

Bolivia votes for socialism

written by Cheryl LaBash
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Bolivia's Movement toward Socialism (MAS) victory in the Oct. 18 election

overturned a U.S.-backed coup. Eleven months ago, false charges of electoral irregularities and subsequent death threats drove MAS leader and Indigenous Bolivian President Evo Morales into exile. In his place, Jeanine Áñez Chávez unleashed violent repression against the Indigenous people protesting the takeover of their country by the international extractivism imperialists. The Organization of American States — with the U.S. and its junior imperialist partner, Canada — spearheaded the political attack on Bolivia, unleashing right-wing street attacks. A religious fundamentalist Christian, Áñez raised again the historical specter of Spanish conquistadors with a bible in one hand and terror in the other.

The Iranian news agency FARS asked Cheryl LaBash, a writer for Struggle-La Lucha, for her reaction to the MAS victory. Below are her brief answers to their questions.

Q: People could choose a U.S.-backed ruler in the recent election. Critics argue that with the U.S. support, they could expect more prosperity. What did make Bolivians elect Socialists back to power?

Cheryl LaBash: Capitalism cannot deliver prosperity to the majority of the people of Bolivia, only for a few working to enrich global corporate and financial interests, particularly mineral extraction. The Bolivian people rejected the U.S.-backed coup in the streets under heavy repression and now once again at the ballot box.

Indigenous leader Evo Morales led a fundamental transformation in the lives of poor workers and subsistence farmers. Not insignificantly, UNESCO declared Bolivia free of illiteracy in 2008, including in the many Indigenous languages, using the Yo Sí Puedo [Yes I Can] method developed by Cuba.

Bolivia joined Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Ecuador and others in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-Peoples Trade Treaty. This formation, known as ALBA-TCP, and PetroCaribe demonstrated that cooperative, respectful and fair

international trade could uplift the social, political and economic lives of the people who suffered from imperialist neoliberal schemes forced on them. The racist anti-Indigenous coup leader Áñez is an echo of the right-wing movement in the U.S. that uses religion, racism and xenophobia to insure that the imperialists prosper at the expense of the masses of people.

Q: What do we learn about the conflicting interests of the U.S. and people in the Latin American countries from the recent election?

CL: Like the oil-rich countries of West Asia, the people of Latin America and the Caribbean have suffered greatly from the impact of imperialism, headed by the U.S., coveting the natural resources that can be transformed into wealth for a few. It has meant coups, military dictatorships, repression and poverty when imperialism succeeded, and economic warfare and sanctions for countries that insist on independence and sovereignty. It is the U.S. rulers that declared in the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 that Latin America was its “backyard.” Bolivia once again joins Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua in this vote for independence and sovereignty. Working people of the United States do not benefit from U.S. military and economic world domination but are also exploited and repressed.

Q: The Organization of American States was the only entity which declared election fraud against Morales last year. How do you see the hand of the U.S. behind the international organizations (like OAS) to interfere in the domestic affairs of Latin America?

CL: In 1890, the first International Conference of American States concluded in Washington, D.C. The OAS headquarters is still in Washington, D.C., just blocks from the White House, and receives most of its funding from the U.S. After Cuba gained its sovereignty in the 1959 Revolution, the U.S. pushed the OAS to exclude Cuba in 1962 and then required member states to break relations. Only Mexico resisted this isolation order. The OAS is a regional tool to impose U.S. foreign policy expressed in

the Monroe Doctrine.

In the Bolivian election in 2019, the OAS issued statements and reports questioning the election, legitimizing the right-wing campaign against then-President Evo Morales. In 2010, 33 countries, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), formed an intergovernmental region bloc independent of the U.S. and Canada, which are not included. In Bolivia and Venezuela, the OAS continues to promote the U.S. agenda to overthrow progressive, people-oriented governments.

With the U.S. election less than a week away and with much effort at voter suppression evident and the possibility of a stolen election like the one in 2000, there are no OAS election observers in the U.S. The U.S. is a member state. Why is the OAS not questioning this presidential election?

