at the same time as he openly called for and personally oversaw the mass arrest and torture of over one hundred anti-globalization protesters in Guadalajara in 2004. He is reportedly being considered for a cabinet position in the Calderón government.)

In the international sphere, Calderón has stated that Mexico should no longer participate in UN resolutions that criticize Israel. In his document “100 Priorities for Government (100 Acciones Prioritarias de Gobierno),” he proposes that the federal police, the immigration police, and customs agency be fused under a central command, and that this new centralized federal police have additional police powers. He also proposes that a Unified Criminal Information System be created that can be accessed by all the police and prosecutors in the nation. While AMLO has carried out his share of repression—including bringing in the fascist Rudolph Giuliani, former New York City mayor, to “consult with” on policing—there is a sense that Calderón signals something even more repressive.

Bigger Questions

In other words, there is a whole range of questions up for struggle right now in the streets of Mexico. There is the economic dislocation, driving millions off the land and millions more to seek work in the U.S., and the overall desperate situation of increasing millions at the bottom of society—as well as the overall economic polarization in society. There is the way in which the whole history of rigged elections seems to be repeating itself before the eyes of the people—at a time when there is struggle in Mexican society over “the rules of the game.” There is Calderón’s attempt to jam traditional values, including the power of the Catholic Church, into society. The people who have poured into the streets *by the millions* to prevent Calderón from taking power are certainly justified in thinking that radical action is needed—and in taking that action! They are also correct in linking Calderón to an accelerated plan to put Mexico more directly under U.S. domination, with all the horrors the Bush regime will bring if not stopped. As one

indigenous Maya man who traveled from Yucatan to attend the first Zocalo protest put it: “They’re doing to us what they did in the era of Porfirio Diaz. They grabbed on to Mexico and didn’t want to let it go. If we hadn’t started a war, he never would have let go.”

The sentiments of these awakened and activated masses reflect both the recognition that radical change is needed—and the hope and illusion that it can be achieved through electoral means and that AMLO is about bringing that change. Huge expectations have been raised that AMLO will come through with his promises. At the same time, the specter of very radical change has arisen; for instance, at the rally of millions in the Zocalo on July 30, the people chanted “If there’s no solution, there’ll be a revolution.” Turmoil and combativeness are bursting out all over the country, opening up the possibility of real challenges to the programs of all the political parties, and the existing institutions. Once people begin to challenge these institutions, once they have been drawn into political life and struggle—even when it is initiated by forces within the rulers—people become open to all kinds of new thinking and new

ways of acting. New questions are posed and new answers are urgently sought. The people get a glimpse of their own potential power, as they strain against the framework that the ruling parties and institutions try to put them in. And as that struggle sharpens, it can spread to other people and even exacerbate the conflicts among the rulers, and strengthen the basis to push forward the whole dynamic toward revolution and fundamental change.

In this sort of situation, it is not always so easy to “put the genie back in the bottle”—not so easy to force the masses back into acceptance of “the way things are.” But that will still require a furious struggle—to not be put “back in the bottle” and to continue pushing things forward. Nobody knows the course things will take in the next days and weeks. But the contradictions in Mexico are very deep and right now they are very sharp. It is certainly in the interests of the masses in Mexico and people around the world for the rejection of the status quo to continue and grow, no matter what AMLO and his leading core decide to do. This is a struggle that people everywhere should support and draw lessons and inspiration from. □

CT.

THE WORLD CAN'T WAIT!

5TH

DRIVE OUT THE BUSH REGIME!

A DAY OF MASS RESISTANCE

ENDLESS WARS! TORTURE! KATRINA! THEOCRACY! BRING THIS TO A HALT!

WE MUST ACT NOW—THE WORLD'S FUTURE IS IN OUR HANDS

The Bush Regime is radically remaking society very quickly in a fascist way and for generations to come. There is not going to be some magical “pendulum swing”. A regime that steals elections and believes they’re on a “mission from God” will not go without a fight. Accommodation and politics as usual has proved to be a disaster. But there is a way. On October 5th, join us in saying to the world: This Regime does not represent us and we will not stop until we drive it out! Walk out of school! Refuse to work! No shopping on October 5th! Come to mass demonstrations across the country and march through the streets calling on millions more to join us in repudiating this criminal regime with the mobilization of massive political opposition!

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