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Fourth International on Brazil

# Organizing resistance in Brazil and international solidarity against neofascist Bolsonaro's government

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**All solidarity with the workers, black people, women, youth, natives, peasants, landless and homeless people, LGBTI community, teachers, professors, scientists and artists who will be the targets of “ultra” neoliberal, conservative and authoritarian policies of the new occupant of Planalto Palace. With this turn to the ultra right, in the largest Latin American country, the social and democratic achievements of the last two decades in Latin America are more than ever under threat. The situation requires a broad mobilization of all the political and social forces in the world committed to democracy, to the struggle for the environment, against oppressions and inequalities of all kinds.**

The final result of the presidential elections in Brazil last October catapulted to power the deputy and former army captain Jair Messias Bolsonaro, considered, until just under a year ago, an outsider in the dispute, with less than 10% in the polls despite his 28 years in parliament. The president-elect in Brazil was, in fact, an almost folkloric figure, with his positions of undisguised defence of the military dictatorship (1964-1985) and of torture, his vehement defence of the “shoot to kill” bandits and massive incarceration as solution for the urban violence, his clumsy bigotry against feminists and women in general, his gross prejudice against gays, lesbians and transexuals, and all marginalized and contempt for basic social environmental, behavioural and labour rights.

But this ultra right figure, who had the support of the cattle agro-industry, part of the financial system, most of the neo-pentecostalist evangelical churches, most of the rich urban middle class and large popular sectors, will be inaugurated on 1 January 2019 as the 38th president of the Federative Republic of Brazil. With 55% of the vote, Bolsonaro came to power after the most polarized and violent election campaign in the history of the political system inaugurated in 1985 with the end of the last military dictatorship, the so-called New Republic. It was also the Brazilian election with the most decisive manipulation of fake news through social media, with the very probable participation of personalities and foreign companies.

These were not elections like any other. The pre-electoral environment began already under the sign first of a political assassination and then the persecution of the figure who was leading the polls. It was another terrifying chapter in the thriller of the institutional coup of 2016, which brought down the PT government. The murder, on 14 March, was that of Rio's councilwoman and feminist, black and LGBT activist Marielle Franco of the PSOL, whose death, along with that of driver Anderson Gomes, has still not been elucidated. A macabre message from the most reactionary forces to all blacks, to all favela activists, to all feminists, to all LGBTs, in an unprecedented institutional form. The persecution, perpetrated by the High Courts of Justice, traditional parties and Congress, and also by grassroots Bolsonist groups (who even shot at a bus in former president's caravan in the south of the country) was that of Lula, the PT leader, a coup that was reconsolidated with his arrest on 7 April, following a highly questionable process.

In early September, Bolsonaro was stabbed by a “lone wolf” while campaigning in the city of Juiz de Fora (Minas Gerais). The attack took him to the operating theatre three times, endangered his life, gave him the aura of a surviving hero, and yet gave him the pretext he needed to avoid debates - which he had already shown were difficult for him. Polarization has, since that episode, reached levels unknown in Brazil.

The first polls for the second round pointed to an overwhelming victory of the captain-candidate, which in the end did not happen because his victory in the first round imposed both unity and mobilization on the majority of the left and democratic forces, in a unified action that included millions of activists and people who first took to the streets in the race to “change the vote.” The mobilizations for Haddad in the last two weeks of October were strengthened by Folha de S. Paulo's revelation that Bolsonaro had used illegal business financing to pay for fake news in Whats App - a

practice similar to that already used by Donald Trump in 2016 via Facebook. Many Bolsonaro voters chose not to vote or to cancel their vote. But the fascist campaign did not fade: the candidate responded, in a speech on Avenida Paulista, promising to sweep from the map "the reds" and the largest newspaper in the country. The political climate was marked by physical aggression against pro-Haddad activists, rape, and even the murder of a capoeira master in Salvador (Bahia).

Nevertheless Bolsonaro finally won with a very significant advantage, 10 million more votes than Haddad (55% to 45%), with victories in most states - with the exception of the Northeast and Pará (Amazon). However, the PT managed to maintain the largest group in the Chamber of Deputies (56 MPs, against 52 for Bolsonaro's PSL) and, with its allies, the governments in all of the Northeast. At the same time, the far right conquered the governments of the rich and strategic Southeast-Rio, São Paulo, Minas Gerais. The hard core of Bolsonaro's backward coalition elected a group of 90 MPs, but their alliance could reach more than 200 votes of the total of 534.

## How was Bolsonaro possible?

It is impossible to understand the rise of Jair Bolsonaro without going back a few years in the report and recover the main characteristics and events that marked the 13 years of PT governments, overthrown by the institutional coup of 2016.

