

Brazilian parliamentary inquiry indicts former president Bolsonaro and generals for attempted coup

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October 18 marked the conclusion of the work of the Brazilian legislature's Joint Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (CPMI) into the fascist assault on the national capital of Brasília on January 8, barely a week after President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT) had taken office. Its stark conclusion was that former president Jair Bolsonaro had been “intellectually and morally” responsible for the assault, as well as for a “conspiracy to commit a crime, political violence, a violent attempt to abolish the rule of law, and a coup d'état.”

Bolsonaro was indicted along with over 60 others, half of whom belong to the military, including former Army commander Gen. Freire Gomes and Navy commander Adm. Almir Garnier, who according to Bolsonaro's former aide, Lt. Col. Mauro Cid, had agreed to provide Bolsonaro with troops for a takeover.

The indictments have no immediate practical consequences, being referred by Congress to a number of other state branches, including the Attorney General's Office (PGR) and the Federal Police. Nonetheless, the report in itself constitutes a crucial element in the deepening of the crisis of bourgeois rule in Brazil. Despite all its efforts, the PT's ruling coalition in Congress could not hide from millions of Brazilians that a vast conspiracy was put into motion involving dozens of high-ranking officials from the security apparatus. And, despite the party's lies about a decisive victory on January 1 and in the months after the beginning of government transition, this conspiracy was fully alive and able to take over the capital.

The assault saw thousands of fascistic supporters of Bolsonaro storm the headquarters of the three Constitutional powers—the Congress, Supreme Court (STF) and the presidential offices—after repeated calls by Bolsonaro for his followers to express support for his false allegations that electoral fraud was responsible for his defeat in the October 2022 general elections. The mob was escorted and guided from rallying points in the capital, including the national Army headquarters, to the Three Powers Square where government buildings are concentrated, and where a few dozen police and soldiers either welcomed them or were instantly overrun.

While obviously emulating the putsch attempt led by former United States President Donald Trump a year earlier, with the storming of US Congress, Bolsonaro's followers were also following clear signals that the military would support an overthrow of the Electoral Court. This was most graphically expressed in a November 9, 2022 military report on the safety of the country's electronic ballot boxes, which concluded that fraud “could not be ruled out.” Those allegations, made relentlessly by Bolsonaro throughout his term, ran counter to

previous reports by the military itself, which in the previous decades of use of the electronic ballot boxes participated in numerous “hackathons” sponsored by the electoral authorities, failing to produce any evidence that the machines were prone to fraud.

After the vote tally was announced on October 30, and as Bolsonaro refused to concede, supporters immediately started setting up camps in front of barracks all over the country, demanding a military takeover. The camps were defended by the military as an expression of “freedom of speech,” at the same time that official press releases of the high command decried “authoritarian” measures by the STF against those claiming electoral fraud. Shortly before the end of the year, on December 18, a Bolsonaro supporter was caught attempting to blow up a fuel tanker at the capital's airport, in an attempt to provoke and legitimize the use of emergency powers.

As the high point of such conspiracies, the fascist assault on the capital provoked a political storm in the country. It came barely a week after Lula's theatrical third inauguration on January 1, in which the PT proclaimed a decisive victory over the far-right and the dawn of a new era for bourgeois democracy in Brazil. Lula, who was visiting a flood-hit region south of the capital in the state of São Paulo on January 8, refused to use executive powers to order the military to take over the security in the capital for fear he would lose control of the situation. The government then decided on a takeover of the capital's state-level security forces, which lasted for almost two months.

From the start, the summoning of the CPMI, joining both senators and representatives, was forcefully resisted by the PT government. Opposing Bolsonaro since his 2018 election campaign from the standpoint of the defense of the capitalist state—and criticizing Bolsonaro for compromising Brazilian capitalism's interests abroad—the PT sought to deal with the fascistic faction of the national bourgeoisie by ceding secretive, police-state powers to STF Justice Alexandre de Moraes. From the immediate aftermath of the January 8 attacks, the government resisted calls for a CPMI, insisting that a classified inquiry being led by Moraes was sufficient.

The CPMI was only initiated after the far-right opposition had gathered enough support in Congress to attempt to falsely indict the Executive for staging the attacks. The government then set in motion parliamentary maneuvers to ensure its representatives a majority on the commission. The commission's hallmark was its exclusive reliance upon information already publicly available through leaked or declassified information obtained by the Federal Police. Hearings were restricted to questioning figures, such as Lieutenant Colonel Cid,

kept in pre-trial detention by order of Justice Moraes, and who were already negotiating plea bargains. Information not made publicly available by Moraes was only accessible by CPMI members in a “safe room” monitored under the most stringent conditions, which included a prohibition on members of Congress making any reproduction of the material.

