

To Save Mexico, Let Us Bury NAFTA Now

This statement was issued on Dec. 4 by Marivilia Carrasco, president of the Ibero-American Solidarity Movement (MSIA) in Mexico.

Wherever one looks, discord, decomposition and slavery go hand in glove with the British system of free trade; on the other hand, harmony, freedom, wealth and strength grow in all of those countries which resist that system. —Henry Carey, 1859

With the launching of the new phase of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that goes into effect in 2003, under which Mexico will eliminate what remains of protectionist tariffs for its agricultural sector, new and totally justified protests have taken place, on the part of widely varied groups of agricultural producers and political circles in the country. The majority of these reactions denounce the protectionism and subsidies of the United States and Canada, and call for a moratorium on the implementation of this new outrageous phase of NAFTA. That, however, will not solve the problem.

The problem is neither the subsidies nor the protectionism of the United States and Canada; nor is the answer to try to gain some time so as to postpone the death of the Mexican farmer. The problem is the entirety of the free trade policy on a world scale!

Precisely what the MSIA and U.S. Presidential pre-candidate and economist Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. warned of, some ten years ago, has come to pass: NAFTA is a euphemism for creating an “Auschwitz”—a concentration camp of slave labor—on the southern border of the United States. The coming phase will drive several million new unemployed and starving Mexicans into trying to cross the border into the United States—where the demand is to open the borders to free trade, but to shut them to migration.

All of NAFTA Must Be Repudiated

To survive, it is urgent to recognize NAFTA as the cruel farce that it is, along with all the free trade policies that would be imposed under a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and similar instruments around the world, such as the Maastricht accords in Europe. Fraudulent statistics of Mexico’s supposed success have been fabricated in order to similarly swindle the other countries of Central and South America, and the entire world. Increased Mexican exports, the ostensible proof of the “success” of NAFTA, are an economic fraud, since in both the countryside and in the assembly industries

known as “*maquiladoras*,” the increase in those exports is not the result of a strengthening of the real national economy, but of the permanent looting of labor power, agricultural products, and the country’s natural resources. They do not mean an increase in the general productive capacity of the country, but a mechanism for keeping Mexico open to an infernal dance of looting, determined by speculation on the financial markets. It is like hastening the hemorrhaging of a dying patient.

After eight years under NAFTA, with the elimination of economic protection barriers, elimination of subsidies for national agriculture, and so forth, the effects are devastating, both for agriculture and for national industry. Despite supposed protection, production of basic grains, such as rice, wheat, and corn, among others, has collapsed in per-capita physical terms.

Take the case of rice: Imports represent 300% of national production, and per-capita national production fell 60%. Look at wheat: The country imports more than it produces, whereas in the early 1990s, imports only represented 20% of national wheat production. Per-capita production has collapsed between 20% and 30%. Corn: Although we still produce more than we export, imports have grown at a faster rate than national production, and it is a fact that imports are slowly displacing production of this basic product.

It is impossible to continue to hide the fact that all the international free trade agreements are in a state of collapse. The Maastricht treaties in Europe, for example, are wreaking havoc with national economies, and European governments are under tremendous pressure to halt plans to completely eliminate tariff barriers for agriculture and other sectors. Romano Prodi, president of the European Union Commission, recently labelled the so-called monetary “Stability Pact” of the Maastricht treaties “stupid”; the description was endorsed by other members of the European Commission and European Parliament, who noted that the treaties have weakened their nations even further, and have had a very negative effect on employment.

From the very beginning, the purpose of NAFTA was to destroy any possibility of Mexico’s sovereign development, and to subject the country to the vilest looting. After the order of the Trilateral Commission, issued by Zbigniew Brzezinski, to prevent “a Japan south of the [U.S.] border”—a reference to development programs attempted by the José López Portillo government in the late 1970s and early 1980s—NAFTA was constituted as the necessary means to subject Mexico to the designs of globalization and its policies of looting and speculation, for the exclusive purpose of guaranteeing payments on the usurious foreign debt, under IMF policies. . . .

We are creating, together with political forces in Argentina, Brazil, and other nations of the continent, a world forum in defense of the sovereign nation-state, and for a just new international financial system, which we have baptized the Guadalajara Forum, with the certainty that the people will have to assume responsibility in defense of our nation-states.