In the federal government, PT benefited, between 2003 and 2013, from the global boom in commodity exports. Even deepening the deindustrialization of the country, its policy based on export extraction allowed both Lula's administrations (2003-2010) and the first one of Dilma (2011-2014) to guarantee extraordinary profits to financial capital, to agribusiness and to finance major capitalist groups in construction, mining, telecommunications and meat with public resources.

But PT governments nevertheless promoted limited redistributive policies – with real impact on the most vulnerable urban and rural populations. They increased the minimum wage at rates higher than inflation, maintained the Bolsa Família Programme (monthly payment to families below the poverty line, conditional on the maintenance of children in school), a lot of affirmative policies (quotas for poor, black and indigenous students in universities and technical schools) and the multiplication of new public universities, public schools and scholarships in private universities. These measures, coupled with the widespread encouragement of domestic consumption by means of public banks' easy money, made it possible for a wide spectrum of workers to buy a home and enter the mass consumer market for the first time in their lives.

Nevertheless, already in 2005, with the scandal of the purchase of votes in the parliament by the Lula's government ("mensalão"), the PT's prestige began to fall. By this time, it was clear that the party, which had long since abandoned any class discourse, would not adopt any type of measure or policy to encourage popular and citizen participation in public life. Instead, in order to guarantee governability for the coalition regime, PT made huge concessions to maintain in its base in Congress the groups of evangelical churches such as the Universal Church of God's Kingdom and sectors of the Assembly of God (which in 2018 would be decisive for Bolsonaro's victory).

These concessions to ruralists, neo-pentecostals and to the "bullet group" (polices and weapons manufacturers' representatives) meant that the PT did nothing to advance in feminist guidelines such as the decriminalization and legalization of abortion, paralyzed demarcations of indigenous lands, adopted programs of major infrastructure and major events that resulted in the expulsion of indigenous and riverine people from their lands. PT advance anything in the debate for a deep reform of the judicial, police and prison system, to put an end to the drug war, the mass incarceration and the genocide of the black people (in particular the favela youth). In 2013, under Dilma, PT's

political-ideological decline would jump in with the social outbursts of discontent.

Amid the gigantic demonstrations for education, health, better urban transportation, right-wing groups took to the streets to fight with the left and channel the movement against corruption, against all the political parties and against PT in particular. June 2013 was not, however, as the PT states, an explosion of a reactionary nature – far from it. But undoubtedly it showed a part of the elite that the PT no longer had as much use to keep the masses as "passive" as before. And the right and ultra-right have counted, from then, on the decisive support of the mainstream media in the political and ideological struggle for the mass mobilizations, as we saw in 2015 and 2016 in the wide protests to dismiss Dilma.

## The role of the Lava Jato scandal and economic stagnation

Political-social discontent with the government intensified greatly with the long economic stagnation, starting in 2014, that imposed a drop in income for the sectors that formed the basis of Lullism and provoked the explosion of urban and rural violence. It was a decisive contribution to Dilma's deep discredit that she made her second presidential campaign (August to October 2014) on the left and, in less than two months, started to apply an economic program that went counter to everything she promised, with a Minister from her opponents, the neoliberal Joaquim Levy. Levy, who will now be part of Bolsonaro's government.

The PT's breakout accelerated with the impact on the workers' consciousness of the biggest corruption scandal in terms of amount of money and contagion on the whole political system: the Petrobras scandal, unveiled by Operation Lava Jato, which involved a network of millionaire bribes in virtually all the Republic's parties. Sometime between the end of 2014 and early 2015 (more likely when Dilma fired Levy), with hundreds of thousands of "yellow-green" (the main colours of the Brazilian flag) on the streets mobilized by the right against "corruption", fundamental sectors of Brazilian capital broke with the support they were giving to the PT's class collaboration project and adhere to the coup conspiracy.

After Dilma's impeachment, between April and September 2016, while the PT lost voters, activists and militants (and was only able to respond by talking of persecution), the right and its most ultra version grew in society. Desperate factions of the bourgeoisie and a large middle-class sector, traditionally more reactionary (racist, misogynist, homophobic and fearful of the new generations' socially progressive mores) embraced the ultra-right.

The persecution of the PT was real: Justice and Federal Police were selective. Coup forces appealed abusively to the "plea bargain" mechanism. Lula has been accused without clear proof, and later condemned without a fair trial. Media published Lula and Dilma's audios without official authorization. Judges arrested several PT leaders without any obvious need to do so. Impeachment was politically and legally unjustifiable. However, the party never outlined any self-criticism of the "bad deeds" (to use Dilma's expression) of so many leaders. The official orientation of the leadership was to forbid Haddad from making such a self criticism in the 2018 campaign. The problem, for the PT leadership, was a lot of individuals' "mistakes" - a large part of them nowadays in prison. No word on the "PT's way to governing", so much adapted to the political system's rules that the party caught their worst habits from its oligarchic partners.