Throughout the procedures, the government’s overriding concern was to present the suspects as isolated from the security establishment, and, as such, acting as individuals and not an expression of the crisis of the capitalist state.

The CPMI’s final report, written by the government-allied Senator Eliziane Gama, makes precisely the point that, despite the 60 indictees, including Bolsonaro, “there is nothing to see” in the investigation. It concludes: “Against the coup plotters, the solidity of our institutional arrangement prevailed,” pointing to “the sanitizing action of the sectors of the police security forces that did not allow themselves to be contaminated by the ideological discourse of Bolsonarism” and to “the constitutional stance of the Armed Forces.”

In other words, the Brazilian military, which the CPMI admits was deeply implicated in a conspiracy to overthrow democracy less than four decades after the official dissolution of its 21-year-long bloody CIA-backed dictatorship, is to be commended as the chief defender of democracy.

Gama leaves no doubt that the government sees the CPMI report as a means to “close the case” on the coup conspiracy and resume business as usual: “This report is a real demonstration of the victory of democracy against fascism, fundamentalism and the attempt to usurp and take away rights that we have kept for years through blood and sweat, which is our democratic rule of law.”

This attempt to ignore reality, contradicted by the fact that key members of the military chain of command were prepared to follow Bolsonaro in establishing a dictatorship, is rooted in the class interests represented by the PT-led coalition. The Bolsonaro government, and his plans to overthrow bourgeois democracy, arose out of the world crisis of capitalism, which is giving rise to wars, austerity to finance them and the growth of the far right and police-state measures to impose them in country after country. The PT, entirely committed to the preservation of capitalist rule, fears a working class reaction against capitalism itself—the source of austerity, war and dictatorship—indefinitely more than it fears fascism.

Those class interests are behind the cowardly, and veering on pathetic, attempt to deny the terminal crisis of bourgeois democracy in Brazil expressed in another section of the report. It states: “It would be a tragedy for democracy if it were confirmed, for example, that at least 6 of the 16 members of the Army High Command, would have been in favor of reading article 142 of the Constitution as a norm authorizing military intervention in the country and/or in favor of decreeing a GLO (Guarantee of Law and Order [operation]), during internal discussions within the high command.”

The fact that the CPMI has been shut down without any attempt to investigate the claims presented in its own report regarding the “tragical” implications of “at least” a third of the military top brass supporting a coup exposes the PT government itself as an accomplice of the far right and the military.

The report also makes abundantly clear that the PT government and the Brazilian ruling class as a whole are aware that the continued revelations stemming from the aftershocks of the January 8 attacks are actually fueling the mass opposition the government is attempting to squelch. While glorifying the military as the backbone of democracy,

the report lays the groundwork for a massive expansion of state powers.

The report opens with a political analysis of the broader framework of the coup plot in Brazil in which it denounces unnamed “coups by the left” and “left-wing extremism”: “Modern coups—on the left and on the right—don’t use tanks, cables and soldiers. They begin with hybrid, psychological warfare, based on lies, smear campaigns, subliminal propaganda, the spread of fear and the fabrication of hatred.”

The document, written and approved by the PT and its pseudo-left allies, including the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL), proceeds in chauvinistic language that matches that of Bolsonaro and the fascists: “The coup moves forward by appropriating the national symbols. The guerrillas of chaos distort the National Flag ... they make the National Anthem their song, as if ‘Ouviram do Ipiranga’ [the first words of the hymn] wasn’t the soundtrack of a country marked by diversity, plurality and freedom.”

After decrying the “exhaustion of liberal democracy,” the report adds: “However, it should be noted that the crisis of prestige of liberal democracy is not only appropriated by far-right movements. The process of manipulating those affected by the globalization process also has actors on the extreme left, which also shows that material discontent is fertile ground for anti-democratic militants from across the ideological spectrum.”

The report argues that “extremism,” supposedly a product of mass communication made possible by the internet, must be countered through censorship. It claims: “[T]he current state of the Brazilian digital ecosystem is a threat to our Democratic Rule of Law, which is why it violates the deepest constitutional standards.”

This reactionary conclusion of the document represents a blueprint for a police state. The inevitable implication of such conceptions is that fascism—which is equated with “left-wing extremism,” that is, socialism—should be counteracted by mass censorship and repression.

The outcome of the CPMI makes clear that the Brazilian working class can confront the growing threat of dictatorship and fascism only through a break with the PT and all the pseudo-left parties committed to the preservation of the rotten bourgeois order. This fight must be oriented against the whole capitalist system, fusing itself with the growing class struggle and opposition to war across the world.



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