

Fascistic candidate Bolsonaro widens lead in Brazilian polls

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A week and a half after the stunning first round of Brazil's presidential elections, which nearly delivered an outright victory to the fascistic demagogue Jair Bolsonaro, who won 46 percent of the votes, polls are indicating he may get up to 60 percent in the October 28 run-off. He is currently polling a 20 percent lead over Workers Party (PT) candidate Fernando Haddad, who won 29 percent of the votes in the first round and now polls at 40 percent.

Given the crisis-ridden and frenzied character of this year's Brazilian electoral process, however, a surprise win by Haddad cannot be discounted, especially given that Bolsonaro was polling only 30 percent barely a week before the first round of balloting.

However shocking, Bolsonaro's lead was consistent with congressional election results. His Social Liberal Party (PSL) went from only one representative elected in 2014 to 52 elected on October 7, only four short of the PT. The PT's former allies in the Brazilian Democratic Movement—the party of President Michel Temer, who took office after PT President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment in 2016—and the former right-wing opposition, the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) each saw their caucuses cut in half. The PT also lost 20 percent of its seats in the 513-member House, with analogous results for each of these parties in the Brazilian Senate.

The breakdown of the vote leaves no doubt that the elections amounted to a referendum on the 14 years of PT rule, which culminated in the Rousseff impeachment and the right-wing Temer administration.

Bolsonaro won by at least 25 percentage points, and in some cases 40 points, over Haddad in every major industrial region and former PT stronghold, including the so-called ABC cities that form São Paulo's "red" industrial belt, where the PT was founded in 1980. He polled similar leads in all the centers of Brazil's oil extraction and refining industries in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, as well as in cities with histories of bitter union struggles and plant occupations well into the 1990s, such as the steelmaking center of Volta Redonda. Most stunningly, he scored similar

results in every single city in the state of Rio de Janeiro, which had in every presidential election since the end of the 1964-1985 US-backed military dictatorship, except for 1994, voted for the PT. A seven-term congressional representative from Rio de Janeiro, Bolsonaro was part of the PT's congressional alliance until the 2016 impeachment.

Bolsonaro's wide margins, however shocking, are chiefly the result of the absence of any left-wing alternative to the PT that could give voice to workers' grievances.

Developments since the first-round election have only exposed with stark clarity that, whoever wins the second round, Brazil will have the most right-wing government since the end of the dictatorship. A PT electoral victory will provide no defense for the working class against the pack of generals who have built up the fascistic Bolsonaro's demagogic campaign and have already opened the door, through Bolsonaro's running mate, Gen. Hamilton Mourão, for a "self-coup," that is, Bolsonaro calling out the army in face of widespread opposition.

Bolsonaro's victory has served to push the PT far to the right, while it covers up its real policies through its call for the formation of a "democratic front." This cynical operation is winning the unanimous support of Brazil's pseudo-left, which has tried to dress up the campaign of the PT, a right-wing bourgeois party, in the language of a "united front," utterly distorting the policy advanced by Leon Trotsky to mobilize the working class in struggle against fascism in the 1930s.

Barely a day after the elections, the PT's first action was to ditch the use of the color red to identify its campaign, essentially adapting itself to Bolsonaro's claim that workers have turned hostile to socialism. Instead, it announced that it would use the colors "green and yellow"—those of the Brazilian flag—making itself essentially indistinguishable from Bolsonaro's own campaign.

With stunning opportunism, it also ditched any reference to former PT President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, jailed on corruption charges. Haddad replaced Lula as the PT's presidential candidate after a protracted legal battle failed to

overcome a legal ban on the jailed former president running for office.

Initially, the PT believed that promoting Haddad as the standard bearer for Lula would guarantee the party victory. It advanced the slogan “Haddad as president and Lula in power.” In fact, however, polls indicated that a majority of the Brazilian population opposes Lula’s release from prison. Cutting its losses, the PT has now abandoned Lula.

In name of broadening its “anti-fascist front” the PT has increasingly pitched its appeal to big business. The party’s media mouthpiece *Brasil247* has repeatedly run pro-business headlines such as “Bolsonaro betrays the markets, denying privatizations” (October 10), “Germans speak of breaking strategic partnerships in case of Bolsonaro win” (October 13), and even celebrated French far-right leader Marine Le Pen’s criticism of Bolsonaro’s saying “extremely disagreeable things” about women and gays (also on October 13).

Since the first-round election, Haddad has met with Brazil’s National Bishops Confederation to sign a pact ditching any reference to the right to abortion in the PT’s electoral program. He further pitched a naked sectarian appeal to Catholic voters, expressing concern that the far right would target the Catholic Church and warning that evangelical leaders “have a power project.” The PT has also mobilized its supporters to flood social media with attacks on Bolsonaro for his three divorces and two sons born out of wedlock, while celebrating Haddad’s “30-year marriage” and highlighting the fact that his grandfather was a Greek Orthodox priest in Lebanon, the country from which his family immigrated to Brazil.

Last Sunday, PT spokesmen told the media that in order to win the support of the right-wing PSDB against Bolsonaro, Haddad had invited the PSDB’s neoliberal economist and former central bank president Pérlio Arida to join his government as a prospective finance minister.

In advance of the first-round election, the PT had embraced the demonstrations called under the banner of #elenao (#not him), which in late September drew hundreds of thousands into the streets against Bolsonaro, in spite of the narrow feminist outlook of its upper-middle-class leadership.

After an October 1 poll showed a 4 percent jump for Bolsonaro, the PT disassociated itself from #elenao with lightning speed, following the lead of a layer of demoralized and embittered pseudo-left professors who claimed that “feminists with exposed breasts” at the demonstration had provoked a “backlash” from workers, who had responded by moving toward Bolsonaro.

Brasil247 editor Mauro Lopes declared that “Lula and the PT didn’t make the mistake of putting fascism at the center

of the debate.” In other words, the best action in countering the far right was for Brazilians to vote and go home.

In the face of Bolsonaro’s vows that he will “end all activism” in Brazil in order to fix the economy, the PT’s answer is one of appeasement and treachery. The military and businessmen have made clear that the development of far-right movement targeting the masses is their goal. Their attack on the striking truckers in May, who were abandoned by the PT in order not to interfere with the party’s electoral maneuvers, and their support for Bolsonaro has made this abundantly clear.

This threat will only intensify after the elections, whether it brings to power a “democratic” government of the PT or Bolsonaro himself. In the face of this threat, the PT and its affiliated union federation, the CUT, are working day and night to tie the hands of the masses of workers.

This effort is supported by the entire pseudo-left in Brazil, including the Morenoites of the PSTU, who called for Rousseff’s impeachment in 2016. These organizations are under immense class pressure from their social base, a privileged petty-bourgeois layer that is embittered by the turn of the working class away from the PT and blames it for the rise of Bolsonaro.

After the first-round elections, meetings were called at the universities where leaflets were circulated on “how to talk to a Bolsonaro supporter” in another attempt to cover up for the PT’s betrayals.

Workers and youth seeking to fight the far right in Brazil must first and foremost reject the so-called “united front” with the PT, a bourgeois party that is chiefly responsible for the rise of the fascistic Bolsonaro and which demands the subordination of the working class to its right-wing capitalist program.



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