

Lula's reelection in Brazil hailed by pseudo-left in US and Europe as supposed way forward against fascism

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The reelection of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, of the Workers Party (PT), on October 25, immediately transcended national borders, becoming a focus of attention for a wide array of pseudo-left organizations and nominally left-wing parties. From the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), through Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Unsubmissive France (LFI), to wings of the Democratic Party, including the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), in the United States, the Brazilian result was promptly proclaimed a victorious demonstration that the electoral path of "broad fronts" is the means for containing the global wave of fascism and the far right.

In practice, this celebration signifies a diversion from any genuine struggle against fascism. Far from representing a definitive defeat of reaction, the PT's victory expressed a defensive vote of the masses against the fascist threat, whose path was opened by the PT itself and by other bourgeois "progressive" parties that now purport to combat it. The attempt to transform Lula's election into a "universal model" serves the function of obscuring their own programs of austerity and militarism in their respective countries, for which the pseudo-left provides left cover.

The moment in which this campaign unfolds is decisive. It occurs amid an eruption of protests and strikes, above all in Spain and France, following the "No Kings" protests in the United States. No less important, it takes place on the eve of a series of elections: the US midterms next week, the Spanish elections on November 29, and the French elections next year. The reason these forces need to celebrate Lula now is precisely because the class struggle is exploding in their own countries—and they need to channel it back to the ballot box.

Precedent for backing Lula: the bankrupt Global Progressive Mobilization in Barcelona

This campaign did not begin with Lula's reelection. On April 17 and 18, Sánchez and Lula convened the "Global Progressive Mobilization" in Barcelona, under the banner of the "defense of democracy." As the WSWs documented at the time, it was "not a gathering of opponents of austerity, repression and war, but of their administrators."

Besides Lula and Sánchez, Hillary Clinton and Zohran Mamdani sent videos to the conference, alongside the Democrats Chris Murphy and Tim Walz—a demonstration of the role that the DSA and the pseudo-left play within the pro-imperialist, pro-war structure of the Democratic Party.

It was there that Lula, in a moment of frankness, admitted that "left-wing" governments had implemented austerity upon coming to power: "We have become the system." The phrase condenses the truth that the

current celebration seeks to conceal. The greetings on Lula's reelection are the second round of the same process: the administrators of austerity and war, dressed up as "defenders of democracy."

Sanders and Mamdani hail Lula's reelection

In the United States, the reaction came from two representatives of the same political machine operating within the Democratic Party: Senator Bernie Sanders and Zohran Mamdani, mayor of New York City and member of the DSA. Both had met with Lula in late September, before the UN General Assembly.

Significantly, Mamdani's meeting with Lula took place shortly before the mayor received Trump at Gracie Mansion, his official residence—the third meeting between the two in ten months. As the WSWs documented, "the DSA, in the person of its leading elected official, has formed a political alliance with Trump"—precisely the orientation that Lula has pursued in his active search for an accommodation with the American president.

On X, Bernie Sanders hailed Lula's "extraordinary victory," declaring that he had "stood up for Brazilian workers and democracy." Lula responded by thanking Sanders for his "solidarity" and declaring that "this victory belongs to the entire progressive camp."

Mamdani went further. He declared on X his "total admiration for everything Lula has done for the working people" and singled out the "end of the 6x1 work schedule": "This is the kind of thing working people seek—a more dignified life, with more rest, with time to breathe."

This formulation is a bold-faced lie. The struggle against the 6x1 work schedule was a movement that developed entirely from below, in the face of the open hostility from PT leaders. The party initially opposed the demand and only embraced it in the home stretch of the election campaign. This political maneuver was coordinated with hated representatives of the Brazilian Congress, whose objective for the PT was not to secure a right of the Brazilian working class, but to reverse Lula's electoral decline in the midst of a tight race against his fascist opponent, Flávio Bolsonaro.

