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Brazil

# Brazil in the shadow of the far right

- IV Online magazine - 2018 - IV526 - November 2018 -

Publication date: Sunday 18 November 2018

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**Marcelo Ramos, a member of PSOL, spoke to a meeting of Socialist Resistance in London on 6 November 2018 on the dangers and the prospects for resistance in Brazil after the election of Bolsonaro – the “Trump in the tropics”. This is the text of his speech.**

Today Brazil is living through one of the saddest moments of its history. The history of the Brazilian people is essentially a history of resistance, since the European colonial invasion it has been very difficult to survive in our land. But we fight and resist.

As you may know, the capitalist development in my country is permeated with blood throughout its history. This includes the fact that there was a military dictatorship in Brazil between 1964 -1985. But democratic struggles of the working class in the 1980s succeeded in securing important social achievements that were brought together through the Federal Constitution of Brazil approved in 1988. We succeeded in approving the need for a social function of private property, education and free public health for all, democratic freedoms, labor rights and greater popular participation in decisions.

Although the current constitution is applied selectively, it still protects most of the rights historically conquered by the subaltern peoples in Brazil. What is at stake today with the Bolsonaro election is exactly the end of the republican cycle that began with the 1988 constitution. 30 years later ,capitalism plunges Brazil again into a cycle of high repression.

Even with all their problems and contradictions we recognize that the Lula and PT class conciliation governments introduced some poverty reduction measures and invested more in social rights than all previous governments. So how was it possible for Brazil to elect a fascist president who defends the military dictatorship and the persecution to the left even after 13 years of the government of a party that was born of the unions and the landless movement? Bolsonaro did not come out of nowhere! We must remember two fundamental problems: the post-dictatorship democratic transition and the waning of PT's popularity from 2013 onwards.

First, Brazil, unlike Argentina, had a transition to democracy conducted by the military itself. They gave themselves an-amnesty for their crimes against humanity, they ensured that the first presidents continued their policy, and the majority of the population had negative memory of the military dictatorship. They promoted a conservative common sense which praised the dictatorship as a time of economic progress and social order, devaluing the persecution and violations of rights that occurred. Officials like Bolsonaro kept defending the policy of the dictatorship without suffering any retaliation.

Secondly from 2013, when the international economic crisis had serious effects on Brazil, the PT governments were widely challenged by popular mobilizations that brought millions of people to the streets. Intellectuals close to the PT claim that these protests were conservative and started the new fascist wave in Brazil. In my opinion this analysis is incorrect and dishonest. The so-called days of June 2013 were popular demonstrations unleashed in the context of the preparation for the World Cup and began with protests against the increase of the prices of public transport and the criticisms were extended to the withdrawal of investment in health and education for the World Cup of 2014.

The problem here is that if, on the one hand, there was a new generation of young social activists who formed in the leadership of those protests, and I am an example of this, a young university student from the periphery of one of the great cities of Brazil. On the other hand, the extreme right went to the streets and participated in those demonstrations – arguing that the fight against corruption as the main demand. The general response of the PT

government was the widespread repression of demonstrations, the use of new coercive legislation and the new national force, a military force created by Lula for use in military occupation of favelas (poor neighbourhoods) and large demonstrations.

Initially the direction of these manifestations that questioned the government and the project of the PT to govern was from a left perspective, even though there was great questioning of the traditional organizations of the left the general tone was defence of improvement of the life of the poorest ones: more investment in health, education and leisure. However with the cooling of the large demonstrations there was little organizational balance left. Even with some growth of the PSOL and movements like the MTST (Moving Homeless Workers Movement) the following years were about growth and organization of the far right, while the idea of getting rid of the PT was growing. What was done through the impeachment process of Dilma Rousseff, led in the congress by a deputy who today is imprisoned for corruption, and through the imprisonment of Lula, orchestrated by a Judge (Sergio Moro) who made this a political trial, and fulfilled so well his mission that he prevented the election of Lula as president, that last week he became the new Minister of Justice of Bolsonaro.

What is happening today in Brazil is the conclusion of a process of capital recovering from its crisis in an extremely violent way. Today Brazil faces its biggest financial crisis in history. Starting in 2013, a dispute about the causes and solutions of this crisis began. The fragile bases of the recent democracy in Brazil, the inability of the radical left to create an alternative pole to the PT project, and the great capacity that the far right has had to organize (in Brazil and in the world) provide the basis for understanding why Bolsonaro was elected in Brazil.

