

Bolsonaro and Workers Party seek support of US imperialism as Brazil's presidential elections near

Miguel Andrade
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With Brazil's October general elections approaching, the two main presidential contenders, fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro and former Workers Party (PT) president Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, are competing to convince national and international capital that each is the most reliable defender of profit interests against the impoverished Brazilian working class.

The PT's and Lula's opposition to Bolsonaro are founded not on any desire, much less ability, to solve any of the pressing issues facing workers—a raging pandemic, spiraling inflation and mass unemployment and poverty. They have always opposed Bolsonaro as a liability for Brazilian capitalism. His overt contempt for workers' lives and living standards and his open preparations to take power by force in case of an electoral defeat expose all the brutality of the country's profit system. This in turn threatens to provoke a mass reaction from below, as in neighboring Chile, Colombia and now Ecuador, calling into question capitalism itself.

Much attention has been given by the Brazilian corporate press and Congressional parties in the last weeks to a June 11 Bloomberg report of a leak from the White House, saying that Bolsonaro told Biden he would defend "US interests" in Brazil, in opposition to Lula, who would defend "Brazilian interests," which presumably, means neutrality in face of the US war preparations against China, as well as the current NATO proxy war against Russia.

Lula's campaign coordinator, Senator Randolfe Rodrigues, reacted to the news with a nationalist, right-wing rant. He once again appealed to Bolsonaro's own military base, declaring the president should be charged with high treason for seeking electoral interference by a foreign power. The ominous implications of US interference for workers' democratic and social rights, including the history of US-backed coups in Latin America and its countless victims, was completely ignored.

In what has become a ritual in the Brazilian media reporting and official opposition statements, the Bloomberg report has been treated as further evidence that Brazilian democracy is thriving, with the exception of Bolsonaro himself. Without citing any evidence, *Globo* pundit Valdo Cruz argued that the White House leaked the report to mark its distance from Bolsonaro and his preparations for an electoral coup and, in turn, that such "distancing" would guarantee a peaceful transition of power after October's election. In the words of Lula's former chief-of-staff

José Dirceu, "there will be no coup because of the lack of international support for an event of this kind."

Dirceu's statement embodies the PT's entire attitude towards Bolsonaro's plans for dictatorship: they must be opposed not in the name of social and democratic rights of Brazilian workers, but because they are "bad for business." What the PT offers, in turn, is loyalty from unions and the so-called "social movements" in achieving "internal stability."

Virtually ignored by the media was a Reuters report from May 25 that the PT sent its last defense minister, Jaques Wagner, for an undisclosed meeting with US State Department officials to discuss prospects for a third Lula government. Officially, Wagner went to the United States to speak in Lula's name at the so-called "Brazil Conference" organized yearly by Brazilian students at Harvard and MIT. Wagner, who is a senator but holds no official foreign relations capacity in the Brazilian Congress, has also met with French, and US ambassadors for similar discussions.

The PT's promotion of the US and other imperialist powers as the guarantors of democracy in Brazil is a criminally dangerous policy. Given the US-backed 1964-1985 military dictatorship, this claim is absurd on its face. The PT, which was founded in the wake of the mass struggles against this regime, long ago transformed itself into the foremost instrument not to reform, let alone abolish Brazilian capitalism, but to defend it against the Brazilian working class. The PT is single-minded in hiding the real dangers facing Brazilian workers because it fears a working class rebellion far more than it fears Bolsonaro and his fascist supporters.

Claims of US "support" for democracy in Brazil, drawn from a handful of White House press conferences and State Department leaks, are even more preposterous in face of the intractable crisis facing world capitalism, expressed most intensely in the United States itself. This crisis was the source of Donald Trump's January 6 putsch, which enjoyed significant support within the political establishment and military apparatus. It is also the driving force behind the US imperialist offensive against Russia and China, threatening World War Three, in which Latin America features as a key battleground. This global crisis is driving US imperialism to renew its aggression against multiple Latin American countries, including its crippling sanctions against Venezuela, the 2019 coup in Bolivia and the tight grip it maintains over Colombia.

