

May Day 2022: No to war and capitalist misery! For socialist revolution in Latin America!

Tomas Castanheira

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This is the report delivered by Tomas Castanheira to the 2022 International May Day Online Rally held on May 1. Castanheira is a leading member of the Socialist Equality Group in Brazil. To view all speeches, visit wsws.org/mayday.

On this historic May Day, the International Committee of the Fourth International calls upon the working class in all countries to join in an internationally unified struggle against imperialist war, the endless COVID-19 pandemic, and the real cause of them both: the capitalist system in putrefaction.

On behalf of the Socialist Equality Group in Brazil, I urge Brazilian and Latin American workers and youth to join this struggle. Only the collaboration between the working class in both the oppressed and imperialist countries, based upon the perspective of international socialism, can overthrow imperialism all over the world and guarantee the development of all humanity.

In recent years, in every country, the capitalist class has been exposed as totally incapable of continuing its rule over society. In Latin America, a region of extreme social inequality, the billionaires have multiplied amidst the pandemic while the masses have been thrown back decades in their living standards.

While it is estimated that the impact of the war in Ukraine on fuel and food prices will be responsible for keeping more than 10 million Latin Americans in poverty, the financial elite speculate on the profit opportunities opened up by the war. “There are several countries that import the same products from Russia and Ukraine as from Latin America and the Caribbean. Let’s take advantage of it,” declared the president of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

The illusions fostered by the representatives of the Latin American bourgeoisie and their media, that they are able to play from a distance with the fire of imperialist war, signal that the working class urgently needs to take the reins of the situation.

A new world war, on a scale incomparable with the two previous wars, will necessarily put Latin America on the map of conflict. The United States sees the proxy war it is waging with Russia in Ukraine as the first phase of a military escalation against China. And China’s dependence on the raw materials produced by countries like Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Argentina, as well as its investments in Latin America’s markets, are strategic points in the war calculations of the imperialist powers.

The last great world war brought the eruption of US imperialism on the global arena. In the “Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and Proletarian Revolution,” written in 1940, Trotsky pointed out that the monstrous armament of the United States prepared a violent resolution of the complex contradictions in the Western Hemisphere. The US “good neighbor” policy in Latin America would quickly be replaced by iron fist domination.

These predictions were tragically confirmed in the postwar period. By promoting interventions, coups and brutal military dictatorships—the coup in Brazil in 1964; in Chile in 1973; in Argentina in 1976; the Contra war in Nicaragua in the 1980s and many others—US imperialism drowned in blood the revolutionary spirit of the young Latin American proletariat.

The new imperialist war being fomented by the US is an expression not of American capitalism’s strength, but of its historic decline. In its period of crisis, the

military power of the United States imposes itself more savagely and unscrupulously in the quest for world domination.

But, to paraphrase Marx, the imperialist bourgeoisie resembles the sorcerer unable to control the infernal powers it has summoned. Each military action it takes in its desperation to hold on to power generates a new and more uncontrollable explosion of domestic and international class struggle.

The destruction of the living standards of the masses under capitalism is leading the working class in Latin America and throughout the world to a confrontation with the ruling bourgeois power.

As an immediate consequence of the war in Ukraine, mass protests broke out in Peru against rising fuel prices. The same conditions are fueling a wave of strikes in Brazil in dozens of economic sectors. Significantly, a wildcat strike was launched by CSN workers at the continent's largest steel plant. The workers are confronting losses systematically imposed by the unions since the last major strike at CSN in 1988.

These struggles are just the first signs of the class battles that are on the agenda. They follow the largest wave of demonstrations in decades, which swept through countries such as Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Brazil immediately before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With a social time bomb on its hands, the Latin American bourgeoisie goes from one government in crisis to another. A new wave of the “Pink Tide” in the region was born already showing its most reactionary face to the world. Only months after his election, the union leader Pedro Castillo, president of Peru, already has the blood of demonstrators murdered by the army on his hands. In Chile, the pseudo-left Boric is following the same path, calling on the hated carabineros to bring order to the streets.

A new government led by Lula of the Workers’ Party in Brazil would be no different. Challenging the fascistic Jair Bolsonaro, who is actively preparing an electoral putsch along the lines of Trump’s January 6 coup in the United States, Lula has declared his obsession, along with the unions, guaranteeing the profits of the transnational corporations to keep them in the country.

The interests of the workers will not be realized by

any of these false bourgeois alternatives. It is necessary to fight for the complete political independence of the working class!

The objective conditions have never been so favorable for the international socialist revolution. In Latin America and the other former colonies, the working class is now the overwhelming majority of society. It lives in large metropolises and is connected by the process of capitalist production and the internet to the working class all over the world.

The great task we face this May Day is to transform these powerful objective conditions into a conscious movement of the international working class against war, the pandemic, and social inequality—and for international socialism. The essential element of this process is the building of the world party of socialist revolution, the International Committee of the Fourth International. Join this struggle for the future!



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