

One year since the January 8 fascist uprising in Brazil

Tomas Castanheira
10 January 2024

Monday marked one year since the fascist coup attempt in Brasilia, led by ex-president Jair Bolsonaro with support from the military.

On the afternoon of January 8, 2023, one week after the inauguration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT), a mob of fascist supporters of the ex-president invaded the main government buildings, repeating Bolsonaro's accusations of electoral fraud and demanding the seizure of power by the armed forces.

The first anniversary of this assault on the Brazilian capital, which marked the ruin of the civilian regime instituted in 1985-1988 after two decades of military dictatorship, was observed by the PT government with an event dubbed "Unshaken Democracy." The celebration, held under heavy police guard, was conceived as a means of transmitting to the Brazilian population the idea that the dictatorial conspiracy that unfolded a year ago had been effectively overcome.

In the main speech at the event, President Lula hailed those "who placed themselves above differences to deliver an eloquent 'no' to fascism." He referred in particular to the Supreme Federal Court (STF) and to the national Congress, which joined in sponsoring the event, to the "legalist military" and to the "security force workers," that is to say, the police. "We saved democracy," Lula declared.

The president demanded exemplary punishment for "all those who financed, planned and executed the coup attempt," affirming that "there is no pardon for those who attack democracy, their country and their own people."

Nonetheless, Lula was compelled to recognize that democracy in Brazil, one of the most unequal countries in the world, is "imperfect."

"Democracy for the few is not really a democracy," he said. Despite this, he concluded, "If we were able to put our differences to the side to defend the democratic regime, we are able to unite in building a more just and less unequal country."

These statements sound like a repetition of Lula's inauguration speech, in which he affirmed that his "democratic front," made of the parties of Brazil's rotting bourgeois establishment, "blocked the return of authoritarianism to the country" and "overcame the terrible challenge to democracy." Just one week later, reality brutally upended this rosy rhetoric.

One year after the fascist attack on Brasilia, the PT and its pseudo-left supporters, inseparably tied to crisis-ridden capitalism, have learned nothing and can learn nothing. They continue in their attempts to hide the dictatorial threats to the working class.

The conditions under which Monday's event took place completely demolish the farce of Brazil's "Unshaken Democracy."

The media widely reported that the participation of the commanders of the Armed Forces, which the PT saw as central in conveying the

message of a "democratic commitment" by the military, was achieved only through the insistence of Defense Minister José Múcio.

While Lula hailed the brave governors and deputies who confronted fascism, a whole number of governors, including those of Brazil's two largest states, as well as the president of the Chamber of Deputies, ostentatiously boycotted the ceremony, rejecting Lula's invitation to participate.

The political significance of this boycott was highlighted by a statement from the Supreme Court judge and president of the Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE), Alexandre de Moraes, last week. Moraes revealed that he had ordered the immediate jailing of the governor of the Federal District, the security secretary and police commander of Brasilia on January 8 of last year with the objective of preventing the clear alignment of the local government with the coup movement triggering a "domino effect" across the country.

The penetration and scope of the dictatorial conspiracies within the Brazilian state were exposed, despite the best efforts of the PT and the entire political establishment, in successive revelations over the last year. In their face, the demands made by Lula for "exemplary punishment" of all those involved in the coup remain conveniently vague.

Lula has never endorsed the conclusions of the Joint Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPMI) on January 8, whose formation he and his government fought to prevent, and, subsequently, whose actions they attempted to restrict. The CPMI concluded its work in October, declaring Bolsonaro the "intellectual and moral" author of the coup attempt and indicting 30 military officers, including the former commanders of the Navy and the Army, for crimes that include the attempted "violent abolition of the democratic state of law" by means of a coup.

Different sources confirmed to both the CPMI and the media that the military commanders discussed and seriously weighed giving their support to the coup attempt. The then-Navy commander, Adm. Almir Garnier, insisted up until the last moment on supporting it. Then the Army commander, Gen. Freire Gomes, blocked the arrest of the fascist militants on January 8, threatening a violent confrontation to defy the orders of the elected government.

These facts are criminally denied by figures in Lula's own government. His minister of defense declared last week that "we still need to find those responsible [for January 8] to dispel the cloud of suspicion over the Armed Forces," and declared that it was the military that actually saved Brazil from a coup.

