

## **Mexico: On the attacks on the EZLN - “The issue is now the position to take in the face of the new Government’s policy”**

Thursday 24 January 2019, by [SANCHEZ Edgard](#) (Date first published: 15 January 2019).

**At the beginning the year a series of attacks, some slanderous, were unleashed against the EZLN following its New Year statements, especially those by Commander Moises, concerning the projects of the new Mexican government, headed by Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO). [1]**

In a conversation on WhatsApp I answered the comments of a comrade who sought to defend the government of AMLO against the criticism of the EZLN. The wave of attacks against the EZLN continues and, although different from those of the person I refer to, I find it useful for the debate that is being generated to reproduce here what I said rapidly on social networks. The criticisms of those who are “more Catholic than the Pope” contrast with the statements by López Obrador himself in Tabasco, recognizing the right of the EZLN to have an opinion, but at the same time responding that the megaproject goes on and nothing will stop it. With its statements on its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the EZLN is not “debunking electoral triumph.” The issue is no longer the election campaign, but the position you take in the face of the new Government’s policy.

In this case, as we in the PRT explained and discussed a couple of weeks ago at our cadre school, we oppose the typical social liberal policy of the “progressive” governments that support extractivism as a rule and thereby the dispossession and division of indigenous peoples. This is what the projects of the Maya train and the Transístmico (a reworking of the Puebla Panamá plan backed by cabinet head Alfonso Romo, as well as other bourgeois sectors inside and outside the new government) represent.

These projects also coincide with the interests of Yankee imperialism and Trump’s government, to effectively draw the border with the US farther south, down to the isthmus, practically raising the Wall, or the curtain or filter as AMLO calls it, there, with the excuse of offering work, cheap labour, so that Mexicans and Central Americans don’t have to go to the US.

It is not the EZLN that seeks to divide the exploited by organizing resistance against the neoliberal megaprojects of the new government. These megaprojects involve dividing the communities and therefore the exploited. While in the Zócalo they give AMLO’s baton to indigenous groups of the PRI and the CNC in folkloric ceremonies, it is the new government that is seeking to divide and discredit the EZLN, the National Indigenous Congress and our candidate Marichuy. As in any other movement, there are political differences in the indigenous movement. There are indigenous groups who support the PRI, a product of the indigenous politics that derives from Cardenismo (a project for which AMLO worked in Tabasco in the INI (Instituto Nacional Indigenista), when he was active in the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) at the time of Echeverría (PRI President from 1970 to 1976) and there are also indigenous groups that have been defined on the left (from the PC and the PRT in Guerrero and Oaxaca) but also Zapatismo since 1994, with the CNI (Congreso Nacional

Indígena). By appealing to the indigenous PRI in the Zócalo, AMLO does not “stain his anti-capitalist credentials”, as Ramón says in relation to the EZLN, but seeks to beat the anti-capitalists by showing that on the indigenous issue he also has the PRI. When the EZLN responds to the new government, it acts as a defender of the interests of its social base and indigenous peoples.

We have insisted therefore that the central axis of the socialist and anti-capitalist left must, as always, be political independence with respect to the new government. It is regrettable that former militants of the left acrimoniously join the disqualifying and immobilizing campaigns of Morena and the Lopezobradoristas. [2] That the defeat of the PRIAN was inflicted by 30 million voters with the illusion of ending neoliberalism, should force us to act consequently pushing and supporting the mass struggles in that direction and not subordinating to the rhythms, commitments and interests of a progressive government with a social-liberal policy (which will develop some welfare policies, at the same time as the mega-neoliberal mega-projects). [3]

As the event of the new government is explained in the framework of the deep crisis of the regime, it was accepted by the ruling classes as a way of salvation to avoid a violent and radical breakdown, and it is clear that we have entered a phase of sharpening of the class struggle and frequent Bonapartist turns by the new government. The above does not mean as the Lopezobradoristas suggest that the line should be to support the government. On the contrary today political independence with respect to the government is necessary to continue developing the struggles and eventually achieve triumphs not by the will of AMLO but by the thrust of these struggles. The struggle is what, even through Bonapartist turns, forces the government to recognize the correctness of our demands.

