

# HOW CAN BRAZILIANS ESCAPE THE CRISIS?

Statement by the Liga Socialista, Brazilian section of the L5I

**W**hat we are witnessing in Brazil today is the continuation of the 2016 coup that overthrew President Dilma Rousseff, Workers' Party, PT. It was not only a coup against the PT government, but one directed against the entire working class.

Immediately after taking office, Michel Temer of the Brazilian Democratic Movement, MDB, tried to pass a pension reform, but popular mobilisation stopped him. However, he successfully manoeuvred to force through "reforms" of the labour laws.

## Aftermath of the 2016 coup

Prior to the 2018 elections, former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, "Lula", of the PT, was illegally arrested and convicted without evidence. The Supreme Federal Court, STF, did not grant habeas corpus, that is, release from illegal detention, at the time and banned Lula from participating in the election campaign. The main parties of the bourgeoisie did badly in the elections with their main candidate, Geraldo Alckmin, failing before the second round, which was fought between the neo-fascist Jair Bolsonaro and the candidate of the Workers' Party, Fernando Haddad. At that point, the bourgeoisie, with its hatred of the PT, joined the campaign of Bolsonaro, giving him victory in the end.

That has meant that today in Brazil we have a government that denies science, declares civil servants to be great enemies of the nation, promotes public meetings and the non-use of masks. For Bolsonaro, Covid is just a "little flu".

As a result, Brazil has now reached over 320,000 covid deaths and today broke the record of 3,869 deaths in a single day. The medical system is collapsing in many parts of the country, especially in terms of intensive care units, but also in basic pharmaceutical care.

## Lula rehabilitated

Now, in an extraordinary ruling on the

"lava jato", the "car wash" as a multi-billion dollar corruption trial is known, the STF has declared that the Federal Criminal Court, the Curitiba, does not have the competence to judge in the cases against Lula. Shortly afterwards, in another extraordinary and controversial decision, the STF also ruled that Judge Sergio Moro was biased in the case against Lula, thereby overturning the entire case against Lula in the "lava jato".

With this decision, the STF restored Lula's political rights. This gave an unexpected boost to the Left. Lula made several public speeches and PT supporters regained hope and now see the possibility of Lula's candidacy in 2022. On the other hand, a section of the bourgeoisie has now turned against Bolsonaro and published a document against him signed by bankers, businessmen and renowned economists. Turning its attention towards Congress, this group obliged the Centrão (the big swamp of centre parties in Congress that must be won over for any majority in the current parliament), to begin to withdraw its support for the government.

## Bolsonaro's political rampage

Bolsonaro, in total confusion in the face of the threat of a Lula candidacy and under pressure from his base, is now shooting in all directions. He is threatening to impose a state of siege on the country, calling on the armed forces to support him and even threatening to shut down the STF and Congress. But he was surprised when the armed forces made it clear that they would defend the federal constitution and would never engage in any act that would negate it or lead to a totalitarian government.

In the light of this, pro-Bolsonaro military police in the state of Bahia, which is governed by the PT, attempted a mutiny that was intended to spread to other states.

The attempted insurrection, however, was exposed early on and the police forces withdrew. This action was promoted by MPs from Bolsonaro's base as an attack on state governors who imposed a Corona lockdown.

In the squabbles within the government, Bolsonaro removed Defence Minister Fernando Azevedo from office, who left saying he "did not want to repeat what he experienced" in May last year, when "Bolsonaristas" took to the streets, calling for military intervention and attacking the STF.

The army commander, Edson Pujol, was also dismissed, or resigned, and the heads of the armed forces withdrew all their cadres from the government. It is a very complicated situation with different interpretations. For some analysts, it represents a manoeuvre by the Centrão to get more posts in the government. There is also the possibility that the armed forces are planning to overthrow Bolsonaro so that his vice-president, ex-general Mourão, takes over the presidency. But in this situation, there could be a reaction from Bolsonaristas, mainly from the military police, who are federal state police but have shown themselves to be supporters of Bolsonaro throughout Brazil.

Anything can happen, from a new agreement between the forces that make up the Bolsonaro government to a police mutiny and a confrontation between police and armed forces. The situation is worsened by the fact that poverty is spreading in the country and basic food supply chains are no longer functioning in more and more regions. The reaction of those affected by the crisis can happen at any moment.

Some scientific studies report that there are about 15 million Brazilians suffering from serious malnutrition. In several big cities, huge queues are forming in front of the food banks, because most of the poor cannot survive on the small rations of emergency aid.

However, the left is offering no leadership or strategy and many of the



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poor may join the right-wing populists and even fascists, convinced that the economic crisis in the country is caused by the “communists” (including right-wing governors!) and “petistas” (members and supporters of the PT) who are preventing people from working—because of the “hysterical measures” (lockdown) to ward off the pandemic.

