

US and Mexican governments agree on new Central American “Marshall Plan”

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On Tuesday, the US and Mexican governments announced a new Central American development plan aimed at stemming the tide of migrants to the US. The new program, dubbed a new “Marshall Plan”—invoking the US program for reviving post-World War II European capitalism—will reportedly focus on infrastructure efforts in the “Northern Triangle” countries of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

The Mexican government will invest \$25 billion over five years, while the US will contribute \$5.8 billion to the Northern Triangle and \$4.8 billion to Mexico. The US funds will not constitute new money, but will merely be reallocated from existing aid efforts. There will be an additional \$4.5 billion from new loans that will be managed through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and will have to be repaid.

The plan was announced by a joint US-Mexican statement weeks after it was initially proposed by the new government of “leftist” President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO). “Perhaps it is not like the Marshall Plan, but it is similar in the scope of what we are addressing in terms of the amount of effort that needs to be done, the largest investment in recent years, in the three Central American countries of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras,” stated Mexican foreign minister Marcelo Ebrard.

Layers of the US ruling elite see AMLO’s plan as a convenient way to refurbish the “human rights” credentials of the US government, while committing the US only to further loans that will fatten the pockets of finance capital.

The deal could also result in a so-called “Remain in Mexico” policy between the US and Mexico that would further restrict asylum requests in the US. This would entail naming Mexico a “safe third country” under

asylum law with the aim of denying immigrants seeking asylum entry to the US, as they could “safely” remain in Mexico.

A continuation of the deportation policies of the former Peña Nieto administration would quickly discredit the “leftist” AMLO. The Mexican Commission for Assistance to Refugees (Comar) currently has a backlog of more than 48,000 refugee applications. According to the agency, the number of refugee applications received four years ago was about 2,000. This year is expected to close with more than 26,000 from migrants from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala.

The “Marshall Plan” does not represent a departure from the draconian anti-immigrant policies of the Trump administration. Trump continues to utilize the issue of immigration to foment a fascistic movement based on xenophobia and chauvinism. Nearly 15,000 children remain detained in camps across the US under horrific conditions, which last week led to the death of seven-year-old Jackeline Caal. Trump has continued his threats to shut down the federal government unless a border wall with Mexico is funded in the next appropriations bill and has provocatively tweeted that Mexico is already paying for the wall as a result of the new trade deal between the US, Canada and Mexico.

There is widespread popular support for immigrants. Deeply angered by the anti-immigrant attacks by the Trump administration, millions have rallied in support of the thousands of caravan members who have correctly labeled themselves as international workers. The struggles of Central American workers and peasants strike a cord with conditions facing workers in every country, including a lack of social services, deep inequality and limited economic opportunities.

To this must be added the growing and correct

sentiment among the population that the US government, through its support of destabilizing coups that have fueled poverty and violence, bears primary responsibility for the intolerable conditions that Central American immigrants are seeking to escape.

The “Marshall plan” will do nothing to substantially change the circumstances of Central American migrants. From the side of the Central American and Mexican bourgeoisies, the goal of the plan is to present a stop-gap measure aimed at defusing unbearable conditions that could lead to political convulsions throughout the region. The AMLO administration also sees this as a way to develop the south of Mexico as a low-wage platform for transnational corporations that would be staffed with cheap Central American labor.

The US and Mexico will hold a “business summit” in the first three months of 2019 for corporations interested in participating in the plan. The offering of Central American raw materials and human resources up to the claws of finance capital is nothing new. After all, the region has suffered decades of US-backed dictatorships for the very purpose of guaranteeing the profits of corporations.

The original Marshall Plan was carried out in order to stabilize Europe after the Second World War. This was not done out of the charity of American capitalism, but to save the discredited European governments from the threat of socialist revolution and with the understanding that the economic advance of the US depended on the expansion of the world economy as a whole.

US and world capitalism have long since lost the capacity to carry out projects like the Marshall Plan. Now, the ruling elites in every country are responding to the threat of renewed financial crisis through economic nationalism and by scapegoating workers in other countries for conditions caused by the capitalist system itself.

The entrenched poverty facing the region cannot be addressed without eliminating the domination of profit over every aspect of life. At best, the current program will provide a few billion dollars for pre-approved projects that will go largely into the pockets of US, Mexican and Central American capitalists. What is objectively needed by the masses are tens of trillions to fund a massive public works program, democratically controlled by the international working class. This must be accompanied by a policy of open borders to

guarantee that workers, who as a class are already international, can live and work wherever they choose with full citizenship rights.



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