

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

Statement of the Socialist Equality Group (Brazil)
30 September 2022

The presidential elections in Brazil, which enter their first round on Sunday, mark the most acute political crisis since the establishment of the country's fragile democratic regime 35 years ago.

The country's fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro—with support from within the upper echelons of the state and the armed forces—is openly campaigning to overturn the result of the vote and illegally remain in power in a presidential dictatorship.

Meanwhile, the military has reestablished its role as Brazil's final political arbiters. Invited by the civil power to participate in the organization of the elections—with the purported aim of curbing the politicization of the Armed Forces by the conspiring president—the generals have waged a campaign to undermine the electoral court and poison public opinion with fraudulent theories designed to discredit the voting process.

Arrogating to themselves the role of validating the elections, the military will conduct a parallel vote count for the first time in the current regime's history. Soldiers will be sent to personally inspect hundreds of ballot boxes around the country and ensure that they are “fraud-free.”

At the same time, the Army's battalions are being put on standby across the country to intervene in the streets, on the pretext of curbing “electoral violence.” If they were to act against a Bolsonaro coup attempt, nobody knows who would be able to send the tanks back to the barracks.

The naming of the next Brazilian president will await negotiations behind closed doors and depend upon the final word of the generals.

The Brazilian political crisis is one of the epicenters of a globally interconnected process of dissolution of democratic forms of rule by the ruling class in all countries.

The specter of a return to military dictatorship in Brazil, which suffered the bloody rule of the generals for two decades following the US-backed 1964 coup, arises from the same worldwide crisis that produced Donald Trump's attempted fascist coup in the US; the rise to power in Italy of Georgia Meloni, successor of Benito Mussolini's fascist movement; the rehabilitation of the neo-Nazis of the Alternative for Germany (AfD); the return to power of the heir to the Marcos

dictatorship in the Philippines; and the cultivation of Ukrainian fascist forces by Washington and NATO in their war against Russia.

One of the most serious indications of the mortal crisis facing the Brazilian political system is that the main opposition party, the Workers Party (PT), is seeking to cover up the dangers posed by the present situation.

The polls have repeatedly shown PT candidate Lula da Silva, who governed Brazil from 2003 to 2010, as the favorite in the presidential race. The latest DataFolha poll, published Thursday, showed Lula with 50 percent of the vote and Bolsonaro trailing with 36 percent. Nevertheless, Bolsonaro has repeated on numerous occasions that only fraud will prevent his outright victory in the first round.

In the last public debate between the candidates, held three days before the election, Lula traded accusations of corruption with Bolsonaro, but he kept silent about Bolsonaro's coup preparations. It fell to a far-right candidate, Soraya Thronicke of União Brasil, a former supporter of the fascistic president, to ask Bolsonaro if he “intends to stage a coup,” to which the president replied, “That's not the issue.”

Lula and the PT refuse to publicly denounce the conspiracies of Bolsonaro and the military. Their greatest fear is unleashing a mass movement of the working class, which has a long tradition of struggle against authoritarianism in Brazil, that would turn against capitalism and its state. Instead, the PT seeks to address the threat through backroom negotiations with representatives of the ruling class.

The support base that the PT sees as key to returning to power is not Brazil's working class and oppressed masses, but rather the bourgeoisie, the military, the judges and the right-wing parties that had discarded its political services with the impeachment of the PT President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and the subsequent jailing of Lula himself.

In the last week of his campaign, Lula attended a dinner with dozens of representatives of the banks and big business in which, according to one of the participants quoted by *Globo*, “he said everything the audience wanted to hear.” Among those present were open supporters of Bolsonaro, such as the owner

of the Riachuelo store chain, Flávio Rocha, who, according to the newspaper, said that Lula “could count on him if he fulfills the commitments made at the dinner.”

The alignment of growing sectors of Brazilian capital with Lula is based on their belief that his government will be able to secure their interests on two fronts. First they are counting on a PT government to establish a balance in Brazil’s relations with the United States and China, thereby promoting an influx of investments. And second, they believe it can impose a tighter rein on the working class, aided by the corporatist unions, allowing for an intensified exploitation of the workforce.

The explosive crisis of global capitalism, however, will make the fulfillment of these interests of the Brazilian bourgeoisie a tall order.

With Brazil and Latin America as a whole becoming more and more a strategic battleground in US imperialism’s drive to war against China, the goal of geopolitical neutrality and an environment of free trade relations with both countries is a pipe-dream. The recent destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines linking Russia and Germany, an act of terrorist sabotage benefiting Washington’s imperialist interests, is indicative of the shape of things to come, including on the South American continent.

And, despite the efforts of the PT-linked unions to sabotage the movement of the working class, the deepening economic crisis is creating the conditions for an explosion of the class struggle in Brazil.

In his speeches defending laws that expand the repressive capacity of the Brazilian state, Bolsonaro has repeatedly warned about the imminence of the eruption of a popular movement “worse than in Chile,” where masses of workers and youth took to the streets against social inequality and the political regime in 2019.

Under these conditions, an incoming PT government will have a reactionary and politically unstable character. Like the recent incarnations of “Pink Tide” governments in Latin America, such as that of Gabriel Boric in Chile and Pedro Castillo in Peru, the PT’s fundamental role will be to implement the attacks demanded by capitalism on the living conditions of workers and to unleash brutal repression against any form of social opposition.

From the point of view of the ruling class, such a “left-wing” government will represent only an interregnum, during which better preparations can be made for the implementation of an outright dictatorship against the working class of the kind that Bolsonaro advocates today. The record of Lula and the PT, particularly their response to current dictatorial threats, leaves no doubt that they will make every concession to the coup plotters.

The Socialist Equality Group (GSI), Brazilian supporters of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), is making every effort to expose the grave dangers contained in the present situation. But in raising these warnings, its position

is not one of passive contemplation of an unfolding tragedy.

The fundamental objective of the GSI is to mobilize the working class as an independent political force and prepare it for the confrontation that will necessarily come no matter which government ultimately takes power.

The Brazilian working class is a massive social force, with a long history of struggle against capitalism and a profound democratic and socialist tradition. Brazilian workers have in their hands powerful means of production and are objectively linked through global economic supply chains with workers all over the world.

The current civilian regime was established in Brazil as a response by the bourgeoisie to the wave of massive strikes by the working class at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. Provoked by conditions of economic misery, it was this movement that fatally undermined the military dictatorship.

The bourgeoisie was able to remain in power during this mortal crisis only through the deliberate derailing of the semi-insurrectionary struggles of the working class. The main political agents of this process of betrayal were the different Pabloite tendencies, from the Lambertites of the International Socialist Organization (OSI) to the Morenoites of the Socialist Convergence (CS), which were the true creators of Lula and the PT.

In its recent struggles, such as the wildcat strike that hit the National Steel Company (CSN) this year, the successive struggles against layoffs in the auto industry, the series of strikes by teachers, transportation workers, and many others, the Brazilian working class demonstrates that it is ready for a new mass confrontation with capitalism. In all these processes, it has clashed with the bureaucratic, pro-business unions controlled by the PT and its allies.

The Socialist Equality Group is fighting for the establishment of democratic organs that enable the development of the working class struggles: rank-and-file committees internationally unified through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. And, above all, it is engaged in the construction of the necessary revolutionary leadership that will lead the seizure of power by the Brazilian working class as part of the international socialist revolution.

This perspective will be presented by the GSI in its event “The Crisis of Democracy in Brazil and the Perspective of Socialist Revolution” to be held on Saturday, 3pm (GMT-3). We urge all our readers to participate. <https://youtu.be/oFcvuM1rb7k>



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)