

The fascist storming of Brasilia: A warning to the working class

Tomas Castanheira**10 January 2023**

The January 8 invasion of the government headquarters in Brazil by a fascist mob of former president Jair Bolsonaro's supporters has brought into stark relief the irrepressible decline of democracy in South America's largest country.

The fascist attack in Brasilia, the Brazilian capital, took place exactly one week after President-Elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT) took office.

In his inaugural speech, the third in the career of the former trade unionist who presided over the Brazilian government between 2003 and 2010, Lula acknowledged the extraordinary character of the recent elections. He declared that an "authoritarian project of power" was able to take hold of the "public machine" and, with broad "mobilization of public and private resources," tried to overthrow democracy in Brazil.

The threats cited by Lula are of concern to millions of Brazilians. The country's former fascistic president, Bolsonaro, has waged a systematic assault on the democratic system and attempted to overturn the legitimate results of the election over the past two months.

However, on January 1, Lula assured the Brazilian people that this "terrible threat" had been overcome. He claimed that the PT's promotion of a "democratic front" of the official bourgeois parties, from the traditional right wing to the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), had been able to definitively crush fascism in Brazil. "It was democracy that was the great winner in this election," the president declared.

But the following Sunday, it was the fascists' turn to hold their "inauguration" ceremony. The same police that mounted an unprecedented security regime during Lula's inauguration, predicting possible terrorist actions by Bolsonaro supporters, escorted the fascist

mob to take over the seats of government in the January 8 attack.

This event exposed the fact that, contrary to Lula's claims, a fascist conspiracy remains active in the Brazilian state.

In response to the extraordinary events on Sunday, the PT government and state institutions moved to suppress the pro-Bolsonaro mob.

Lula decreed a federal intervention over the Federal District (DF), allowing his government to take control of security in Brasilia and bring officers from across the country to reinforce the police. The governor of DF, Ibaneis Rocha, was temporarily removed by the Supreme Court (STF), and his Secretary of Security Anderson Torres was threatened with arrest. The encampment of Bolsonaro supporters, which had remained since November at the gates of the Army Headquarters, was dispersed. Fifteen hundred participants in the encampment and the January 8 storming of Brasilia were arrested.

According to Lula and his government, these measures will guarantee "once and for all that this will never happen again in Brazil."

Justice Minister Flávio Dino said that "the country is moving toward absolute institutional normalization with great speed." Dino, who governed the state of Maranhão on behalf of the Maoist Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), concluded: "The Brazilian Armed Forces until now have remained faithful to democratic legality. This is a fact that should be saluted. In general, I would say that the worst is over."

Concurring with the thesis advanced by the PT, political analysts in the official media were quick to characterize the invasion of Brasilia as a defeat of the far-right movement in Brazil.

"Bolsonarismo shot itself in the foot by promoting the

so-called ‘seizure of power’ in Brasilia,” stated *Estado de São Paulo*. “The action of the extremists who brought chaos to the heart of the state will have the consequence of strengthening, albeit temporarily, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva,” it concluded.

These assessments are absolutely false. In particular, the claim made by Dino that the military has “so far remained faithful to democratic legality” flies in the face of reality.

Over the past few months, the Armed Forces have intervened in an unprecedented way in Brazilian politics. The military commanders have issued official notes censuring civilian officials for speaking out unfavorably about the military forces. The military has also raised false accusations of a risk of electoral fraud.

Meanwhile, the senior brass defended the demonstrations around the barracks, which called for a military coup, as a legitimate “popular movement.” This is in a country where the military seized power in 1964 and ruled by means of a bloody dictatorship for two decades.

Moreover, the military remained silent about the preparations for Sunday’s and previous violent attacks by its fascist proteges. The storming of the governmental buildings began and was organized at the gates of the Army Headquarters in Brasilia, a restricted zone where the fascists were allowed to stay by the generals.

The fact that the military has so far collaborated with the actions taken by Lula’s government neither contradicts its previous stance nor represents a political turn.

In fact, none of the political actors directly engaged in the formation of a fascist movement in Brazil have claimed authorship of Sunday’s attacks. Bolsonaro and members of his Liberal Party (PL), the governor and the secretary of security of Brasilia, the fascist military—all condemned the action as an aberration.

These political forces would have one believe that 5,000 “terrorists” sprang up in Brasilia and spontaneously invaded the seat of government. But it is evident that the organizers of the fascist assault in Brasilia are deeply entrenched in the state, and especially in the military.

The January 8 attack does not represent a defeat for these forces. On the contrary, their “collaboration” with the PT administration in confronting this crisis will

only lend them more space in the government, enabling them to drive it ever further to the right while still preparing for its overthrow.

What then explains the PT’s direct collaboration in covering for those responsible and its rush to falsely declare the situation resolved?

As representatives of capitalism, the PT was rehabilitated and brought back to power by the Brazilian ruling class under explosive political and social conditions. The last years saw the eruption of social inequality and misery, mass deaths caused by pro-capitalist policies in response to COVID-19, and economic stagnation in the midst of a global economic environment increasingly marked by war.

These conditions are preparing an uncontrollable explosion of class struggle in Brazil. The development of a fascist movement and every form of political reaction is the response of the ruling class to these objective conditions.

The PT, supported by its middle class pseudo-left allies, plays an instrumental role in this bourgeois reaction. Engaged in covering up the extent of the crisis of the capitalist state, promoting illusions in its democratic character, and using its trade union apparatus to repress working class struggles, the PT is paving the way for fascist forces to develop and create the conditions for a coup d’état.

The international working class must take the action of the fascists in Brasilia as the most serious warning. Confronted by the volcanic eruption of the contradictions of capitalism, the ruling class internationally is fomenting fascist movements.

The establishment of fascist dictatorships, even in the core capitalist countries, should not be seen as a distant possibility. Alongside the danger of a nuclear war of annihilation, this threat is absolutely real. These threats can only be confronted by the development of a working class movement aimed at taking political power, on the basis of a socialist program, in Brazil and throughout the world.



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