

Down with the conspiracies of Bolsonaro and the military!

For the independent mobilization of the working class against the threat of dictatorship in Brazil

Statement of the Socialist Equality Group (Brazil)
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Brazil's presidential elections, scheduled for October 2, are being held under extraordinary circumstances. Almost six decades after the US-backed coup that overthrew President João Goulart in 1964, the possibility of a new military dictatorship is being openly discussed within the Brazilian bourgeoisie.

The Brazilian Socialist Equality Group (GSI) calls on the working class to mobilize its social force independently against growing dictatorial threats, rejecting the pseudo-left's demands for its subordination to capitalism and the bourgeois state.

The official opening of Brazil's election campaign on August 16 has laid bare the fraudulent claims of fascist President Jair Bolsonaro's official opposition, led by the Workers Party (PT), that it is waging a struggle in defense of the social and democratic rights of the working class and against the strengthening of fascism in the country.

While the PT promotes the idea that Bolsonaro is politically isolated and weak, his demise is only a matter of time, Bolsonaro is engaged in frantic preparations for a coup, centered on relentless claims that the Electoral Court (TSE) is preparing to rig the vote in favor of the PT candidate, former President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva.

As part of this strategy, Bolsonaro has directed the Defense Ministry to mobilize military resources to call into question the voting machines, setting up a "parallel vote count" that will essentially give the generals a justification not to recognize the candidate declared the winner by the Electoral Court.

The president has already converted the upcoming commemoration of Brazil's Independence Day on September 7 into a massive rehearsal for his putsch. He has called his supporters to take to the streets "one last time" against the TSE, and has tried to arrange a massive military display involving all three branches to coincide with his arrival on Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, to address a fascist mob.

A conversation leaked by the *Metrópoles* website has revealed how a section of the ruling class openly supports a Bolsonaro dictatorship. Shrugging off the opposition's warnings that such a regime would "scare investors," José Koury, a real estate businessman, argued that, "surely nobody will cut business with Brazil. As they keep them with several dictatorships around the world."

Bolsonaro remains fully supported in his conspiracy by the two largest parties in Congress, which failed to "abandon" him, as predicted by Lula, who tried without success to rekindle his old

alliance with Bolsonaro's chief-of-staff, Ciro Nogueira.

At the same time, the armed forces are preparing an unprecedented national mobilization on the pretext of threats of "electoral violence." For the first time since 1985, battalions will be on standby to act throughout the country without being requested by the governors. While the president is certainly counting on episodes of organized violence on Election Day to open the way for emergency rule, these preparations underscore the threat of an independent intervention of military forces with the same goal.

In contrast to the advanced and explosive state of the political crisis in Brazil, the tone of the PT-led opposition campaign was set by the reading of the pro-capitalist "Letters for Democracy" on August 11 at the São Paulo Faculty of Law.

Endorsed and promoted by the PT, the trade unions, and its allied pseudo-left parties as a great leap forward in the fight against fascism, these cowardly "letters" fail to even mention Bolsonaro or his plot to overthrow democracy and establish a military dictatorship.

The first document, "In defense of Democracy and Justice," was advanced by large business associations, led by the São Paulo Federation of Industries (FIESP) and by the Brazilian Federation of Banks (Febraban). The second, "Letter to Brazilian Women and Men in Defense of the Rule of Law (Estado Democrático de Direito)!" was put forward "individually" by the barons of industry and finance—the leaders of the families that own Itaú bank and industrial empires such as Suzano, Votorantim, and Klabin. Signing both documents were not only former PT presidents Lula and Dilma Rousseff, but also the two largest trade union federations in the country, the CUT and Força Sindical, as well as the National Union of Students (UNE).

The political orientation of these documents was spelled out by the former justice minister of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration, José Carlos Dias, who in the introduction of the first letter cited its "unprecedented" character in "bringing together capital and labor in defense of democracy."

Such a remark says more than its author probably intended. The "unprecedented character" could be attributed to the fact that the same capitalist entities and personalities that supposedly defend democracy today supported the 1964 military coup, inaugurating a 21-year-long bloody regime that Bolsonaro celebrates and says "should have killed ten times as many."

The 1964 coup was carried out ostensibly in defense of bourgeois "democracy," understood by such representatives of the Brazilian

bourgeoisie as the unconditional defense of private property and the right to profit.

It is also revealing that the letters declare that “in today’s Brazil there is no more room for authoritarian deviations. Dictatorship and torture belong to the past.” They do not explain what allowed “room” for a dictatorship in 1964. Nor do they indicate what fundamental social and political transformations have occurred since then, and why, if Brazil’s political reality no longer allows it, an authoritarian offensive is clearly underway.