This was how a strong rejection of the PT was born and grew in a large part of Brazilian society. In more impoverished sectors, who had benefited from the Lula years, this did not consolidate. Among the more informed and active youngsters and leftist working class sectors, this questioning of the PT may have favoured Ciro Gomes, Marina Silva and PSOL. But in broad sectors of the rich urban middle class, particularly its upper strata (and

especially in the Southeast and South), it has become, with the help of the media, Lava Jato and right-wing parties, a blind hatred of the PT. A blind hatred of the left, social policies, the idea of Human Rights valid for all, to the idea of solidarity with the dispossessed, to the notion of belonging to the world, to science and to truth. A hatred that extended to the colour red, Cuba, Venezuela, feminism, gays, trans and environmentalism and anything but pure egocentric individualism, based on the theology of prosperity, belief in the God-market, in the opportunity for all and in the contempt for the different.

It was the combination of this reactionary antipetism with the justified disappointment of millions of workers with the party that had brought so much illusion to them that elected President Bolsonaro.

## So, Bolsonaro was not (or should not be) exactly a surprise

Although Michel Temer will leave the government with unprecedented levels of unpopularity, unable to take the economy out of stagnation, he has done the groundwork for capital and helped in the election of Bolsonaro. The radical programme of freezing public investment and withdrawal of labour rights, applied by Dilma's former vice president, has deepened the economic crisis. The explosive combination of that crisis with the strong conservative, patriarchal and authoritarian slaver base, always latent in the country which was the last to abolish slavery on the globe, fertilized the soil for the growth of the far right. In any case, the most important sectors of the Brazilian bourgeoisie wagered not on Bolsonaro, but on Geraldo Alckmin (PSDB of São Paulo). The sectors that bet on Bolsonaro from the outset were the weapons industry, retailers and the majority of agribusiness.

We must also remember that there was a real political-ideological crusade against corruption, fuelled by the "holy alliance" between judges, prosecutors who operated the Lava Jato, the mainstream media, and – it is now well known – a large part of the Armed Forces. This four-year long campaign was decisive for reinforcing exhaustion with the political system, the old parties and figures – as well as the illusion of the supposedly antisystemic "saviour" that Bolsonaro incarnated – in public opinion. The traditional ruling parties PSDB and MDB were seen as representing the old-style system and took a beating at the polls, getting 34 and 29 MPs. Alckmin would never be elected.

## Internationalized media manipulation

The successful manipulation of WhatsApp groups by the Bolsonaro campaign indicates a dangerous internationalization of the Brazilian elections and heralds a worldwide trend. There is likely to have been international campaigning advice from marketing firms linked to Steve Bannon, Trump's strategist, who is now engaged in organizing an "international" of ultra-right "populism." This shaped foreign intervention in the Brazilian electoral process. It is important to note that the production centers of the digital data that influences the elections, in this surveillance capitalism, are globally located in the USA. Another sign of farewell to national sovereignties.

The far right candidate surfed on the high waves of discontent with the corrupt and unpopular Temer government, with recession and unemployment, with traditional politics and with the PT, thus Bolsonaro managed to give himself an "anti-systemic" image. His rise, therefore, fits perfectly into the scenario of unpredictability and global ungovernability drawn by the document "Capitalist Globalization, Imperialisms, Geopolitical Chaos and Its Implications", approved at the last Congress of the International. Sectors of capital in Brazil, even quite globalized ones, such as banks, insurance companies and agribusiness, have completely given up "mediations" in dealing with the democratic regime and the subaltern classes, opting to embrace an alternative that offers them greater facilities for deepening super-exploitation and plunder.

There is a new global capitalist restructuring whereby public funds - all of them - and all common goods, territories, forests, energy and water, should be used by the system. No such project can survive without putting an end to all transparent debate in society. It is the same context in which racist, xenophobic, nationalist groups are growing in the United States, France, Germany, India and in which they are coming to power in Hungary and the Philippines. In fact, the difficulties in returning to the rates of profit obtained up to 2007, before the financial tsunami of 2007/2008, have pushed the world bourgeoisie to:

(1) the pursuit of a global project of increasing dispossession of the rights of the working class and of the peoples of the "global South", which includes (re) taking absolute rights over what should be common property of land, such as the territory itself, water (aquifers, rivers, oceans), mineral deposits, energy sources;

(2) therefore, increasingly attacks on national sovereignties and bourgeois democratic regimes, which increasingly represent obstacles to the implementation of the neoliberal plans of adjustment, austerity, privatization, indebtedness and resumption of territories and goods imposed by the system and its international organizations;

(3) to opt, at least in part, for far-right solutions, with nationalist-protectionist overtones in industrialized countries, and more ultraliberal characteristics on the economic front in the Global South, with strong conservative discourse in customs and punitive policies, anti-human rights, bloodthirsty war on trafficking and banditry in general.