Trotsky, during his exile in Mexico, at the time of the founding of the Confederation of Mexican Workers, self-critically insisted that the experience of “War Communism” showed that the trade unions (and today we can extend this to the whole movement) must be independent of the government, of all governments, even of “a revolutionary government” (which anyway is not the case with the AMLO government). The left in Mexico, which since the 1970s has learned the strategic nature of the struggle for union democracy and independence, now contains some who reject the supposed dogmatism of the “old left”, forgetting the necessary independence with respect to the government, even believe that trade union democracy can be achieved with government support.

I apologize for repeating the arguments that you have surely read in the recent resolutions of the PRT and that were explained and discussed in the cadre school in December, but it is necessary again confronted with the wave of attacks by Lopezobradoristas and their fellow travellers against those who, like the EZLN, dare to criticize the new government’s policy. Worse yet to disqualify the critics by presenting them as allies of the right. An old recourse of the Stalinists and the PRI. In the epoch of Echeverría they said that the dilemma was “Echeverría or fascism”. Surely the phrase is remembered by people like Ignacio Ovalle, private secretary of the LEA and now in the ranks of Morena, or Porfirio Muñoz Ledo who was then the President of the PRI. Reissuing the slogan as “AMLO or fascism” faced with the advance of the far right, as the case of Bolsonaro in Brazil shows, is a mistaken analysis sacrificing the necessary independence with respect to this type of progressive government.

The extreme right has advanced not simply by its own energy but by the limitations, errors or the failure of progressivism. The corrupt orchestrated the removal of Dilma Rousseff; accusing her of being corrupt. But where did the right-wing Temer come from? He was the vice-president with President Dilma. It was because the PT made a broad alliance to win elections, even with right-wing parties, such as Temer’s. The serpent’s egg for “betrayal” or revenge was already in the PT government. It was Temer who succeeded in dismissing Dilma and then imprisoning Lula. In Mexico there is no longer the figure of vice president. Now there is a Chief of Cabinet. Who? What interests

does the Mexican Temer Alfonso Romo represent – including in Chiapas? [4]

Bolsonaro's triumph involved a far right and evangelical minority winning by denouncing corruption and the failure of the PT. Evangelicals were also in the minority and practically unknown on the political terrain in Mexico until the irresponsible policy of alliances of AMLO projected them, via the PES, to the forefront with many deputies and senators. The snake's egg is there. That is why the "AMLO or fascism" binary is wrong. It is vital to maintain political independence with respect to the new government. Do not let the right wing capitalize on the errors, limitations or the politics of the new government, as the right did in Brazil. To remain silent in the face of errors or the neoliberal policy of progressivism is what helps the right. Criticism does not play the game of the right, silence, the subordination of the left to the new government clears the way for the right. In any case, the alternative expression of the anti-capitalist or socialist left will be necessary.

We welcome the criticism and denunciations by the EZLN. We share opposition to extractive and neoliberal megaprojects. And our opposition and arguments are not those of the right but of the anti-capitalist left and the interests of indigenous peoples and communities. So, we must continue in all struggles: offering a critique and opposition from the left, independent of the government and not leaving the field open to the demagoguery of the right. This is the position that we, the PRT, have.

**Edgard Sanchez**

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## Footnotes

[1] Telesur 1 January 2019 ["Zapatistas Warn Mexico: 'We Won't Back AMLO Projects'"](#).

[2] Morena Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (National Regeneration Movement) is the political party founded by AMLO in 2014.

[3] The PRI and the PAN (Partido Acción Nacional), were the two major parties who alternated in power. The term PRIAN indicates a feeling that they have morphed into one indistinguishable bloc of the elites.

[4] See ESSF (article 47076), [Statement: Organizing resistance in Brazil and international solidarity against neofascist Bolsonaro's government](#).