

Brazil's Congress launches January 8 coup inquiry as Lula covers for the military

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More than four months after the fascist storming of the seats of political power in Brasilia by supporters of former president Jair Bolsonaro, the Brazilian Congress has begun a Joint Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPMI) into the Acts of January 8, 2023. The presentation of the agenda for the six-month investigation, which was scheduled for Thursday, has been postponed until next week.

The events that this Commission of Inquiry are to investigate represent the biggest shock to Brazil's civilian regime since it was established in 1985-88, after 21 years of military dictatorship. The attempted coup of January 8, which was unquestionably prepared at the highest echelons of the state and the armed forces, revealed that sections of the Brazilian ruling class are determined to dispense with any democratic facade and reestablish dictatorship as their means of exercising political power.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote in January, the attack in Brasilia “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 response of the Brazilian establishment in the following months, particularly that of the Workers Party (PT) government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, has demonstrated that there exists no faction of the bourgeoisie that is able or willing to respond to the growing fascist threat. The conditions in which the parliamentary investigation into the coup attempt is being held only confirm this elementary truth.

The long delay in convening the Commission of Inquiry is the result of the PT government's determination to prevent a public investigation into the conspiracy that, in the words of the president himself,

came close to toppling him from power “so that some general could take over the government.”

After working to dissuade congressmen from the PT itself from convening an inquiry, the Lula government entered into frantic negotiations with its far-right allied parties, such as União Brasil, to block the CPMI. In February, the government leader in Congress, Randolfe Rodrigues, declared that they were “working to disarm this CPMI,” which he said was “led by the opposition” in order to “obstruct the ongoing investigations [into the] responsibility of those who committed the terrorist acts of January 8, 2023.”

The government was forced to invest heavily—with an ample distribution of public offices and funds, according to media reports—to get its allied parties to withdraw support for a proposal that it effectively characterized as sabotage of ongoing investigations into the coup attempt. This very fact reveals the fragile foundations upon which the PT's power rests.

While the PT fought to limit investigations exclusively to the secret operations of the Federal Police and the Supreme Court (STF), the fascistic opposition led by Bolsonaro's Liberal Party (PL) doggedly sought the opening of the public inquiry into the coup that it itself had planned. The PL and its allies aim to use the CPMI to create a platform to wave the political banners of the January 8 coup, while spreading the lie that the PT was the real architect of the invasion of government buildings, having purposefully undermined security and infiltrated agents responsible for “acts of vandalism.”

This false narrative by Bolsonaro's supporters gained momentum after the leak in mid-April of security camera footage showing Lula's Institutional Security Cabinet minister, Gen. Gonçalves Dias, walking among the protesters occupying the Planalto presidential

palace. In response, the government fired Gonçalves Dias and agreed to set up the Commission of Inquiry to reaffirm, according to Randolfe, that “we were not the executioners of January 8, we are the victims.”

Even after having agreed to the inquiry, the Lula government is openly seeking to derail the work of the investigation. On the eve of its installation, Randolfe and the leader of the PT caucus, Zeca Dirceu, had dinner with the president of the commission, Arthur Maia, of União Brasil. According to *Veja* magazine, they demanded from Maia “‘responsibility’ in dealing with the military.” A participant interviewed by the magazine summarized the contents of the discussion: “The government recognizes that the relationship with the Armed Forces is not good and that it is not possible to stretch the rope, put the military against the wall, and throw the CPMI over them.”

The discussion reported by *Veja* is entirely consistent with the attitude and objectives openly pursued by the PT. On the opening day of the CPMI, May 25, Zeca Dirceu declared to CNN that this investigation “actually should not even exist.” According to the PT leader, “the political class should be dealing with hunger, job creation, education, health care,” and most importantly, “approving a new sustainable fiscal regime.”

In other words, as it seeks the unity of the Brazilian bourgeoisie to confront a working class increasingly impatient with the decline in its social conditions, the PT cannot allow the public agenda to be lost in exposing and fighting a fascist conspiracy within the state.

In particular, the PT wishes to prevent at any cost the exposure of the military high command’s engagement in systematic attacks on the legitimacy of the electoral process; its official support for a “popular mobilization” to overthrow the elected government; and its conspiratorial discussions, reported by various sources, of a possible uprising to consolidate a coup.

As it refuses to disarm the civilian and military forces acting to overthrow democracy, the PT seeks to buy their favors. In a revealing interview, Navy Commander Marcos Olsen, sworn in last month, declared: “I find it absolutely justifiable, in light of all that has occurred, that the president [Lula] has his reservations about the military in an ideological political context.... But, since the first conversation I

had with him, he has always been concerned about assuring investments for the Force.”

Despite Lula’s attempts to cover up the tensions between his government and the military by showering it with increasing state resources, his government cannot buy its way out of these contradictions. American imperialism, which conspired alongside the Brazilian military to overthrow the elected government of João Goulart in 1964, remains a key player in this process.

Seeking to secure its strategic interests in Latin America, permeated by its growing war campaign against Russia and China, Washington is again establishing independent and extra-constitutional relations with the Brazilian military. This alarming fact was made explicit by the leaked Pentagon documents, which revealed that Brazilian Navy officials maintained contacts with the US government, seeking to shift the Lula administration’s foreign policy towards a closer alignment with Washington.

Recently, the daily *Estado de São Paulo* reported that the Brazilian Army organized a major international seminar with the US and NATO countries, from which it deliberately excluded Russia and China without consulting the government. According to the newspaper, along with a recent episode in which the Ukrainian government requested the purchase of Brazilian armored vehicles directly from the Ministry of Defense, the seminar was seen among Lula’s officials “as an example of how military diplomacy clashed with that of the government.”

The cowardly strategy of the PT government, unconditionally supported by the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) and other pseudo-left groups, can only pave a more certain path to a successful fascist coup in the future. It must be confronted by an intransigent campaign to prepare the working class to disarm the bourgeois state and take political power into its own hands.



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