## **Period of turbulence in the dispute over regime change**

In addition to being rather dark and difficult, the times ahead for those exploited and oppressed in Brazil will be intensely turbulent.

Although the election of a neofascist government in Brazil is a hard defeat for the social and democratic movements of Latin America and the world, this is not a historic defeat. The leap from the current reactionary situation to an openly counterrevolutionary situation has not occurred and may not occur: this depends on the outcome of the clashes and struggles that will still be fought. The radicalization of the political situation in Brazil will depend on the unfolding of the world economic crisis and its impact on the Brazilian economy, on the capacity of Bolsonaro and his government to resolve the internal contradictions of its block of support and the resistance force of the country's workers and oppressed .

The hard core of the government has a project that leads to the closure of the regime, to a political system less permeable to popular pressures. Another question is whether there is at present the correlation of forces to this change of the political system and at what pace Bolsonaro and his first echelon will be able to apply his project. The government is, in essence, authoritarian, racist, misogynist, LGBT-phobic, militarist, anti-left, unconcerned with democratic institutions and indicated to operate on the logic of creating internal and external enemies. In a word, neofascist. All this in the service of an ultraliberal, privatizing and withdrawing rights agenda, averse to the protectionist nationalism of classical fascism.

Along with the military and ultraliberal nucleus, comprise the support block of the new government, ultraliberal religious fundamentalism (in which the Universal of the Kingdom of God stands out), fractions of the Justice (just as Sergio Moro), agribusiness, economists and ultraliberal bankers of the Chicago School and physiological politicians straying from traditional parties - an important part of the bloc that made the coup of 2016. This sum of forces has contradictions between its agendas and projects. The future of government will depend on the ability of its nucleus to cohesion this bloc in engagement with its political project.

Depending on the development of these internal and external issues, the hard core of the government will or will not move towards the radical implementation of its project, which is that of a less democratic political system. Some major tests of the resurgence are already planned for 2019.

# Where the attacks come from: the "tests" of neofascism

The international conditions do not seem promising for new growth for the Brazilian economy. The prospect is of a world recession in 2019. And Bolsonaro announces a messy alignment with U.S. and Israeli interests (with the stupid proposal to move the Brazilian embassy to Jerusalem), as well as cosyng up to Piñera's Chile to the detriment of Argentina and Mercosur as a whole.

These alignments unbalance relations with key economic partners for recovery. China – is the main Brazil trade partner, with the trade balance strongly positive for Brazil. Chinese companies have strong direct investments in the country, such as in electricity. Arab countries are the main buyer of the chicken and cow meat of the agribusiness.. To err in international politics, in this unfavorable global context, can make unfeasible the chances of a minimum balance of public accounts and keep the industrial sector in operation.

The "School Without a Party" project aims to control what is said in the classroom - with special concern about gender issues, sex education and criticism of the government. The president-elect calls, through social networks, parents and students to denounce teachers who politicize historical issues and address gender issues in the classroom. The oldest son of the president-elect, Eduardo Bolsonaro, a federal deputy for Sao Paulo, has already announced a bill that aims to criminalize, in addition, the "apology to communism."

Still in the field of education, the promise is a brutal attack on public and free education, particularly in the upper sphere. Bolsonaro directly interferes with the choice of rectors. At the same time, he lavishes praise on the advantages of long-distance education, including at the elementary level (five first years!) And suggests adopting in the country the voucher model so that the population has access to private schools, as in Chile, or a way to transfer public money to the privately owned schools.

The second test will be the criminalization of land and housing occupation movements (MST and MTST) through the improvement of the Antiterrorism Act (tragically and ironically enacted by Dilma in response to 2013), already quickly provided by the new reactionary groups.

Another fundamental test, charged daily by the voices of the "God market" and the media quickly converted to bolsonarism, is the reform of the social security system. The president-elect has already negotiated with Temer to not vote this year any change in the Social Security system. The superminister of the Economy and Chicago boy Paulo Guedes promises an even more radical reform to 2019, based on the precepts of the Pinochet Social Security (on what each worker makes his individual savings for his retirement), that, as it is known in means of real news, resulted in a social disaster in Chile. The debate and the struggle promise.

