

# Lula imposes silence on the anniversary of the 1964 military coup in Brazil

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Last Monday marked the 61st anniversary of the US-backed military coup in Brazil that overthrew the elected government of President João Goulart and established a brutal dictatorship that remained in power for 21 years.

The date was observed by the Workers Party (PT) government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva with the same reactionary directives it adopted for the historic 60th anniversary of the coup last year. In order to avoid friction with the upper echelons of the Armed Forces, infested with fascist apologists for the military dictatorship, the official orientation of the Lula government was to ignore the date.

In 2024, the Brazilian Socialist Group for Equality (GSI) wrote in response to the government's cancellation of planned ceremonies in memory of those murdered, tortured and imprisoned as a result of the military coup:

Lula's statements are remarkable in light of recent events. The bourgeois PT government's nervousness about the issue is directly proportional to the renewed relevance of the lessons of the 1964 coup for the Brazilian and international working class.

This assessment is even truer today.

This year's anniversary took place a week after the indictment of former president Jair Bolsonaro and seven allies, almost all members of the top brass of the military, accused of being the "hard core" of the fascist coup attempt that culminated in the attack on the seats of power in Brasilia on January 8, 2023.

The complacent attitude of the PT government towards the persistent danger of a military fascist coup, contrasts with the moods of significant sections of the Brazilian population.

The popularity achieved by *I'm Still Here*, the movie depicting the terror of the military dictatorship that was awarded an Oscar for the best international film in March, is one of the most significant mass cultural phenomena in the recent period in Brazil. Almost 6 million Brazilians went to see it in theaters, in screenings that were repeatedly closed with political demonstrations by audiences in repudiation of the dictatorship.

As we wrote, this phenomenon reflects a widespread recognition that "resolving the current acute political crisis is impossible without... a reckoning never before carried out with the crimes and

dark legacy of the 1964-85 military dictatorship".

The Lula government's guidelines have provoked criticism from its own allies, who are aware of their unpopularity. An article in *Estado de São Paulo* noted: "The silence on March 31 is seen as embarrassing by some PT members."

Seeking to fill the political vacuum left by this "embarrassing silence," the PT and its pseudo-left allies held demonstrations on Sunday, March 30, in different Brazilian capitals, under the slogan "No Amnesty".

The demonstrations aimed not only to mark the 1964 coup, but also to counter the protests carried out two weeks earlier by Bolsonaro and his supporters, who advocate a bill to grant amnesty to those involved in the coup attempt of January 8, 2023. This demand makes direct reference to the "Amnesty Law," signed by the military itself in 1979, which led to the transition to a civilian bourgeois regime without trial or punishment for those responsible for the atrocious crimes of the military dictatorship.

Despite attracting a few thousand people to the streets, the demonstrations were significantly contained, smaller and less publicized than the recent pro-Bolsonaro protests. This was no accident. The main aim of their pseudo-left leaders was to release pressure from the growing opposition of youth and workers to the reactionary policies of the Lula government.

This was clear in the comments made beforehand by Guilherme Boulos, leader of the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) and the People Without Fear Front, a collective of social movements and trade unions that called for the protests. "The issue is not the size of the crowd. We can't leave the streets to Bolsonarism," Boulos told CNN on March 28, already assuming that the demonstrations would be smaller than those recently held by Bolsonaro's supporters, which were considered a fiasco.

In the main speech at the demonstration in São Paulo, Boulos ironically declared: "The world turns, and we will still have the opportunity to take the Human Rights Commission of the Chamber of Deputies and deliver Solidarity Kitchen lunch to [Bolsonaro] at the Papuda [Penitentiary Complex]."

Boulos' lack of seriousness and empty triumphalism are hallmarks of the petty-bourgeois politics espoused by the PSOL. In the last five years, Boulos has waged two failed campaigns for mayor of São Paulo. His campaigns were based on the bankrupt and reactionary political theory that a fight against fascism requires ever broader political fronts with the bourgeoisie and its right wing.

