Mexican President AMLO to Visit Trump, both Hope for a Boost Amid Crises

written by Dan La Botz | July 5, 2020

This article was written for L'Anticapitaliste, the weekly newspaper of the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) of France.

Failing at home, Mexico's president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) will visit U.S. President Donald Trump this week to celebrate the new North American trade pact. Each hopes to get a political boost from the visit. That seems unlikely, especially for AMLO. Most Mexicans and Mexican Americans loathe Trump who has called them "rapists and murderers" and wanted Mexico to pay for a wall to keep them out of the United States. Yet AMLO acts as accomplice to Trump's anti-immigration policies.

Mexico today has over a quarter of a million COVID cases and has lost 30,000 lives, half of these in Mexico City. Like the United States, Mexico failed to take adequate measure to deal with the virus because its president didn't take the virus seriously. In March he told the Mexican people not to be afraid of the virus. "Live life as usual," he said. "If you're able and have the means to do so, continue taking your family out to eat … because that strengthens the economy." Cases appear to be peaking, but Mexico is not doing a great deal of testing and hundreds and possibly thousands of deaths from COVID-19 have gone unreported.

While the government's policies have been ineffective, there was a shutdown between March and June and more than 12 million workers lost their jobs. The International Monetary Fund predicts that Mexico's economy will shrink by ten percent this year, the biggest decline since the 1930s. Mexico's stimulus program is quite weak, offering no support to large, medium, or small businesses and providing loans only to micro-businesses or the self-employed. AMLO's programs have done little to staunch the economic bleeding.

Gang violence also remains out of control. On Wednesday, July 1, gangsters from a drug cartel stormed a drug rehabilitation center in Irapuato, killing 26 people. Since Mexican President Felipe Calderón unleashed the government's war on drugs in 2006, some 250,000 people have been killed and another 60,000 have disappeared, most of whom can be presumed to be dead. Such killings continue at the rate of about 3,000 per month. AMLO had originally talked about dealing with crime through social programs, but then decided to create a new militarized police force called the National Guard. Cooperating with Trump, AMLO has used the Guard to keep Central Americans and others from entering Mexico en route to the United States. During AMLO's presidency the killings have not stopped.

Among the many murders in Mexico are the femicides, the murders of women. Mexico recorded 1,000 last year, only the latest among thousands of others over the last thirty years in states throughout Mexico. In February Mexicans were horrified to learn to learn of the brutal murders of two more. Twenty-five-year-old Ingrid Escamilla was knifed, skinned and disemboweled, and seven-year old Fátima Cecilia Aldrighett was kidnapped from her school, her body later found in a plastic bag. Women took up the issue of femicide on March 8, International Women's Day. Yet April proved to be the deadliest month in the last five years with a record 267 women killed. AMLO has not seemed concerned with the issue of violence against women, which goes on unabated.

Mexicans are protesting all of these conditions. Health workers have protested in several states, demanding an increase in the government health budget. Doctors are threatening a national protest for August 1. The Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations (FIOB), active both in Mexico and the United States, is organizing protests against AMLO's visit to Trump. Often described as a leftist, AMLO, two years into a six-year term, has failed to defend the Mexican people against disease, unemployment, or crime. And he fawningly deferred to Trump on the immigration issue. Not surprising then today 58 percent of the people don't support him. The Mexican left criticizes AMLO's austerity policies and calls for taxing the rich to pay for the crisis.