

Brazil's Lula endorses Castillo's impeachment in Peru on behalf of imperialism

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The fall of Peru's pseudo-left-backed President Pedro Castillo, impeached and arrested a week ago, is a political event with profound implications for Latin America.

In the one and a half years he has remained in office, the former Peruvian teacher and trade unionist has faced a sustained effort by the far-right opposition to illegally remove him from power.

Castillo quickly lost any popular support by implementing the same pro-capitalist policies he had promised to fight and unleashing brutal repression against the growing struggles of the working class.

Like all the reactionary measures Castillo took to win the support of the Peruvian ruling class, the military and the imperialist powers, his final act of despair—to call for the dissolution of Congress and the establishment of a state of exception—played into the hands of the extreme right conspiring against his government.

The impeachment and arrest of Castillo, along with the appointment of his vice president, Dina Boluarte, as president of Peru, were enacted at lightning speed by a Congress that has an even lower popular approval rating than the deposed president. However, its decisions were promptly endorsed by the European Union and Washington.

The eagerness of the imperialist powers to back Boluarte is primarily motivated by the fear that the process of transferring power entirely behind the backs of the Peruvian population will spark a social explosion in the country with the potential of spreading throughout the region.

These counterrevolutionary efforts of imperialism had the immediate backing of the newly elected president of Brazil, Luís Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT).

On Wednesday evening, December 7, Lula published a

letter supporting Castillo's removal from office and assuring that "everything was carried out within the constitutional framework." Presenting the episode as a lesson for South America, the Brazilian leader greeted Boluarte and wished her "success in her task of reconciling the country and leading it along the path of development and social peace."

The position taken by Lula, who is desperate for the support of the imperialist powers and the reactionary ruling class of his own country, differed from those of other Latin American leaders, who either remained silent or openly defended Castillo.

Lula's attitude towards the Peruvian crisis signals an ostensible break with the diplomatic policies pursued in his previous terms as president of Brazil, between 2003 and 2010. Then, the Brazilian former trade unionist belonged to a group of bourgeois national governments in Latin America, the so-called "Pink Tide," that sought to present themselves as a viable alternative to the capitalist misery and imperialist oppression that historically dominated the region.

In 2008, alongside figures such as Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, Nestor Kirchner of Argentina, and Evo Morales of Bolivia, Lula founded the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). The purported goal of this initiative was to forge an economic, political, and military bloc that would allow for unprecedented development of the oppressed continent.

In a supposed show of independence from US imperialism, the South American countries jointly responded to the police insurrection against Rafael Correa in Ecuador in 2010. In an emergency meeting convened on the same day of the events, UNASUR condemned the coup attempt in Ecuador and approved a resolution to prevent future coup attempts in the continent.

Within a decade, the UNASUR project completely foundered, alongside the crisis of the Pink Tide governments and their pretensions of an alternative Latin American path to socialism.

Although Lula promises in his new government program that he will resume efforts for “South American, Latin American and Caribbean integration” and to strengthen initiatives like UNASUR, his response to the crisis in Peru shows a determination to achieve a unilateral accommodation with the imperialist powers.

Lula’s verdict on the undemocratic process of Castillo’s ouster—“everything was carried out within the constitutional framework”—is even more hypocritical if one considers his response to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff of the PT in 2016. The toppling of Rousseff and the elevation of her right-wing vice president Michel Temer to the presidency, executed on the basis of trumped-up charges by a Congress determined to undemocratically remove her from power, was characterized by the PT as an unequivocal “coup d’état.”

Castillo faced an even more unscrupulous and blatant conspiracy by the far-right. Determined first to subvert the popular vote, it then worked feverishly in the Congress to sabotage the basic functioning of the government and to remove the president based upon absolutely reactionary charges such as “betrayal of the fatherland.” In this case, however, Lula claims that’s what a constitutional process looks like. The success he wished Boluarte “in reconciling the country” might as well have been directed to Michel Temer!

Lula’s readiness to throw Castillo to the lions is an expression of his own tremendous political weakness in the face of conditions analogous to those that undermined Peru’s pseudo-left government.

The new PT government struggles to assume office as it is confronted by an authoritarian conspiracy by Brazil’s current President Jair Bolsonaro, supported by sections of the military. Like Keiko Fujimori, defeated by Castillo in Peru, the fascistic Bolsonaro and his Liberal Party refuse to acknowledge the election’s results and demand that political power be kept in their hands.

Last Friday, Bolsonaro spoke out for only the third time in public since his defeat was confirmed 40 days ago. He urged his supporters to remain mobilized, stressing that he remains “the supreme chief of the Armed Forces,” which he defined as “the last obstacle to socialism.” His speech was followed, three days later, by violent protests in Brasilia by his fascist supporters against the official

certification of Lula’s victory.

A year ago, as Peru was seeing far-right protests demanding a military coup to prevent Castillo’s inauguration, the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote:

If Castillo’s government survives these challenges, its ascendance will not signify a revival of Latin America’s “Pink Tide” and a new era of social reforms, even of a minimal character. Having guaranteed the sanctity of private ownership and the interests of the mining transnationals, its policies will be dictated by the Peruvian bourgeoisie and the international markets, even as the Peruvian right and the military prepare a coup.

This warning, besides attesting to the WSWs’ immense prescience regarding the development of the political crisis in Peru, in its general lines is fully applicable to the current political crossroads in Brazil and other Latin American countries.

The economic conditions of the commodities boom in the early 2000s, under which the original Pink Tide governments came to power and that allowed them to adopt a “pink” political hue, have been profoundly changed.

Governments such as those of Luis Arce in Bolivia, Gabriel Boric in Chile, Gustavo Petro in Colombia and now Lula in Brazil rose to office amidst an explosion of social opposition to the persistent crisis conditions, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. They are already playing the same criminal political role as Castillo: implementing the capitalist attacks against the working class, making continuous concessions to the far right and the military and paving the way for fascistic coups.



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