My family is an example of poor workers who gave Bolsonaro his victory. For them Bolsonaro represents change. In a country where rates of violence have surpassed those of wars such as those in Iraq and in Afghanistan Bolsonaro, with his speech “good bandit is dead bandit”, represents security. For my relatives, Bolsonaro represents the fight against corruption. In a country where all traditional parties are plunged in corruption, where even the PT has gained parliamentary support for its government through corrupt relations with traditional parties and has been placed by the media as the great example of a corrupt party, it matters little whether there is evidence that Bolsonaro and his party are also corrupt, what matters is to take the PT out of government.

Bolsonaro’s surprising election is explained by the anti-petism, fomented by the large media but also by the leap of organization that the far right has been given worldwide. The widespread use of fake news in social networks, often financed by entrepreneurs outside of regular campaign funding – a crime in Brazil – was Bolsonaro’s main way of organizing a passionate army of militants who are today the basis of Brazilian fascism. There are many similarities to Trump in the way he uses hate speech against LGBT groups, quilombolas, indigenous, landless and homeless, promising security and prosperity for conservative Christian families.

But there are also big differences with Trump, both in the neoliberal agenda that Bolsonaro and his new economy minister want to effect, ending social security and state-owned enterprises, but also in the greater aggressiveness of hatred toward the left. Bolsonaro, in addition to ending public universities and labour rights, also announced during the campaign, and reaffirmed one day after the election, that his government will pursue, to arrest the expulsion of all “reds” from the country, pointing mainly to the PT and PSOL. He intends to resume the persecutions of the military dictatorship, he has already stated that he intends to kill 30,000 people and it is okay to die “innocent”, everything to free Brazil from communism and the left. He also pledged to attack all popular governments in Latin America, such as Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia.

For this he will have a wide support network. Most of the bourgeoisie is with him. Most conservative evangelical leaders are with him, like Bishop Edir MacÃdo, Owner of Universal Church of Kingdom of God (UCKG, who has 30 churches in the United Kingdom) and owns the second largest communication network in Brazil. The military leadership is with him. The Judiciary summits have already shown that they will not face it.

But do not doubt, we will resist! Today we in PSOL have no doubt that the alternative is popular mobilization and on the streets. We will not succumb to fear of what is to come. We are counting on the formation of a broad democratic and anti-fascist front that opposes parliament and the streets against Bolsonaro's government measures, including counting on parties and sectors traditionally linked to the bourgeoisie, but that do not support the Bolsonaro project. We want all Democrats against Bolsonaro and Brazilian fascism! We understand that only a broad front in defence of democracy can oppose the force that fascism has won in Brazil.

PSOL, our party, has grown and demonstrated strength as a pole of organization of the popular movements that will resist in the next years. We grew up in these elections for the national congress and in the main states of the country. We have built an alliance with the indigenous movement and the homeless workers movement that is the best new factor on the Brazilian left. We believe it is possible to push the legitimacy of Fascist rule to the limit. 70% of Brazilians are against any pension reform and the Bolsonaro government will try to apply an ultraliberal reform that wants to end welfare and put a system of savings similar to Pinochet in Chile that filled the pockets of bankers and today starves the retirees.

The moment is terrible, 10 dead by the fascist paramilitary groups in 1 month. Our resistance must be intelligent, we do not want any more martyrs! For this your solidarity is fundamental! We need that our condemnations of Bolsonaro be spread as widely as possible, we need your shelter in the most difficult times. We need international networks of assistance to the movements in Brazil. Why we will not give up! Our hope is not over!

Against the shadow of fascism has the flame of millions of Brazilians who went to the streets on October 20 to show that in Brazil there is popular resistance. This is our strength!

For the memory of Marielle, Moa do Catendã<sup>a</sup> and dozens of social fighters who were murdered for defending our people in recent months, we have no right to retreat! By the blood of our indigenous ancestors, black Brazilians and caboclos, we will not retreat!

Comrades, more than ever, internationalism is a necessity. We need your solidarity!

Source [Socialist Resistance](#).

PS:

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