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The Peruvian Left Unites Once Again
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After 24 years, the Peruvian left has, once again, regrouped in a new coalition, the Frente Amplio de Izquierda (FAI), through which it will participate in the 2014 municipal and regional elections and the 2016 presidential balloting.

On June 4, at a tribute to the leftist leader and congressional deputy Javier Diez Canseco on the one-month anniversary of his death, leftist organizations promised to make the legislator's challenge to them—a united left—a reality. On June 26, six leftist organizations announced the formation of the FAI.

"We address our people at a moment of sorrow and, at the same time, hope. The life of compañero Javier Diez Canseco—a long-time leader of our political tradition—leaves us a lesson and a challenge: the lesson of a clean trajectory in the commitment to and the struggle for social transformation and against corruption; the challenge of the unity of all the left to bring together the democratic forces that long for a new Peru," said the heading of the public statement announcing the formation of the new coalition.

"We are promoting the formation of a very important, unified, and broad-based political entity that brings together political parties, leaders and members of movements and social organizations, and thousands of citizens as a real alternative of government for a change in democracy. The only ones for whom there is no room in this project are those whose hands are stained with blood and corruption," said the statement.

The coalition includes Fuerza Social (FS), the party of Lima Mayor Susana Villarán; Tierra y Libertad (TyL); the Partido Comunista Peruano (PCP); the Partido Socialista (PS), in which Diez Canseco was an activist; the collective Ciudadanos por el Cambio (CxC); and Movimiento de Afirmación Social (MAS).

"This unity is emerging 24 years after Izquierda Unida (1980-1989). Not only is it unity with electoral aims, it is a long-term political project," Julio Castro Gómez, PS secretary-general, told the press.

Of the six political organizations that make up the FAI, only TyL is recognized by the Jurado Nacional de Elecciones (JNE), and it has therefore put its registration at the disposition of the FAI. The Peruvian left today represents less than 3% of the popular vote nationally, after having been, in the 1980s, the second-largest political force in Peru.

Marco Arana, an ex-priest and TyL leader, recognized the diverse positions among members of the new coalition. "A debate exists within the FAI about investments. We agree that they are necessary for development and growth. The differences are in whether this is done based on the primary-export model. Tierra y Libertad’s emphasis is on diversification of economic activities in the country with limits on extractive activities where they lack a social license and cause high environmental damage," said Arana in an interview with the daily El Comercio.

Since the end of 2011, Arana, along with other local leaders of the northern Andean department of Cajamarca, including its regional president Gregorio Santos, has actively opposed the Conga mining
project, which is being developed in basin headwaters. The project, which will transfer waters from the lakes to artificial reservoirs (NotiSur, Dec. 16, 2011, and Feb. 24, 2012), is being carried out by Yanacocha mining company, owned by US-based Newmont Mining, Peru’s Buenaventura, and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC).

The FAI supports environmental defense in Cajamarca and other regions, a new economic policy that combines growth with well-being for all, a more just distribution of wealth, respect for human and labor rights and the rights of indigenous, Amazonian, and Afrodescendent peoples, defense of food security, and energy sovereignty. It stands against corruption and for an independent foreign policy that prioritizes South American and Latin American integration.

**Estrangement from Humala accentuated**

On July 4, the FAI held its first action against the administration of President Ollanta Humala; it was the only political group that participated in a massive mobilization rejecting measures supported by the central government.

But what has most put the FAI in open and dramatic opposition to the president were Humala's statements to the Spanish daily El País in which he called the Peruvian left "rigid" and said that, because of its mistakes—in contrast with the left that has taken power elsewhere in Latin America—"in Peru, the most it could achieve was the mayoral post in Lima."

"Participants [in the electoral coalition Gana Perú] who were leftists and whom we put there did not last six months in the administration; they left, and now they are with the right," said Humala. "One of the left's strategic mistakes was that it abandoned the banner of social justice, and that is what we have taken up in nationalism," in reference to the Partido Nacionalista Peruano (PNP), his political party.

When Humala said that the left was now with the right, he referred to the alliance between the FAI and Acción Popular (AP) blocs in Congress.

In a public letter addressed to Humala, the CxC responded: "The left, since the time of Amauta José Carlos Mariátegui, has never abandoned the social justice banner. Those who played a key role in preparing the ideological foundation for the Partido Nacionalista were persons on the left. It was people on the left, from Ciudadanos por el Cambio, who were put in charge of preparing the campaign's governing plan."

Further on in the letter, CxC reminded Humala that in the 2011 campaign he appointed five representatives from the left (whom he now calls "rigid") to travel to different regions to present his Plan de Gobierno de la Gran Transformación. The left also wrote the administration's subsequent plan, the Hoja de Ruta (roadmap).

CxC also said that it was not true that leftists quit because "they couldn't stand" the pressure or because they wanted a bigger share of power. "We left because authoritarianism and repression of the popular movement took precedence over dialogue and consensus, which was the commitment that we made with you and with the Peruvian people."

However, Humala got rid of the leftists after the crisis of late 2011, the result of the social conflict surrounding the Conga project that led to the resignation of the first prime minister Salomón Lerner.
and Humala's subsequent Cabinet shuffle that marked the left's separation from the center of power (NotiSur, Jan. 20, 2012).

Political analyst and historian Antonio Zapata, in his column in La República, asks, "Who is the enemy of the popular coalition that is looking to be built?" And he responds, "The answer is the corrupt state, normally accommodating to the powerful and abusive to the poor. That state has lasted too long. On the eve of the bicentennial (2021), the left is looking for a refounding of the republic and the devising of a new social pact."

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