Monday's event served to reaffirm the PT government's support for an escalation of internet censorship. The president alleged that "our democracy will be constantly under threat as long as we are not firm

in regulating social media.” This point was vigorously reiterated by Moraes, who, while keeping secret the results of his investigation into the coup, is directing an authoritarian offensive against freedom of expression in Brazil.

The military and the fascistic ex-president utilized not merely social media, but above all official means of the state to discredit the electoral process and incite the mobilization for a coup on January 8. But while the PT government promotes internet censorship, it is systematically strengthening the power of the military, transferring growing resources to the Armed Forces and allowing their consolidation as independent political actors.

In December, Lula approved a new law that regulates the activities of the Military Police, drafted in parliament by an alliance between the PT and deputies aligned with Bolsonaro, which was established behind the backs of the population. In an article published by the daily *Folha de São Paulo*, the researchers Adilson Paes de Souza, of the University de São Paulo, and Gabriel Feltran, of Sciences Po de Paris, denounced the new legislation for being explicitly based on a 1969 decree that established the political police of the military dictatorship, and on some points being even more aggressive.

The researchers posed a crucial question: “How can a law approved in a time of democracy be even more authoritarian than a decree issued during a dictatorship’s height of repression?”

Answering this question demands a consideration of the historical and international context which is driving the Brazilian ruling class as a whole to reestablish dictatorial forms of rule.

The crumbling of bourgeois democracies and the strengthening of figures and parties of the extreme right is a universal phenomenon, which is advancing explosively in Latin America. His silence on these critical developments exposes the political emptiness of Lula’s formal defense of democracy.

Among these developments was the parliamentary coup that toppled Peru’s pseudo-left president, Pedro Castillo, promoted by the far right and the military and with the support of US imperialism, exactly one month before the fascist assault on Brasilia. Seeking to put himself in Washington’s good graces, Lula criminally backed the overthrow of Castillo and the illegitimate regime of Dina Boluarte, which unleashed a wave of murderous repression against the popular opposition in the streets.

And, less than one year after Bolsonaro’s coup attempt, a fascist was elected president of Argentina, the major neighboring state to Brazil. Like Bolsonaro, Argentina’s Javier Milei openly draws inspiration from the brutal military dictatorship that ruled his country from 1976 to 1983. While Lula was constrained from participating in the inauguration ceremony in Buenos Aires, Bolsonaro was received by Milei as the effective political leader of Brazil.

On top of all this, the January 8 fascist assault in Brazil was a further unfolding of the same tendencies seen in the January 6, 2021 coup attempt led by Donald Trump in Washington. Beyond openly serving as a political model for Bolsonaro and his allies in Brazil, the fascist coup attempt in the heart of world imperialism represented a nodal event in the unfolding disintegration of bourgeois democratic regimes globally.

Despite the silence on this event in Brasilia, Lula sought to respond to the links between the authoritarian attacks in the US and Brazil with a guest opinion column published by the *Washington Post* on Monday. After repeating his reactionary attacks on social media for “strengthening extremist speech,” he concluded:

Another Jan. 6 or Jan. 8 can be avoided only by transforming the reality of inequality and precarious work. This concern motivated the partnership to promote decent work that I launched with President Biden in September.

The exalting of Biden as an agent for the promotion of social equality and world democracy is a complete fraud, which ends up exposing the criminal political role being played by Lula himself.

Far from representing “democracy” against the candidate for dictator, Donald Trump, the Democratic president pursues a policy of ever-expanding imperialist war, which requires the cultivation of fascist forces around the world, from the Ukrainian neo-Nazis to the fascistic Zionists who run the government of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel.

As part of this same movement, the Biden government is promoting right-wing military cliques throughout Latin America, having established in Brazil independent relations and channels of communication with the senior officer corps behind the official diplomacy with Lula.

Alongside the worldwide resurgence of fascist and dictatorial threats, the drive toward a new world imperialist war has its origins in the eruption of an historic crisis of global capitalism.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) affirmed in its New Year’s statement:

All talk about defending democracy and fighting fascism while ignoring the fundamental question of class and economic power – and, therefore, recognizing the necessity for the mobilization of the working class on a global scale for the overthrow of capitalism – is cynical and politically impotent demagoguery.

These same historic contradictions are driving the “normalization of socialism in the political outlook of the working class.” In Brazil and internationally, the objective conditions are maturing for the building of a conscious revolutionary leadership, the parties affiliated with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which are called upon to lead the definitive overthrow of capitalism and taking of power by the working class worldwide.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)