Also speaking at the São Paulo demonstration was the leader of the government in the Congress, Lindbergh Farias. Seeking to numb the audience to the persistent threat of fascism, the PT deputy declared: "I'm calling the leaders. This is going to be the week when we bury this Amnesty Bill. They won't succeed, I'm telling you."

According to Farias, the fact that the majority of the congressmen are in favor of or neutral towards the bill that exonerates the perpetrators of the 2023 attempted fascist coup, is just a misunderstanding that can be fixed with a few phone calls.

At the end of the day, Lula made a bland personal statement on social media. "Today is a day to remember the importance of democracy," he wrote on X, without referring directly to the military coup. Instead, Lula praised the civilian political regime inaugurated in March 1985, writing:

Our people, with much struggle, have overcome the dark periods of their history. For 40 years, we have lived in a regime of democracy and freedom, which became even stronger and more alive with the Federal Constitution of 1988. This is a path that I am sure we will continue to follow. Without ever going backwards.

No amount of "positive thinking" by Lula can obscure the fact that the Brazilian bourgeois regime is going through a crisis that demonstrates its failure to "overcome the dark periods" of the country's history.

Bolsonaro and the fascist military's conspiracy leaves no doubt that the experience and lessons of the 1964 coup remain very much alive for the Brazilian ruling class.

While the Lula government has adopted a cowardly and capitulating silence on the 1964 coup and the military dictatorship, Bolsonaro has done exactly the opposite. Since his first year in office, the fascistic president has openly celebrated March 31 as the victory of the "1964 Revolution".

General Walter Braga Netto, former Chief of Staff and Bolsonaro's running mate, joined the government as Minister of Defense on March 30, 2021. Remarkably, his first action in office was to issue an "order of the day" which, falsifying history, described the 1964 coup as a popular movement initiated in the streets, through which the military guaranteed the "democratic freedoms we enjoy today".

There are striking parallels between this narrative, and the development of the 1964 coup as a whole, and the strategy guiding the fascist coup attempt of 2022-23, which had Braga Netto as one of the main and perhaps most unscrupulous leaders.

The evidence published in the November Federal Police report shows that Bolsonaro, Braga Netto and their allies instigated a series of violent actions with the express aim of creating the conditions for a military takeover under the pretext of "restoring order," as they did 61 years ago.

The main center from which these actions originated was the encampment of Bolsonaro's fascist supporters in front of the Army Headquarters in Brasilia. On December 12, during the

ceremony certifying Lula's electoral victory, the encampment's participants burned buses and attacked public buildings, creating chaos in the Brazilian capital. On January 8, they led the storming of the governmental headquarters.

The fascist encampments in front of the barracks were hailed as "popular demonstrations" in an official note of the Armed Forces, which at the same time affirmed the military's "unrestricted and unwavering commitment to the Brazilian people."

The eventual police repression against these encampments would serve, in the words of the fascist conspirators, as "trigger events" for a military intervention that would place power in the hands of an "Institutional Crisis Management Office," commanded by Braga Netto and other generals.

This "crisis office" was supposed to play the same role as the "Supreme Command of the Revolution" led by the three commanders of the Armed Forces in 1964, which oversaw the consolidation of a dictatorial regime with the first Institutional Act of April 9.

The fascist encampments in front of the barracks, which Lula's current defense minister, José Múcio Monteiro, said were attended by his "friends" and "family members," are directly reminiscent of the 1964 March of the Family with God for Freedom.

With slogans such as "Green and yellow, without sickle and hammer" and "Brazil will not be a new Cuba," the March of the Family brought the most reactionary sections of the petty bourgeoisie to the streets of São Paulo on March 19, 1964, serving as a "popular" façade for the subsequent military takeover. The demonstration was organized and financed by the infamous Institute of Research and Social Studies (IPES), a counter-revolutionary think tank of the Brazilian capitalist elite clandestinely sponsored by the CIA.

The "vow of silence" between Lula and the military only serves to mask these fascist traditions that continue to be cultivated inside the barracks, providing an inspiration for future coups. Today, it is not only March 31, 1964 that serves as a touchstone for Brazil's fascist-military factions, but also January 8, 2023, their first attempt to take power in the 21st century.



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