Brazil's PT and PSOL ally with right in face of Bolsonaro's coup threats

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16 September 2021

The threat of a fascist coup in Brazil emerged with blinding clarity on September 7 as demonstrations organized by President Jair Bolsonaro and his ultra-right supporters openly advocated the establishment of a dictatorial regime.

Only two days after the demonstrations, Bolsonaro issued a "Letter to the Nation" in which he declared his loyalty to democracy and stated, "I have never had any intention of attacking any of the Powers [of the Republic]." There could not be a more cynical statement.

Bolsonaro spent weeks systematically preparing the fascistic rallies, with his virulent threats of causing an "institutional rupture." In the speeches he gave on September 7 in front of crowds raising banners demanding a "military intervention," he openly threatened to shut down the judiciary system and declared that only God will remove him from power. The fascistic president stated in his "Letter" that "my words, sometimes forceful, resulted from the heat of the moment and from disputes that always aimed at the common good."

The document was written with the open assistance of former Brazilian President Michel Temer of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB). As Dilma Rousseff's right-wing vice president, he assumed the presidency in 2016 after the Workers Party (PT) president was impeached on trumped up charges.

The "Letter to the Nation" was hailed within the top echelons of the Brazilian state as a sign of reconciliation from Bolsonaro, and the havoc he has systematically promoted was immediately forgiven as a simple misunderstanding!

The president of the Congress, Arthur Lira of the Progressive Party (PP), declared, "Everything that happened and was 'off script,' we can frame as the fervor of politics, emotion of the moment ... the president of the republic rightly calms the tempers." For his part, the president of the Senate, Rodrigo Pacheco of the Democrats (DEM), said that the letter was "a positive sign from Bolsonaro" and "meets what most Brazilians expect."

The tactical retreat signaled by Bolsonaro's "Letter," however, can only be understood as an integral part of his dictatorial drive. Responding to a disappointed section of his fascistic supporters, who expected an immediate coup after the demonstrations, Bolsonaro declared, "Some want me to go there and slit everyone's throat. [But] today there is no isolated country, everyone is integrated into the world."

In other words, the consummation of a fascist military coup in Latin America's largest country requires the alignment of both internal and external factors, among which the support of US imperialism is fundamental. While the bourgeois media and the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left have cast the election of President Joe Biden in the US as a bulwark of Brazilian democracy, the attitude of the Democratic administration—the same party that backed the Brazilian military coup in 1964—is by no means defined.

From the internal perspective, the very response of the parliamentary leaderships to the president's cynical letter reveals a glaring degree of collusion with Bolsonaro's coup moves. This attitude permeates both the traditional bourgeois political parties and the military. While some of the generals brought into the government by Bolsonaro have appeared on the platforms at his fascist rallies, others have made unprecedented threats to the civilian regime, such as the joint statement by the military command warning that it will not accept "frivolous attacks" by the legislature on the Armed Forces.

Such developments demolish the claims that the Brazilian regime is supposedly shielded from coup threats by the self-regulatory mechanisms of state institutions, especially by the "constitutionalist" commitment of the Armed Forces. More deeply, they expose the putrefaction of the country's state only 35 years after the establishment of a civilian regime in the wake of more than two decades of brutal military dictatorship.

The ostensible opposition to Bolsonaro, headed by the PT and its pseudo-left satellites, has responded to this deep political crisis in the most politically criminal way. They are fighting to neutralize any independent political movement of the working class, while trying to convince the population

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that the only possible way to resist the dictatorial threats is by forging an agreement within the bourgeois state.

On September 12, various right-wing political parties and movements promoted a demonstration against Bolsonaro, seeking to capitalize on the growing popular hatred of the fascistic government and presenting themselves as alternatives. The demonstration was headed by the Free Brazil Movement (MBL) and Vem Pra Rua (Come Into the Streets), which originally emerged as organizers of the extreme right-wing demonstrations for the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff and supported the election of Bolsonaro. It also had the participation of São Paulo Governor João Doria of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB)—elected as a supporter of Bolsonaro, Ciro Gomes of the Democratic Labor Party (PDT), supporters of the Maoist Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), and the main Brazilian trade union federations, with the exception of the CUT, which is presided over by the PT.

This reactionary political march did not include the participation of the PT and its pseudo-leftist ally, the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL), only because, according to the presidents of both parties, they were not "invited" to "build" the demonstration together with the right wingers. Speaking to *Carta Capital*, the president of the PT, Gleisi Hoffmann, added that "we need to gather the democratic field and build together. The main thing is this. It's not an adhesion, but a joint path."

This political orientation, however, was rejected by elements within both parties. This was revealed by the action of São Paulo's state deputy Isa Penna, one of the PSOL's main parliamentary figures, who disobeyed the decision of her party and openly called for participation in the right-wing demonstrations against Bolsonaro.

Penna comes from the PSOL's Insurgency faction, which is affiliated with the Pabloite Unified Secretariat. She is a mono-thematic advocate of upper middle-class identity politics. Her actions express the desperation of sections of the petty bourgeoisie in the face of the disintegration of the Brazilian bourgeois regime and their swing to the right in response. Her speech during the demonstration made clear her politically criminal attempt to give a democratic cover to the spurious goals of the extreme right-wing forces. "Today I consider that they [MBL] are in the democratic camp. ... I know they are no longer that group that flirts with fascism," she stated.

The reactionary politics promoted by Penna, however, are not essentially different from the orientation advocated by her party. Behind organizational justifications for not joining the right-wing demonstrations, the PSOL and the PT are basing their actions on purely electoral calculations.

The PT and the PSOL intend to launch former President Lula da Silva as their presidential candidate in 2022 election, contesting Bolsonaro. Those who called for the September 12 demonstrations are hoping to advance a "third way" and have raised the banner of "Neither Lula, Nor Bolsonaro," with which neither the PT nor the PSOL can agree.

The PT's efforts to once again rule Brazil in the name of its national bourgeoisie have a purely reactionary character.

On the eve of September 7, Lula made a public statement in response to Bolsonaro's coup plans for that day, which by then had already been exposed. Speaking directly to the ruling class, to whom he is offering his services, Lula attacked Bolsonaro from the standpoint that his actions, "instead of uniting forces, stimulate division."

According to Lula, the "role of a president of the republic is to keep confidence alive in the present and in the future, to show that it is possible to overcome obstacles." He affirmed that as president, "especially on September 7 of such a difficult year" he would have made a speech to console the "families of the victims of the pandemic" and to present plans that "would give a lift of hope to the workers" affected by unemployment and hunger.

Lula is advocating that, in the face of the profound crisis of Brazilian capitalism— completely discredited before the working masses because of the obscene levels of social inequality, the growth of mass misery and the normalization of hundreds of thousands of deaths by COVID-19—what the bourgeoisie needs is a leader capable of mitigating and not deepening social divisions.

But the growth of social conflicts in Brazil and internationally is irrepressible. The rotten alliance proposed by the PT and the PSOL to hold together bourgeois rule can only result in the deepening of its crisis and growing threats of a fascistic coup.

The rise of such a virulent figure as Bolsonaro to the top post of the Brazilian state is not the cause but rather a symptom of the political crisis of the bourgeoisie. Its real roots, which are giving rise to similar fascistic forces around the world, lie in the deep crisis of the world capitalist system and the response of the ruling class to the international growth of the class struggle.

Only an independent movement of the working class, united under the program of international socialism can consistently answer the threat of dictatorship, mounting social inequality and the continued homicidal response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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