Fascists storm Brazilian government buildings two years after attempted coup at US Capitol

Tomas Castanheira
9 January 2023

Thousands of supporters of Brazil's fascistic former president Jair Bolsonaro invaded and occupied for more than three hours the headquarters of the three branches of government in Brasilia, the country's capital, on Sunday. The protesters demanded a military coup to depose and imprison recently inaugurated President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT).

This event marks a new stage in the explosive political crisis in Brazil and throughout Latin America. Happening only one week after Lula took office, it is a vivid verification of the opening phrases of the *World Socialist Web Site*'s New Year statement: "The celebration of the beginning of the New Year will be brief. The old year has passed into history, but its crises persist and will intensify."

The January 8 invasion in Brasilia is the latest product in the conspiracy of Bolsonaro and his fascist allies against democracy in Brazil. Along with his Liberal Party (PL), the former president refused to recognize Lula's victory and fomented a violent movement to contest the elections.

Yesterday's action was directly inspired by, and in many ways an attempt to reenact, the invasion of the US Capitol in Washington, DC on January 6, 2021 by Donald Trump's supporters. Bolsonaro has openly used the attempted fascist coup in the United States as a political guide.

While his son, Eduardo, was invited to watch the events directly in Washington, then-President Bolsonaro announced in January 2021 his intention to carry out his own version of Trump's electoral coup. He said Brazil would have "worse problems than in the United States" in its elections.

Just as in Washington two years ago, the storming of the seats of governmental power by Bolsonaro's fascist supporters had the decisive acquiescence of the police, the military and other sections of the state.

The day before, the daily *O Estado de São Paulo* had already reported that government intelligence reports indicated 100 buses with 3,900 people were heading to Brasilia for a demonstration on Sunday against Lula's elected government. According to the same newspaper, the action had been announced on pro-Bolsonaro social media channels since January 3.

Schedules for buses taking demonstrators from different parts of the country to the capital were being publicly announced, with slogans like: "take over Brasília"; "occupy the Executive, Congress and STF"; "Plan B: all to Congress!". One of the publicity videos called for a "generalized civil disobedience movement" on January 7 and 8 to "surround the [Presidential] Palace, not let any senator, minister, judge to enter," and declare a "provisional government" that would later gain support from the military.

These people, brought by bus from other parts of the country, joined a smaller group of fascist foot soldiers encamped in front of Army headquarters in Brasilia since November. This encampment, cultivated by leaders of the Bolsonaro administration, served as an organizational center for systematic actions to overthrow the election results. Among them was a terrorist plot that included a failed bomb attack at the Brasilia Airport on December 24.

Despite having prior knowledge of the preparations for January 8 and having observed over months the actions of the fascists organizing it, the police forces in Brasilia deliberately allowed the plan to be executed.

Around 2 p.m., the protesters marched from the encampment at the Army headquarters to the *Praça dos Três Poderes* (Three Powers Plaza). Before 3 p.m. they were already inside the Congress, and soon took over the Presidential Palace and the Supreme Court.

Reporters from *Estado de São Paulo* present at the event stated: "More than three hours after the beginning of the invasion, the radicals were still arriving to reinforce their terrorist acts. They were passing in front of groups of police officers, who complacently remained inert without preventing the invaders' access."

The attitude of the policemen was not merely one of complacency, but rather of open admiration. Military police

© World Socialist Web Site

officers were recorded amiably chatting and taking selfies with the fascist demonstrators as they stormed the state buildings.

With the supposedly failed attempts by the Brazilian police—internationally recognized as one of the most violent and murderous repressive forces in the world—to contain the protest, the fascist mob had enough time and room to invade and wreck the buildings' interiors. After retaking their headquarters, officials of the Lula government reported that the protesters stole weapons and ammunition from the Institutional Security Office (GSI).

Bolsonaro, who has been in Orlando since late December, having refused to participate in Lula's inauguration, took to Twitter to publicly distance himself from what took place in Brasília. He wrote that "depredations and invasions of public buildings such as occurred today, as well as those practiced by the left in 2013 and 2017 [referring to popular protests with social demands], go beyond the rule."

Bolsonaro's attempt to disassociate himself from the actions in Brasília mimics Trump's public posture on January 6, 2021. This latest act is inseparable from the entire plot to overthrow the elections that Bolsonaro personally prepared and led. And, while his direct involvement in yesterday's events is yet to be proven, there is no possibility that he was not previously aware of what was to take place, and he only criticized it afterwards.

Despite recognizing the event as a serious threat, the PT administration's reaction exposes both the impotence and the reactionary role of this political representative of the Brazilian ruling class.

In the late afternoon, Lula spoke out, condemning the attack and decreeing federal intervention in the Federal District (DF), which takes the security forces out of the hands of the state governor, Ibaneis Rocha, of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB), and puts them under the direct control of the federal government.

Lula described those who carried out the attack as "fanatical fascists" who "did what has never been done in the history of this country." He said that "this genocidal [Bolsonaro]... not only stimulated this, but, who knows, is still stimulating it through social media... from Miami, where he went to rest. In fact, where he ran away so as not to deliver me the presidential sash."

As Lula announced the federal intervention in Brasília, he publicly acknowledged that on Sunday and in other recent episodes, those responsible for the "public security of the Federal District" acted in "bad will or bad faith." Speaking of Secretary of Security of the Federal District Anderson Torres, Lula declared that "his reputation of connivance with the demonstrations" is "known to all."

Through its legal representative, the Attorney General's office, Lula's government demanded that the Federal Supreme Court (STF) immediately arrest Torres and all those involved in Sunday's actions. Like Bolsonaro, Torres is in the United States. Late in the evening, the STF decreed the 90-day removal of Governor Ibaneis.

While Lula claims that his government took these actions "to guarantee once and for all that this will never happen again in Brazil," these measures only touch the tip of the iceberg.

A critical section of the forces responsible for the fascist attacks on January 8 and in the preceding months in Brazil remain in powerful positions in the state apparatus and even on Lula's own staff. In particular, the responsibility of Lula's defense minister, José Múcio Monteiro, is flagrant.

Less than a week ago, Múcio publicly opposed any repression of the fascist movement that would go on to organize the invasion of the buildings housing the three branches of Brazil's government and declared his sympathy for the participants. "Those demonstrations in the encampment, and I say this with great authority because I have family and friends there, are demonstrations of democracy," the minister said.

On Sunday, Múcio visited the encampment in front of the Army headquarters, reportedly to inspect it and "feel the mood" of the demonstrators. *Poder360* reported speaking with the minister at 2:27 p.m., just minutes before the Congress was stormed, quoting him as saying that the demonstration was "for now, calm."

PT Congressman Washington Quaquá pointed out that besides Múcio, Minister of Justice Flávio Dino of the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) had direct responsibility for what happened. He told *Metrópoles*: "Both Dino and Múcio were warned days ago about this invasion. This could never have happened. Dino and Múcio were inoperative."

The PT's choice of Múcio and other right-wing figures for leading positions in its government was not the product of poor decision making. They were selected precisely to facilitate an accommodation by the new government with the growing fascistic forces within the military and the state.

The efforts of the PT and its pseudo-left supporters in the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) to create illusions in the supposedly democratic inclinations of the rotten Brazilian bourgeoisie and its state—which can only generate political reaction—makes them politically responsible for the development of a fascist movement in Brazil.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site