The attempt to portray Lula's program of austerity and social cuts as a gift to the working class, willfully ignores the wave of strikes and protests by federal public employees against these policies.

The role of Sanders and the DSA is well known and extensively documented by the WSWs. In the week before his meeting with Lula, Sanders shared the stage of the "Pro-Human Assembly" in Washington with the fascist ideologue Steve Bannon—who, at the start of the week,

after Lula's reelection, said Trump should "isolate Lula's Marxist regime until he agrees to annul this stolen election."

At the same time, Sanders has long used "socialist" phraseology to cover the right-wing agenda of the Democratic Party, mobilizing his supporters for the campaigns of Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. The DSA is a faction of the Democratic Party that promotes the trade union bureaucracy and blocks any genuine opposition of the working class.

Spain: the "light of hope" that is rearming

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) was the most explicit in extolling Lula's victory. "What happened in Brazil will happen in Spain. The global progressive turnaround has just begun," he wrote on X. At a campaign event in Gijón, he declared: "If Brazil can do it, Spain can too. We are proud to be the 'Gallic village' of Europe, a light of hope amid so much shadow in the world."

The hypocrisy is twofold. Sánchez celebrates Lula as the "struggle against the far right," while his own government increases military spending to record levels, attacks migrants, imposes austerity and finances NATO's war against Russia. And the "Gallic village" metaphor—Spain as Asterix's resistance against the Roman Empire—is the nationalist framework that attempts to substitute the defense of the national state for the class struggle. The PSOE is not a bulwark against imperialism; it is an integral part of European imperialism and NATO.

At the Broad Front rally in Madrid, the former mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, called on those present to raise their arms in the "L" of Lula: "For hope. For a free Palestine. For Lula in Brazil. For the Broad Front on November 29." The invocation of a "free Palestine" is the most cynical fraud of all: the Sánchez government—of which Colau and the Broad Front are satellites—has not broken with Israel, has not cut the arms trade and remains integrated into the imperialist order that sustains the genocide in Gaza. It is precisely the kind of "symbolic tear" that characterizes this politics: humanitarian rhetoric to cover up real complicity.

France: Mélenchon's fight "against the American empire"

Mélenchon was the most enthusiastic over the Brazilian election. Before the votes were counted, he declared that "Lula's victory will be the victory of the people against the American empire." Afterwards, he proclaimed: "Long live Lula, long live the Brazil of dignity! He defeated the far right and foreign interference."

The "anti-imperialist" framing is the central fraud. The Lula government has not broken with American imperialism; it has adapted itself to it, sanctioned the US invasion and coup in Venezuela and is seeking a "partnership" with Washington. Mélenchon's formulation aims to substitute rivalry between states for the class struggle—and the LFI itself operates within the French national state, one of the world's major imperialist powers.

A former leader and minister of the Socialist Party, a party fully integrated into the bourgeois order, Mélenchon has an extensive record of hostility to the class struggle, particularly in his attempt to strangle the "yellow vest" movement, of subordination to the trade union bureaucracy in the struggle against Macron's pension cuts and of pro-war nationalism.

The most revealing aspect of the reaction, however, was the explicit attempt to export the operational methods of the PT's campaign. The

European press highlighted the phenomenon of "Janonization"—in reference to the digital tactics of federal deputy André Janones, whose WhatsApp group "Lula's Army" gathered more than 10 million people on the eve of the second round. In France, the grouping "Les Soldats Insoumis" ("Unsubmissive Soldiers") emerged; in Spain, groups were baptized as "Frenteampelistas" (Broad Frontists).

What is being exported is not a program, but a marketing technique. "Janonization" and "broad frontism" reduce the political struggle to an advertising contest, oriented exclusively toward the immediate electoral result. The "digital mobilization of the masses" divorced from any class content is precisely the mechanism by which the energy of the masses is contained and diverted behind the bourgeois state. It is the contemporary form of the subordination of the working class.

