

May Day 2026

The new scramble for Latin America and the road to revolution

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This speech was delivered by Tomas Castanheira, leading member of the Socialist Equality Group in Brazil, at the 2026 May Day Online Rally, organized by the WSWs and the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Comrades, on behalf of the Socialist Equality Group in Brazil, I extend revolutionary greetings to all participants in this May Day event.

In previous years, we warned that a new world war would put Latin America on the map of conflict on a scale unparalleled by previous wars. This is no longer a prediction, but the political reality of the present.

On January 3, Donald Trump invaded Venezuela and kidnapped President Nicolás Maduro, who remains illegally imprisoned in a New York jail. The new laws imposed by the “interim” regime of Delcy Rodríguez have rolled back Venezuelan sovereignty over its oil reserves by 80 years, to a point preceding the first nationalization measures. The country’s oil revenues now flow into a Qatari account, where Washington decides how the Venezuelan people should spend them.

Cuba is the next declared target. On April 10, Trump gave Havana a two-week ultimatum to open up to American capital and pay “compensation” for businesses expropriated during the 1959 Revolution. The energy blockade imposed since January has been causing continuous blackouts, the collapse of water systems, and shortages of medicines. This is a form of collective punishment that is prohibited by international law. It is a Gaza without bombs, prepared as a preliminary step to invasion and looting.

These are the gravest acts in a wider proliferation of criminal imperialist interventions. In the Caribbean and South Pacific, since September, the US military has sunk over 50 fishing boats and murdered 181 innocent people.

The few survivors—fishermen like Jhonny Sebastián Palacios, whose boat was attacked in cowardly fashion by an American drone—report being handcuffed, hooded, subjected to psychological torture, and deported to the infamous CECOT prison in El Salvador.

Trump remarked sadistically, “Nobody wants to go fishing anymore.” These criminal methods are becoming normalized throughout the region.

The “Shield of the Americas” Summit, which Trump convened in the midst of the war of extermination against Iran, made clear that the opening of a new front in the global war would mean no retreat in Latin America.

The participants in this summit, including Argentina’s Milei, Chile’s Kast, and El Salvador’s Bukele, are the political heirs of the military dictatorships of the 1970s, now back in power throughout the region. They signed a declaration endorsing Washington’s claims over Latin America and to transform the region into a battleground in the war against China.

Trump and his fascist clique proclaim a corollary to the Monroe Doctrine — the supposed right of the United States over the entire Western Hemisphere. Their actions make clear that for workers — whether residing in Latin America or the United States itself — this project will take the form of a “Hemisphere CECOT”: that is, an intercontinental complex of police terror and unrestricted exploitation.

Workers and youth must reject this Hitlerian plot and mount an offensive against it. The capitalist oligarchy that promotes it — demoralized, riven by political crisis at every level — is impotent before the colossal power of the working class. Its arrival on the scene will sweep away the neocolonial and dictatorial pretensions of the ruling class in a revolutionary uprising across the Americas.

But this demands a decisive political turn. From Castroism in Cuba to the “Bolivarian Revolution” and the

Pink Tide governments, bourgeois nationalism has collapsed in the face of imperialist eruption. More than a century of defeats has demonstrated the inability of these perspectives to solve the social and democratic problems in the region, let alone confront imperialism.

This truth is particularly evident in the erratic policies adopted by the Lula government in Brazil.

Flávio Bolsonaro — running as a stand-in for his father, sentenced to 27 years for an attempted coup — has made clear that the October presidential elections will be contested under the shadow of imperialist intervention and of the continuation of the fascist conspiracy that culminated in January 8, 2023. At the fascist CPAC summit, he proclaimed his goal of handing over Brazilian rare earths and critical minerals to the United States as the solution to free America from dependence on China.

And what alternative does Lula offer? Counterbalancing Trump's offensive, he made a pilgrimage to Spain and Germany, negotiating the exploitation of Brazilian rare earth resources with European imperialism. He met with Merz at the exact moment when Germany was announcing an escalation of its involvement in the war against Russia in Ukraine.

Having cravenly avoided any denunciation of the invasion of Venezuela and the kidnapping of Maduro, Lula sought to cultivate what he called his personal "chemistry" with Trump. "I don't want war with anyone. What I want is to build narratives," he announced after Washington launched its war of extermination against Iran.

But war is not an accident. Illusions in a return to a "rules-based international order" serve only to obstruct the struggle necessary to defeat the war underway. Domestically, this policy translates into the suppression of the working class as an independent political actor, paving the way for fascism and imperialist intervention.

It is decisive to reject the "national front" program promoted by the trade unions and the pseudo-left ever since Trump's tariffs last year.

Most recently, the union federations delivered to Lula a document titled "Working Class Agenda 2026-2030." The CUT leader, Sérgio Nobre, declared: "President, here is your army, and we will be fighting this battle alongside you. You are our general." The language leaves no doubt: this is the adoption of a "wartime" policy that abolishes class struggle and workers' political rights in the name of the "fatherland" — that is, of the national capitalists.

Across all of Latin America, the working class is in turmoil. The war against Iran is already producing direct

economic shocks on the region — surging fuel prices, soaring fertilizer costs, and rising food inflation — fueling an eruption of struggles.

In Mexico, truckers and farmers erected blockades in twenty states, citing the diesel and fertilizer hikes triggered by the war, amid a wave of strikes in the auto and tire industries and among teachers. In Chile, mass protests broke out against the fuel price hikes decreed by the new fascist president, José Kast. In 2025, strikes in Brazil rose by 14 percent, and a new wave of struggles has taken shape in recent weeks. Strikes have spread across education, with more than 50 universities on strike across the country; app-based workers also walked out in four states.

These struggles demand a revolutionary internationalist program, at the heart of which lies the unity of Latin American workers with workers in the imperialist countries. The same capitalist oligarchy that seeks neocolonial dominion over Latin America wants to abolish the social and democratic rights of workers in the United States.

The International Committee of the Fourth International and the Socialist Equality Group call upon the workers and youth in Brazil and throughout Latin America to fight for the political independence of the working class and to raise its revolutionary international unity against war and neocolonialism.

Build the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees! Build the Socialist Equality Parties, sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International!



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