



Interview with Juan Barahona, leader of the Honduran Resistance

By **Pedro Fuentes**, Tegucigalpa

October 1, 2009 -- “We will not stop. We will continue to be against the coup until the last day they are in power,” Juan Barahona said in an interview at the headquarters of STYBIS, the beverage workers’ trade union. Barahona is the principal leader of the resistance, together with Carlos Reyes, president of the trade union, a close comrade of Barahona and an independent candidate for the next presidential election. Reyes is injured and cannot participate, which makes Juan appear to be most visible face of the resistance.

Barahona is 55 years’ old and began his activism in 1975 in the student movement. In 1977 he joined the Communist Party of Honduras. He was active in the party until it was dissolved. It is worth recalling that the party dissolved itself following the fall of the Berlin Wall. But this did not stop Barahona being active. A large chunk of the cadres and activists of the Honduran CP were left without an organisation until they formed the Tendencia Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Tendency, TR) in 1995. TR formed following a meeting with El Salvadoran activists involved with the Tendencia Revolucionaria that was part of the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, FMLN) in El Salvador. The Tendencia Revolucionaria later left the FMLN as [TR claimed it] began to shift towards electoralism and opportunism.

Juan Barahona never rests. He was able to take time out for this interview in the offices of STYBIS, which is part of the Federation of Honduran Workers (FUT). Barahona is president of FUT and also president of SINTRAINA, the union organised in the National Agrarian Institute, which was occupied by its workers two days ago.

‘What we lost in the 1990s, we regained in 2000’

Barahona began the interview talking about this history and that of the Bloque Popular (Popular Bloc, BP), which was formed in 2000 and today is a decisive element in the resistance. The Bloque Popular represented the coming together of peasant unions in the FUT, and left parties and organisations, including the TR. The BP was the motor force behind the mobilisations that dominated the since 2000.

“In the 1990s, the struggle was extremely defensive. In the case of our union, SINTRAINA, in charge of relations between the government and the peasants, we were fired in 1993. We held a hunger strike in front of the gringo [US] embassy for 10 days,

which we halted after negotiations in which we were promised that we would be rehired. But they fired us again, which forced us to return to our hunger strike 20 days later, and there we won, they were forced to rehire us.

“Beginning in 2000, the situation changed. Since then the struggle has been against the neoliberal model and the system. Beginning that year, the FUT organised the Bloque Popular, together with peasant organisations, teachers and community activists, and since then the Bloque has been on the streets.”

This organisation was behind a number of big battles. They held road blockades and strikes. Last year they initiated a strike against corruption, “an exemplary movement which ended with road blockades across the whole country and which basically paralysed the country”. There was another general strike in August and October 2009, behind a 12-point platform that was presented to the government and negotiated with Mel [President Manuel Zelaya].”

“The National Resistance Front is a coalition between the Bloque Popular, UD (Unificación Democrática, Democratic Unification), union confederations and the popular sector of the Liberal Party that defends Mel. Here, we unite the majority of the people”, Juan Barahona explained.

“Honduras changed completely, and all of this will leave a very positive result; an organisation and a great experience. During these days of struggle [since the June 28, 2009, coup], the level of consciousness has greatly risen, much more than would in 100 days of classes about class struggle. There has been a parting of waters. This is a struggle between classes: on one side the exploited people, and on the other the capitalists, the large capitalists that dominate this country. Even the Liberal Party supporters that are part of the resistance understand it as such. It is very easy to explain this as a struggle of the poor against the rich, to put them all into the same group.”

The current situation

“We are faced with a complicated scenario. As the repression continues, now they are talking about negotiations. We, as the resistance, are in favour of participation in negotiations; we have not closed ourselves off to dialogue. We see that there are fissures in the regime. The visit by the deputies [MPs] from Brazil is important in supporting the presence of Zelaya in Brazil’s embassy. That the Organization of American States and the UN come as well is good. Until now they have done nothing because they are on the side of imperialism. We hope that they will now show some commitment. We are in favour of participating in negotiations, but at the same time we say to the coup regime that we will not stop, we will continue to be against the coup until the last day they are in power.

“Carlos Reyes is an independent [presidential] candidate of the resistance and the popular movement. If we participate or not (in the elections) is a question of [the coup regime] accepting certain conditions and with Zelaya [returned to] power. Depending on the situation we will study what we do. The future is ours, nothing will ever be the same in Honduras, the dispute for power is posed now and will continue to be posed afterwards. The resistance has the conditions to organise a political-social organisation to fight for power.

“We just received good news from the US. They have informed us that the dockers have decided to boycott the unloading of products from the *maquiladoras* [sweat shops] here. This is a good blow to the business owners. If it wasn't for the business owners and the right wing in Latin America, there would be no coup in Honduras.

“We are continuing to organise the resistance and continuing on the streets. Yesterday [September 30] we were dispersed but today we were back on the streets again; we marched to the US embassy, passing by the CORE [regional headquarters of the police], where the peasants who were kicked out of the INA are being held and finished up in the centre of the city.”

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