What this marketing technique also conceals is the actual content of Lula's Broad Front: a coalition of the PT with bourgeois and right-wing parties, from Geraldo Alckmin to the leaders of the "Centrão," which administers the capitalist state and imposes the austerity demanded by the banks and the financial markets.

Mélenchon's greeting, however, was not the only one from France—and it is precisely this that exposes him. Lula was equally congratulated by Emmanuel Macron, the "president of the rich" who imposed in 2023 a pension reform in defiance of parliament, who has been one of the greatest defenders of NATO's war against Russia and who today is attempting to violently suppress a revolt of students and workers against his program of austerity and attacks on social rights.

"My congratulations, @LulaOfficial, on your reelection. France and Brazil have much to build together. Faced with the great challenges of our time, let us strengthen our strategic partnership and bring to life the friendship between our two countries in the service of a fairer world," Macron wrote on X. The relationship between Lula and Macron is longstanding: the Brazilian president is a privileged interlocutor of one of the greatest representatives of world imperialism.

That the same Lula should be hailed, in the same terms, by Mélenchon and by Macron is not a contradiction—it is the confirmation that Mélenchon's "anti-fascist front" and the French imperialist state are two faces of the same bourgeois order. Mélenchon's "anti-imperialist" framing collapses before the fact that the man he presents as a symbol of the struggle "against the American empire" is, at the same time, the strategic partner of French imperialism.

What Lula's reelection represented—and did not represent—and the path forward in the struggle against fascism

A rigorous analysis of the electoral process reveals the character of the result. Lula lost more than 3 million votes from the first round of 2022 to the first round of this election, falling behind his opponent, the fascist senator Flávio Bolsonaro. He nonetheless achieved an unprecedented turnaround in the second round, receiving 10 million more votes than in the first (from 53.8 million to 64.2 million). At the same time, both Lula and Flávio were rejected by roughly 45 percent of the electorate throughout the campaign.

This result cannot be explained by the achievements of the Lula government, but by fear of what a new Bolsonaro government would represent. The PT's vote did not reflect an enthusiastic endorsement of its program or of the Broad Front's administration, but a defensive and massive reaction in the face of the dread of the return of an openly fascist government. The electoral mobilization—especially among the youth and the most exploited layers of the working class, a phenomenon occurring throughout the world—was driven by popular hostility to the advance of

authoritarianism, attacks on social rights and the destruction of public services.

The central premise shared by the organizations of the world pseudo-left is that the formation of unprincipled blocs with traditional bourgeois parties is the only means of “saving democracy” and blocking the rise of fascist figures such as Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Santiago Abascal or Bolsonaro. Historical experience and the current conjuncture demonstrate precisely the opposite: the broad front is not the antidote to fascism, but the fertile soil in which it grows.

The growth of the far right throughout the world is not an accidental phenomenon, but the direct product of the bankruptcy of social democracy and reformism. When governments labelled as “left” or “progressive”—the PSOE in Spain, the PT in Brazil, the Democratic Party in the US—assume responsibility for managing the capitalist state and imposing packages of social spending cuts, the frustration and despair of the masses are inevitably exploited by fascist demagogues. This is precisely the role that Lula plays in Brazil, and that Sánchez, Mélenchon, Sanders and Mamdani play in their respective countries.

Lula’s reelection will not pacify the class struggle, but rather open up a period of its intensification. The workers and youth who voted for Lula hoping to improve their living conditions will collide with the policies of austerity demanded by the markets and applied by the Broad Front.

The task that now presents itself is not to pressure these governments, nor to wait upon them. It is to break politically with the parties that administer them—the Democratic Party in the US, the PSOE in Spain, the PT in Brazil, Unsubmissive France in France and their counterparts throughout the world, together with their pseudo-left satellites and the trade union bureaucracy. In every country, an independent movement of the working class must be built, armed with an international socialist program. That is the only basis upon which fascism, dictatorship and imperialist war can be fought.



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