The letters’ supporters—from trade unionists to identity politics careerists and bankers—emphasize that they have been signed not only by the cream of capitalist society, but also by “thousands of police and military officers,” and that the first to read them is a former president of the Military Supreme Court, representing the the top brass.

A coup, they insist, would be bad for business and opposed by foreign governments, above all by the US. And they acknowledge as their model another “letter for democracy” from 1977, sponsored by an undisguised fascist, Goffredo da Silva Telles Júnior, who spent his political life in the Integralist movement and supported the 1964 coup.

In other words, they insist that the bourgeoisie, the military, imperialism and even the Brazilian right wing are against a coup. The threat against democracy they are supposedly fighting, devoid of any real political or social basis, would come solely from President Bolsonaro and a handful of lunatic advisers.

The “unity” between the capitalists and their lackeys in the unions, the PT and its pseudo-left satellites is based upon the contention that everything is fine. The daily crises between the branches of government and the relentless declarations of generals in favor of Bolsonaro and in commemoration of the bloody military dictatorship of 1964-1985 are nothing but background noise.

The principal purpose of this political operation is to conceal from the Brazilian working class the state of terminal crisis of capitalism. On an international scale, this crisis has produced an unprecedented offensive on the living standards of the masses, motivated the malignant response of the world’s ruling classes to deadly pandemics and the climate crisis, and is driving humanity toward a Third World War. These phenomena are fundamentally incompatible with democratic forms of rule. They lie behind the rise of far-right and openly fascist forces in countries such as France, the United Kingdom, India, the Philippines and Germany, and motivated Trump’s January 6 coup in the United States which serves as a model for Bolsonaro.

While Bolsonaro’s authoritarian offensive is aimed at crushing the resistance of the working class through a regime of open violence, the PT and its allies pursue the same goal through legal means, which include their efforts to chloroform the public about the dictatorial threats and their use of unions as an industrial police apparatus.

These operations by the rival factions of the Brazilian bourgeoisie are necessary because the working class is radically opposed to the current state of affairs. It has already begun its counter-offensive, with a powerful wave of strikes and mass demonstrations that is increasingly turning against the capitalist system on a global scale.

None of the objective driving forces behind the crisis of democracy in Brazil and worldwide are even mentioned in the “letters for democracy.” To raise the origins of the Brazilian political crisis would automatically expose the ostensible “hopes” of the letters’ promoters, including the reelection of Lula, as a huge deception.

The PT was founded 42 years ago by trade unionists and Pabloite renegades from the Fourth International who advocated a parliamentary path to a welfare state and even socialism in Brazil. The

PT’s reworking of the Stalinist two-stage theory of revolution—which, applied by the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), had already paved the path to the 1964 military coup—served the purpose of diverting the Brazilian working class uprising that had fatally undermined the military dictatorship. The confidence they advocated in the democratic potential of the Brazilian bourgeois state has given rise, in less than three decades, to renewed threats of fascist dictatorship.

Now, highly discredited among the working masses, the PT and its pseudo-left promoters propose a repetition of that catastrophic path through a bankrupt bourgeois alliance to save Brazilian capitalism.

The adherence of major economic sectors to a declaration of opposition to Bolsonaro’s coup offensive expresses a division within the ruling class and the lack of confidence of certain sections in the viability of this dictatorial project. These same sections see the political soporifics offered by the PT as a necessary means of preparing such a radical change in the character of the regime.

But the dispute within the bourgeoisie is not settled. As behind the backs of the public the ruling elite openly discusses the possibility of either a violent takeover by Bolsonaro, or independent intervention by the military, there is a question none of the signatories of the “letters for democracy” can answer: if the tanks take to the streets, even if against Bolsonaro, who will send them back to the barracks?

In 1964, the Brazilian armed forces promised “swift action” and elections the following year, before staying in power for 21 years and executing, torturing, and exiling thousands.

Today’s dictatorial conspiracies must be disarmed, and the working class is the only social force capable of doing so. Such a fight demands a complete political break with the PT, the unions and pseudo-left parties responsible for subordinating the working class to the national bourgeoisie and imperialism. The workers’ counteroffensive in defense of their social and democratic rights is inseparable from a struggle against capitalism itself, the cause of austerity, war and dictatorship. And it can only be carried out through a socialist and internationalist strategy.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) is the world political party that consciously represents and advances the interests of the global working class upsurge, of which the Brazilian workers’ struggle is an integral part. The building of a section of the ICFI in Brazil, the Partido Socialista pela Igualdade (PSI), is the great task of the present. It will open a new and decisive stage in the long history of the revolutionary struggle of the Brazilian working class.



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