

The WSWS and the fight for revolutionary leadership in Latin America

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The WSWS is publishing the speeches delivered by leading members of the ICFI and contributors to the WSWS at the online rally held October 25 to welcome the relaunching of the WSWS that began with the postings of October 2, 2020. The remarks below were given by Tomas Castanheira, on behalf of the Socialist Equality Group in Brazil.

The launching of the new *World Socialist Web Site* is an important historical achievement of the Trotskyist movement that will play a critical role in the development of a revolutionary perspective for the working class in Brazil and Latin America.

The Latin American region is immersed in a deep social, political and economic crisis that has been sharply exacerbated by the COVID pandemic.

Although it represents 10 percent of the world's population, Latin America accounts for one-third of all COVID-19 deaths.

A horrifying death toll of more than 380,000 continues to rise, with several hundred losing their lives to the disease every day in countries like Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Colombia.

This is the result of the absolutely criminal policies of the capitalist governments in confronting the pandemic. Their homicidal response included the virtual nonexistence of testing; preventing workers from carrying out social distancing; unequipped and overcrowded hospitals and even official corruption, diverting resources destined to fight the pandemic into their own pockets.

At the same time, the pandemic has profoundly shaken Latin America's economies, which already suffered from six years of almost zero growth. The United Nation's Economic Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean predicted a 9 percent drop

in the region's GDP in 2020.

The total number of Latin Americans living in poverty is expected to rise from 186 million to 231 million. And 80 percent of the region's population will be forced to live on under 500 dollars per month.

Unemployment levels are skyrocketing. Official unemployment, according to the UN, will grow 5.4 percent in 2020 compared to 2019, an impact nine times higher than that recorded after the 2008 global financial crash.

In Brazil, for the first time, more than half of the working age population is unemployed. Among youth, the official unemployment rate is twice as high as in the rest of the population.

The young generation of the Latin American working class has absolutely no perspectives under capitalism.

On the other hand, the capitalist oligarchy is enjoying a bonanza, despite the decline in the real economy and the devastating conditions of the masses. The 73 billionaires in the region have accumulated almost \$50 billion just in the first five months of the pandemic, which represents \$10 billion more than Bolivia's total GDP in 2019.

These developments in the objective social crisis will have a major impact on the consciousness of hundreds of millions.

A recent article in *The Economist*, entitled "Latin America's new poor," expressed the deep concerns of the international ruling class over the developing political situation. It concluded: "The tens of millions of new poor have reasons for resentment. They may not accept their fate quietly. That is likely to shape the region's politics for years to come."

It is not whether they will "accept their fate"; they are already fighting back against it. The mass protests against social inequality that rocked countries like

Chile and Ecuador at the end of 2019 have strongly returned in recent months.

With their anger fueled by the disastrous COVID policies, millions of workers and youth have once again taken to the streets in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia, protesting against police violence, authoritarian regimes and their starvation policies. Militant working class strikes, from app delivery workers to nurses, have also spread throughout the region, from Mexico to Brazil.

The growing demand of the working masses for social justice cannot be met within the existing social relations.

As the ruling class as a whole shifts to the right, the remnants of the bourgeois national governments known as the “Pink Tide,” which rose to power in several Latin American countries in the 2000s, assume increasingly reactionary positions.

The government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico has, as much as the government of Brazil’s fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro, spread lies and disorganized the fight against the pandemic, while forcing workers into contaminated workplaces to generate profits and guarantee the privileges of the parasitic capitalist oligarchy.

Under the leadership of the Peronist Alberto Fernández, Argentina is emerging as a country with one of the fastest growing COVID-19 death rates as the disease spreads in the poor working class areas known as *villas miserias*.

In Brazil, the Workers Party (PT) rules states that are among the most severely impacted by the coronavirus, where they are now forcing the reopening of schools. Their response to the growing social crisis is an open orientation to the military and to nationalism.

Nothing different can be expected from a return to power by Morale’s MAS in Bolivia. Having been elected in the middle of rebellious protests by workers and peasants, they offer nothing more than starvation bonuses and a national unity pact with the fascists.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has waged a consistent struggle against any subordination of the working class to the national bourgeoisie, and has exposed the radical, and even socialist, rhetoric of figures like Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez as a fraudulent cover for their capitalist policies and accommodation to imperialism.

The WSWS has also demolished the petty-bourgeois

theories of the pseudo-left, including the heirs of the Pabloite United Secretariat, that have portrayed these governments as a new road to socialism.

This combat has been based on the principles defended by the International Committee of the Fourth International in its protracted fight against Pabloite revisionism.

The promotion by the Pabloites of a wide range of petty bourgeois and national bourgeois leaderships, such as Castroism and Peronism, as political substitutes for the proletariat and its party, the Fourth International, played a critical role in the betrayal of the revolutionary struggles of the Latin American working class in the latter half of the 20th century.

As we enter the period that the International Committee has scientifically described as “the decade of socialist revolution,” the central question of building a genuine revolutionary leadership in the working class depends on the assimilation of this record of struggle.

The WSWS, in its new and more advanced form, is going to interact with the developing struggles of workers and youth in Latin America, arming them with the historical experience and revolutionary program of the Trotskyist movement, connecting them to the global movement of the international working class, and laying the foundations for new sections of the ICFI in every country.



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