The raid against Bolsonaro coup backers and the fight against authoritarianism in Brazil

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A group of eight businessmen backers of Brazil's fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro became the target, on August 23, of a search and seizure warrant issued by the Supreme Court (STF) Justice and current president of the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), Alexandre de Moraes.

The judicial action was motivated by messages exchanged in a private WhatsApp group and leaked by *Metrópoles*, in which the businessmen openly defended the establishment of an authoritarian dictatorship led by Bolsonaro in Brazil. In addition to the searches, the warrant ordered the breaking of bank secrecy and the blocking of social networks of its targets.

One month before the presidential elections in the country, this episode has laid bare the high degree of political crisis within the Brazilian ruling class.

Moraes' action represents a nervous response by a section of the ruling elite to Bolsonaro's ongoing plans to overturn the election. Despite endless assurances in the bourgeois media that these open threats and systematic preparations are unrealizable boasting, an electoral coup attempt is undeniably underway.

The response of the bourgeois opposition to the authoritarian attacks of the president does not imply any revival of democracy in Brazil. On the contrary, based on the need to suppress the unstoppable class conflict in the country, the political forces behind the actions taken by Moraes seek to oppose Bolsonaro's openly fascist attacks by strengthening the bourgeois state apparatus at the expense of democratic freedoms and the right to political opposition.

Moraes' decision against the businessmen, released to the public earlier this week, was based on a request made by senator Randolfe Rodrigues (Rede) and other requests signed by the Workers Party (PT) president, Gleisi Hoffmann, and congress members from the PT and the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL). These documents make explicit the degree of submission of these pseudo-left political forces to the reactionary Brazilian bourgeois state.

It was on the request of Randolfe, also a coordinator of Lula's presidential campaign, that Moraes decreed the breaking of bank secrecy and blocking of the social media of those being investigated. He based his request solely on the "facts reported... in Guilherme Amado's column" in *Metrópoles*, i.e., on leaked messages that express clear support fora coup d'état, but no concrete evidence of involvement in the preparations of such coup.

The Rede senator concluded that to "establish the group's relationship with antidemocratic acts, especially their financing.... [the] present Inquiry, which investigates the attacks on the democratic regime, is the best instrument."

A similar opinion was expressed by PSOL congresswomen Fernanda Melchionna, Sâmia Bomfim and Vivi Reis, all belonging to the Morenoite current Socialist Left Movement (MES). They wrote to Moraes as follows: "Considering the content of Inquiry 4.874/DF, of your responsibility ... we request you to consider adding the investigative procedure in order to verify the probable criminal practices of the businessmen cited in its core, taking all the necessary steps *not only to establish due criminal responsibility, but to take all the measures you deem appropriate* to ensure that the result of the 2022 election is fully respected and fulfilled"[our emphasis].

The confidence placed by these sections of the pseudo-left in Moraes is striking. The inquiry hailed by them on the pretext of confronting "fake news" and "anti-democratic attacks" is being conducted behind the closed doors of the judicial system and behind the backs of the people. Its results include authoritarian attacks, such as the banning of the Workers Cause Party (PCO) on social media for questioning the STF and Moraes' own attacks on free speech, and advances toward internet censorship.

Moraes' background is definitely not that of a champion of democracy. He was the head of the Security Secretariat of the São Paulo state government under Geraldo Alckmin, now Lula's vice-presidential candidate. Moraes has been an open advocate of the brutal use of military-police force, and his tenure as Security secretary was marked by intensified violent repression of political demonstrations along with a sharp rise in police killings. He briefly assumed leadership of Michel Temer's Justice Ministry in 2016, after the impeachment of the PT's Dilma Rousseff, before being appointed as an STF Justice.

By trying to get rid of Bolsonaro by means that exclude the political participation of the working masses and relying on backroom maneuvers to confront the fascistic threats, the pseudo-left reveals its aversion not only to socialist but to basic

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democratic principles.

But there is also an element of self-deception in these measures, an attempt to cover up the inconvenient truths that have come to light. The leaked messages from the pro-coup businessmen's group revealed the falsity of the illusions promoted by the PT and the PSOL with their "Letters for Democracy" signed together with union bureaucrats and capitalist organizations. These letters preach the complacent idea that Bolsonaro's coup maneuvers have no real backing from within the Brazilian bourgeoisie and military and are opposed by US and world imperialism.

In the leaked messages, one businessman exclaimed, "I prefer a coup to the return of the PT. A million times. And for sure nobody will stop doing business with Brazil. Like they do with many dictatorships around the world." Another said: "September 7th is being programmed to unite the people and the Army and at the same time make clear which side the Army is on. Great strategy and the stage will be Rio. The iconic Brazilian city internationally. It will make it very clear."

The aforementioned September 7 demonstration, commemorating the 200th anniversary of Brazil's independence, is being prepared as the first act of Bolsonaro's coup attempt. The president and his supporters have called on their fascist ranks to take to the streets "for the last time," with a main march organized in Rio de Janeiro to coincide with a massive military parade. Billboards in Brasilia are promoting the protests with the phrases it "is now or never" and for a "second independence of Brazil," a reference to the overthrow of the current regime.

Notably, the United States accepted an invitation to join the Brazilian Navy parade in Copacabana. Three days later, the US military will participate in the Unitas naval exercise with 20 other countries in Rio de Janeiro and will send in advance two warships for Brazil's Independence Day.

The presence of the American warships inevitably evokes the memory of the US support for the 1964 military coup in Brazil. It included Operation Brother Sam, through which the United States planned the sending of a Navy fleet to the Rio de Janeiro coast to back the Brazilian military's insurgency against President-elect João Goulart.

Although Washington does not intend to send representatives to Bolsonaro's platform, the US participation in the military parade will provide critical legitimacy to the pro-coup demonstrations. As admitted by Brazil's Eastern Military Commander, Gen. André Luis Novaes de Miranda, the separation of the military event from the Bolsonaro supporters' protest is "unfeasible."

According to *Folha de São Paulo*, "American diplomacy feared the association between their presence and the president's coup speech against the electoral system," but they agreed to participate out of "diplomatic embarrassment." The newspaper continues to assure, however, that "the fact is that the US gave unequivocal signs of disapproval of the president's campaign against the electoral system."

But if the United States could be "constrained" to participate in act that it acknowledges will be channeled behind Bolsonaro's coup threats, the businessman's claim that "for sure nobody will stop doing business with Brazil, as they do it with several dictatorships around the world" is being significantly substantiated.

The attitude of the pseudo-left towards the threats posed by the Independence Day events is again that of criminal complacency. Dismissing the grave anti-democratic attacks as mere fodder for the PT's electoral "opportunities," Randolfe declared, according to *Folha*, that "September 7 could be a watershed in the electoral campaign, should 'Bolsonaro's coup intentions' be confirmed, because the PT campaign could attract votes from candidates like Ciro Gomes (PDT) and Simone Tebet (MDB)."

As stated in the recent statement of the Brazilian Socialist Equality Group (GSI), "Down with the conspiracies of Bolsonaro and the military!":

> 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.

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