The rationale behind Bolsonaro's advanced preparations for dictatorship was laid out late last month in a repulsive and threatening document presented by a group of ultra-right military think-tanks, with the backing of Brazil's vice-president, Gen. Hamilton Mourão, and top intelligence officials. Titled "Nation Project, Brazil in 2035," the document proclaims the need to "neutralize the political and social power" of "radical ... ideologies that divide the nation" in order to provide the country the cohesion needed to assert itself in the geopolitical arena dominated by the conflict between US and China.

The document unapologetically embraces a fascist worldview in which "globalism" is the greatest threat to Brazil. In language reminiscent of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," it asserts that Brazilian capitalist institutions are plagued by a "globalist" outlook and must be purged. Written in the form of a results and perspectives document from a hypothetical Brazil in 2035, it portrays as a major achievement the establishment of a an unelected "center of government" (presumably headed by the military) that oversees the president.

An attack on the justice system, and the Electoral Court (TSE) in particular, consciously laid out in the military manifesto, are the central tenet of Bolsonaro's preparations for a coup. The president has repeatedly fabricated claims that the Electoral Court is actively preparing electoral fraud to benefit the PT.

Bolsonaro's cabinet is escalating attacks against the TSE, with Defense Minister, Gen. Paulo Sérgio Oliveira, publicly denouncing it for "disrespecting" the military and "ignoring" the observations made at the request of the TSE itself over the safety of Brazil's electronic balloting system. Last week, Oliveira declared the military would not discuss its "concerns" outside of exclusive meetings with the Court, which bar other bodies constitutionally allowed to oversee the elections, such as the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB). Three days later, Justice Minister Anderson Torres made the same demand on behalf of the Federal Police, setting the stage for a public refusal by both the Army and the Federal Police to recognize ballot results proclaimed by the TSE.

In face of the unprecedented offensive by the Executive against the TSE and the revelations that government officials have laid out a plan to destroy any opposition after the October elections, the PT's reaction is centered on the spineless appeal for Lula to be elected on the first round, in order to "discourage" Bolsonaro supporters from acting on the president's announced challenge to the results.

As for the PT electoral program's promises of "reforms," the party has made clear to big business that they are not worth the paper on which they are printed. For every time Lula promises to "lift" a crippling federal spending cap imposed by a Constitutional amendment in 2017, he repeats that businessmen know he has always been "fiscally responsible," recalling the austerity measures imposed from the start of his government, such as the pension reform that led to an internal purge in the PT.

For every time he claims to oppose privatizations, he repeats that he has "never broken a single contract," that is, that no private profit will be touched in large mixed capital companies such as Petrobras.

In fact, the issues listed by the fascist military manifesto are the same as those advanced by the PT as fundamental in its opposition to Bolsonaro, chiefly Brazil's perceived diplomatic isolation and geopolitical weakness, and his inability to maintain "internal security." The PT is fully aware that increasing Brazil's share of world markets and geopolitical assertiveness require brutal austerity and exploitation of the working class, which cannot be achieved without the suppression of social opposition.

As opposed to Bolsonaro, it promises national and international capital to achieve these aims through the industrial police of the unions. But the party is also aware that the rotten unions and "social movements" it promotes as social pacifiers will not hold back workers for long, and hence its absolute refusal to point out, let alone condemn, any of Bolsonaro's military co-conspirators.

This is a continuation, and at the same time a deepening, of the policy it pursued in over a decade in power by upholding the amnesty for the torturers and murderers of the 1964-1985 dictatorship, allowing for Bolsonaro himself to thrive as a backbencher in its ruling coalition. As for its goal of pursuing "geopolitical independence" from the US—shared with the military—it only reinforces the need to achieve "competitiveness" through a more intense exploitation of workers. That includes guaranteeing the capitalist profits of US companies in face of workers' strikes and struggles, with the PT's Jaques Wagner seeking to reassure the US State Department not to take Lula's rhetoric as anything else than a "smokescreen," as confessed by PT's president herself.

Whatever the results of the October 2 vote, the ruling class will close ranks in a renewed assault on social and democratic rights. Their defense can only be mounted in a conscious struggle for socialism, independent of and in opposition to all capitalist parties and their political stooges, including the PT, its pseudo-left apologists in the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), and their affiliated unions and "social movements." That requires the building of a new leadership in the working class, a Brazilian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International. That is the task undertaken by the Socialist Equality Group (Brazil).



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