In summary, Brazil is a powder keg, and it may be Bolsonaro himself who lights the fuse. There should be no illusions in the armed forces and Centrão. If the crisis gets worse, the bourgeoisie could resort to a state of emergency or

even a coup by the fascist forces around Bolsonaro, for example, in the military police and militias. The left must be prepared for this and defend basic democratic rights.

### Perspective

A united front must be built to confront such an authoritarian attempt and to answer it with a general strike under the control of the rank and file members of the trade unions and the organisations of the working poor in the cities and in the countryside. At the same time, the struggle against the pandemic and the

severe economic crisis must be combined by taking control of the anti-crisis and anti-pandemic measures away from the Bolsonaristas and the corrupt forces in the shape of the bourgeois governors.

A solidarity lockdown of non-essential parts of the economy must be combined with taking control of the food supply for the poor and unemployed and an emergency plan for the collapsing health system. Not “Lula 2022” but the struggle for a workers’ and peasants’ government to take control of such a programme is the way out of the powder keg situation!

# CUBA PROTESTS SHOW NEED FOR SOCIALIST STRATEGY

## End the imperialist blockade; for a democratically planned economy

**A** number of leftists believe that this protest movement can only be a new “colour revolution”, a “democracy movement” manipulated by imperialism to overthrow a left-wing government.

They can certainly point to several such attempts in Latin America: Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador. What speaks against this scenario, however, is that the movement was certainly spontaneous in its origins, is far too heterogeneous in its makeup and its demands cannot be reduced to an attempt to “overthrow the regime”.

Without any doubt, the immediate trigger for the protests is the current economic situation in Cuba. All of Latin America is currently being hit by a severe economic crisis, and Cuba is not exempt from this. In this respect, mass protests across the entire continent are not unusual.

The situation in Cuba, however, has been shaped for decades by the US economic blockade, which was tightened by Trump. In particular, the ban on dollar transfers by Cubans living abroad has made the struggle for daily survival even more difficult for many Cubans. This has now been compounded by the 70 percent slump in tourism, caused by covid which has further depleted sources of foreign exchange.

This also explains why the Cuban government has had to resort to rationing and electricity cuts. China, in particular, is proving to be a relentless creditor, insisting on punctual payment or enforcing penalty clauses. The Cuban government

thus remains squeezed between the US blockade, pressure from creditors and the growing dissatisfaction of the population.

It is therefore clear that the first demand of socialists all over the world must be: an end to all sanctions and blockades against Cuba and cancellation of all foreign debts! In view of the difficult situation, there must also be food aid, with no strings attached, and supplies of the raw materials to facilitate pharmaceutical and vaccine production.

The core of a solution to the long-term problems therefore lies in a fundamental democratisation and transformation of economic planning. Priorities must be changed to guaranteeing basic services and, for this, a long-term plan democratically drawn up and controlled by the workers must be enforced. It is also clear that such a shift away from dependent development cannot be managed by Cuba alone - such a conversion of the economy will be easier the more countries in Latin America can adopt a socialist path and be won over to a democratic plan of economic reconstruction encompassing the whole region.

In the end, only a political revolution to create workers’ democracy, dissolve the bureaucratic caste that rules Cuba, and stop the development of a social counterrevolution under the banner of bourgeois democracy and the expectation of cheap supplies from the world market. What this would mean in practice can be seen from the living conditions of the workers and the rural poor in neighbouring countries of Latin America.

### ABOUT US

**We are a revolutionary communist organisation fighting to replace capitalism with workers’ power and international socialism.**

- Our goal is communism: a society liberated from exploitation, oppression and war through the abolition of the class system.
- We organise a **revolutionary tendency inside the Labour Party** in order to oppose its reformist leadership and promote an anticapitalist programme.
- We campaign to **democratise the trade unions through a rank and file movement** which dissolves the unelected bureaucracy, and fights for workers’ control of production.
- **We oppose all forms of discrimination** based on race, age, disability, sex or sexual orientation. We oppose all immigration controls and support black self-defence against racist and state attacks.
- We **unconditionally support** all those fighting against imperialism or national oppression, while fighting for socialist, not nationalist, leadership of those struggles. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all British troops from Ireland and overseas bases. Britain out of Nato. Replace the standing army with a workers’ militia.
- Against the dictatorship of capital **we stand for a society based on common ownership and democratic planning**. The bosses will never allow their wealth and privilege to be voted away. **That’s why we fight for revolution and workers’ power.**
- At the core of our strategy is the building of fighting organisations of the working class - factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers’ defence organisations.
- We are internationalists and members of the **British section of the League for the Fifth International**, an organisation fighting to build a new world party of socialist revolution.

**If you agree with what we stand for - join us!**