

After fascist assault in Brasilia, Lula points to military coup threat

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On Thursday, Brazil's new President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT) disclosed details about the reactions of his government and the military to the January 8 attack on the seats of power in Brasilia by fascist supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro.

At a press conference, Lula presented the disturbing conclusion that, had he agreed to call for a Law and Order Assurance (GLO) operation as proposed by his defense minister, José Múcio Monteiro Filho, “then yes, the coup that people wanted was going to happen. Lula ceases to be the government so that some general can take over the government.”

The invasion of the buildings housing the three branches of the Brazilian government last Sunday represented both the culmination of the offensive by Bolsonaro and his civilian and military allies to promote a coup to overturn the election, and the first episode in a new political stage of the developing fascist movement in Brazil.

The nearly 5,000 fascist demonstrators who, after leaving the gates of the Army Headquarters, stormed the buildings of the *Praça dos Três Poderes* (Three Powers Plaza), were not demanding a review of the results of the allegedly “rigged” elections, that would declare Bolsonaro the victor. Rather, they called their demonstration a “seizure of power by the people,” and demanded an “intervention by the Armed Forces” that would inaugurate a new dictatorial military regime in Brazil.

Lula's remarks Thursday exposed a concrete path through which the goals of these fascist forces could have been realized.

On Sunday afternoon, while Bolsonaro's supporters were still occupying government offices, Defense Minister Múcio, meeting with Army Commander Gen. Júlio César de Arruda, telephoned Lula and proposed imposing a GLO. According to media reports, the commander claimed to have 2,500 troops “on standby” to intervene in Brasilia. Lula, who was 800 km from the capital, responded “testily to the possibility of the Army acting to contain the coup plotters by means of a GLO,” reported *Folha de São Paulo*.

The GLO is a legal device that allows the Brazilian president, confronting a “disturbance of public order” in which the “exhaustion of the instruments” provided by the constitution has been supposedly reached, to call for an operation “conducted by the Armed Forces.” The increasing use of GLO missions, especially under previous PT governments, has been one of the channels for the military's re-emergence as a principal actor in the Brazilian political sphere.

As Lula's admitted in his press conference, in the GLO proposed by Múcio and Arruda, it would have been impossible to differentiate the commanders of the military operation from the very “Agents of Public Order Disruption” that it was purportedly meant to suppress.

“There were many people from the Military Police conniving, there were many people from the Armed Forces inside conniving,” Lula stated. He continued: “I am convinced that the door of the Presidential Palace was opened so that people could enter, because there is no broken door... In the videos I have seen, I saw Army soldiers talking to the invaders, I saw soldiers singing along with the invaders.”

In another serious admission, Lula described how the military, after having allowed the invaders of government offices to return to the encampment at the gates of the Army headquarters, prevented the enforcement of an arrest order against the protesters on Sunday night. The president said that while “two tanks” were used to protect the fascist encampment from police action, “the general called me saying ‘president, it is very dangerous to enter the encampment at night, there are too many people, a disaster could happen.’”

Metrópoles, having spoken with Lula's ministers, reported that government officials believe that, “during the early hours of the morning, the military removed reserve soldiers and their families from the encampment, preventing them from being arrested.” Among the notable participants in the camp, the newspaper highlights, were relatives of Gen. Eduardo Villas Bôas, who had posted photos from the scene.

Villas Bôas was appointed Army commander in 2015 by President Dilma Rousseff of the PT, who had presented him as a legalist. In the aftermath, the general gained prominence by breaking the military's relative silence in Brazilian political life and speaking out against granting a writ of habeas corpus that would allow Lula, imprisoned for corruption, to run in the 2018 elections against Bolsonaro.

While contesting the election in which he was defeated, Bolsonaro had private meetings with Villas Bôas, a political mentor throughout his government. In November, the general spoke publicly in support of the "population [that] continues to gather at the doors of the barracks asking the Armed Forces for help." He warned that the media's attempts to "isolate the demonstrations" would create yet another "factor of dissatisfaction," and concluded: "History teaches that people who fight for freedom will never be defeated."

The facts presented by the Brazilian president on Thursday lead to inevitable conclusions.

First, the fascist action that occurred in Brasília last Sunday was not merely a spontaneous attack organized by a group of "extremists." It was carefully engineered in collaboration with forces and individuals high up in the military and the state.

Second, the military forces involved in this conspiracy sought to use the episode as leverage to expand their political power over the state.

Third, this episode did not signify a defeat for the fascist forces that promoted it. They remain lodged in positions of power and will continue their preparations for an authoritarian coup.

These conclusions are fearfully avoided by the PT and the political forces that support it. While they see the real threats posed to Lula's government, their response is a desperate attempt to appease and negotiate with the forces actively seeking a coup d'état.

Despite acknowledging that his defense minister had advised him in practice to abdicate power and deliver it into the hands of the generals, Lula has insisted that Múcio remain in office. He is being kept there in an attempt to forge a permanent bridge between the government and the military coup plotters.

Even though it refused to impose a GLO in response to the fascist assault in Brasília, the PT government depends more and more directly on the protection of the military. *O Estado de São Paulo* reported Wednesday that "faced with the call for a new *Bolsonarista* protest to 'take back power'... officials of the Lula government are already admitting to asking the Armed Forces for help in protecting public buildings in Brasília."

In an act of remarkable cowardice, Lula's justice minister

on Friday held a "ceremony honoring the agents who acted in the repression of the acts of vandalism in the *Praça dos Três Poderes* on Sunday the 8th," reported the *Estado*. Minister Flávio Dino, who governed Maranhão in name of the Maoist Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), pathetically pleaded with the coup plotters: "For the love of God, the election of 2022 is over, definitely understand this."

Lula's first two weeks in power confirm the assessment made by the Socialist Equality Group in Brazil (GSI) about the reactionary political role assigned to the PT government. On the eve of the elections, the GSI declared:

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 efforts by the PT and its pseudo-left allies in the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) to convince the Brazilian working class and youth that it was possible to confront the threats of fascism through a "broad front" of the bourgeoisie against Bolsonaro have been exposed as an absolute fraud.

The turn by the Brazilian ruling class to fascism and other forms of political reaction is a response to the development of the contradictions of capitalism and the potential of an explosion of the class struggle. This bourgeois reaction can only be fought through a struggle for an independent working class political movement against capitalism, which means a direct confrontation with the PT government.



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