In the background, in deep Brazil, there will be an intensification of the war on drugs and the poor, which means that the new government will intensify the genocide of the black people. This attack will occur through the release of the carrying of weapons, the green light to the brutal military police and municipal guards to, in doubt, shoot to kill, and to continue imprisoning massively. This set of measures could be extended to restrictions on the functioning of trade unions, associations, parties (Bolsonaro and his followers promised war on the PT and PSOL leadership) and press freedoms, expression and organization.

Bolsonaro, in addition, proves to be a major threat to the global environment by promising, in the wake of Trump, to break with the fragile Paris Agreement on CO2 emissions. And, to top it off, he promises to end the demarcation of indigenous lands, in an obvious signage to the cattle landowners in particular (but also to the soybean and other crops producers on the Amazonian agricultural frontier) that gives green light to the devastation of the rainforest. If the great rainforest had already been threatened under the reign of PT's extractivism, much worse would be the situation of this world's lung and guarantee of some climatic equilibrium in South America under the baton of this ally of chainsaw and agribusiness.

## Organize international resistance and solidarity

In Brazil, the fundamental task is to organize resistance to the attacks of the new government on the democratic freedoms and social rights of the people, through the unified fight of all those who want to defend democracy and the rights and achievements that the neo-fascist will attack. In this struggle, we will work towards the creation of a single anti-fascist front in defence of democratic and social rights- capable of articulating and unifying sectoral and regional initiatives against attacks by government and capital. The militants and sympathizers of the Fourth International will be in these fights, in defence of democracy and all social and human rights.

We will also be part of the organized movements and entities of workers, youth, blacks and blacks, women, and LGBTs, indigenous people and all sectors of the population, inserting more than ever in workplaces, poor neighbourhoods, in universities, in schools, in cultural groups of precarious and radicalized youth, in the occupations of the poor and without land, in order to resist the Brazilian people. We attach special importance to the movement of young women, who have been coming into force since the spring of 2016 and have taught so much to everyone with the organization of # Elenã£o.

For Latin America, where Bolsonaro's election has had such an impact, it must be very clear that every little struggle, every victory, however sectoral, against Macri, against Duque, against Piã±eira, against Ortega and his plans, is also a victory of the resistance against Bolsonaro. No step back! Resistance in Brazil depends on the persistence of all of Latin America and the progress of the struggle throughout the world.

That is why it is also vital that in Europe, the United States, Asia, Africa and Oceania, we be very attentive to carry out a wide campaign of denunciation against the attacks that the new Brazilian government will rehearse against democracy, legislation and international environmental treaties (the Amazon is in great danger!) and the social and political rights of workers.

The Fourth International calls on all those who struggle, all ecologists, all democrats, to unite their forces to denounce the Bolsonaro government and demand:

**– Hands off the landless and homeless in Brazil! For an international campaign to repudiate the Anti-Terrorism Law and its macabre enhancements! All solidarity with the MST and the MTST and all the activists.**

**– Hands off the Amazon rainforest! Hands off the indigenous lands! Keep the legislation that guarantees the demarcation of the lands for the original peoples. For the continuation of Brazil in the Paris agreement!**

**– Hands off the social security rights of Brazilian workers! No reform of the pension system without first a**

radical audit and publication of Social Security debtors!

– Hands off the Brazilian public universities! Hands off academic freedom! No interference in the rectors' (deans) election.

– Down with the "No party school!" No cell phones in the classroom! Keep the education budget and face-to-face education in primary and secondary education.

– End the war on drugs and the poor! No liberalisation of gun permits. No to the reduction of the penal age, proposed by the future minister Sérgio Moro. Youth need schools, not prisons. For the legalization of marijuana. For a combined effort by the judiciary to speed up the trials of the 200,000 prisoners who are imprisoned without a sentence.

Bolsonaro's electoral victory is in fact part of a resurgence of the authoritarian regimes that are strangling the democratic gains of recent decades, with Putin in Russia, Orban in Hungary, the PiS regime in Poland, Erdogan in Turkey, Duterte in the Philippines, Trump in the United States, Netanyahu in Israel, and far-right parties to the government in Austria or Italy... An international anti-authoritarian and anti-oligarchical movement is necessary, because the situation requires a broad mobilization of all political forces committed to democratic rights, workers' rights, women's rights, environmental and climate preservation, human freedom of movement, in short against oppression of all kinds. Building such a global movement is a task on the agenda.

*5 December 2018*

*PS:*

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