

Paraguay: Change is still to come; The first year of Fernando Lugo's government

Fernando Lugo

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August 14, 2009 – Asunción — The anniversary of the first year of Fernando Lugo's government coincided with a five-day national protest (August 10-15) organised by the United Popular Space (Espacio Unitario Popular, EUP), a coming together of many social organisations and left parties [1], with the support of figures from diverse political sectors, including the governor of the department of San Pedro, Jose Pakova Ledesma, from the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico, PLRA). [2]

Marches and peaceful demonstrations were held in different parts of the country, and the capital, during the days of action. This bloc of organisations is demanding that Lugo comply with his electoral commitments, especially in regards to agrarian reform. It is also demanding that he attack with particular harshness the right-wing bloc that has a majority in both houses of Congress and which puts a break on social projects and seeks to legitimise repression against popular demands through new laws.

The response to these mobilisations by the mass media is scandalous. It distorts and attacks the leaders of the EUP, linking them to all types of crimes (closeness to kidnappers, to drug traffickers etc.). Nevertheless, this aggressive attitude demonstrates the weakness of a backward dominant class that, after losing the political hegemony it held via the Colorado Party (Partido Colorado), which was in power for 60 years uninterrupted, does not have a political party it can use to truly represent its interests and maintain the structures that allowed it to accumulate wealth. It is clear that the coup in Honduras has unleashed the possibility of deepening its virulent and daily attacks against the Lugo government, which sustains itself in an equilibrium among turbulent waters.

Lugo's electoral victory was facilitated by the decomposition and crisis of the relations between party and dominant classes, as well as the (extremely) broad alliance he was able to achieve. But Lugo "reached government, not power", and now has to confront a range of organisations that – although with contradictions – see the reactionary right as their principal enemy while at the same time demanding that Lugo carry out of his program to change social policy and transform judicial power, and that Congress approve laws that favour the people. They are also demanding that a stop be put to the poisoning of the population through the indiscriminate use of toxic agricultural chemicals. Lugo, the ex-bishop, has until now had a populist discourse, but he has still not carried out the reforms that the country needs to come out of backwardness and advance towards development and sovereignty.

The United Popular Space is a recent experience that aims to construct unity of strategic purpose in the face of the current balance of forces, with the objective of constructing a popular bloc through mobilisation and organisation, as weapons of struggle. But this task is not easy and a first step was the August 10-15 days of action, regardless of the results, were part of a process of necessary accumulation [of political forces], with the limitations and divergences that exist. In Paraguay, the great battles in the democratic camp are only beginning and the key force is the people.

P.S.

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<http://links.org.au/node/1226>

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Footnotes

[1] The P-MÁS (Party of the Movement Towards Socialism) and the Tekojoja party form part of the government. The PCPS and the Paraguayan Communist Party are not part of the government, but called for a vote for Lugo in a joint signed document.

[2] Lugo was elected president on April 20, 2008, but did not formally take office until August 15.