



Brazil: Bolsonaro loses, left gains ground in city elections

Liga Socialista, Brasil Tue, 08/12/2020 - 18:41

Liga Socialista, Brasil

The importance of the second and final round of Brazil's municipal elections, on November 29, lies not so much in the precise numbers of votes cast as in what they tell us of the political situation in the country four years after the coup that removed President Rousseff of the Workers' Party, PT, and two years after the election of Jair Bolsonaro as President.

The coup of 2016, in preparation for some years before the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, was intended not only to take the PT out of government but to return power to the open bourgeois forces. Although the PT government was one of class conciliation, its very existence was disturbing to both the national bourgeoisie and to US imperialism. What they wanted was a government that would roll back the rights of the workers and ensure there were no constraints on the ability of capital to exploit the country's wealth.

For that, they needed to destroy the PT and its long-standing leader, Lula, and also the rest of the Brazilian left so that they would have no opposition. Such a coup is not a single, momentary action, it is part of a continuous process. Success for the coup would mean the elimination of the PT and the effective destruction of the entire left.

In 2018, in the presidential elections, we saw that the PT was still alive and that, although it could not defeat the coup sector candidate, the fascist Bolsonaro, it could force the election into a second round. At that point, the key action of the coup was the illegal arrest of Lula, the main popular leader of the country, thereby preventing his candidacy. They did this to guarantee the electoral victory of the right.

It was a victory for hatred. Bolsonaro and his followers and supporters rode the wave and elected themselves across the country. The established right wing parties, the Brazilian Social Democratic Party, PSDB, which is actually the main party of the industrial bourgeoisie, the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party, MDB, based on agro-business throughout the country, and the Democrats, DEM, the successor to the official party under the military government, lost control of the coup and were defeated by the extreme right, being forced to support Bolsonaro in the second round.

Had the coup followed its intended route, today, the left would have been destroyed, completely without forces for the contest. Moreover, the PSDB and MDB would be dominating the political scene, strengthening their grip on the medium and large municipalities. But this was not the case.

Without a shadow of a doubt, the great loser in these elections was Bolsonaro, whose attempt to build his own party failed totally. Only 13 mayoral candidates accepted his explicit support and of those only two were successful. The highlights of this defeat were Crivella (Republicans) in Rio de Janeiro and Captain Wagner (PROS - Republican Party of Social Order) in Fortaleza.

He was not the only loser, however, the traditional parties of the right, the MDB and PSDB also failed to make real gains. These parties promoted the 2016 coup with the expectation of taking power, but they were defeated in the 2018 elections. Their candidacies for president did not take off and they ended up losing ground in state governments and parliament.

Since then, they have been unable to establish themselves, losing out to the so-called "centre" parties, which have no clear programmes but flourish on the basis of local deals, patronage, exploitation of public offices and nepotism. This is the sector that has grown the most since the coup. Their growth began under Bolsonaro but has continued independently of him.

After the coup, the PT, and the left in general, lost control of many municipalities, but they were not completely crushed by the coup. On the contrary, these elections show that they are beginning to regain ground in large and medium-sized cities. The coup, the anti-PT and the spread of right wing ideas have failed to defeat the left.

We cannot say, however, that Bolsonarism is defeated. Bolsonaro undoubtedly comes out weakened from these elections, but the extreme right wing movement that rose with him is still there. The continuing strength of the little parties of the Centre means that Brazil is in something of a political stalemate and that cannot last indefinitely.

The left campaign

In cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants, the left wing contested 18 city halls in the second round and won 5. If we compare with the 2016 elections, when the PT contested 7 and won only one, this was a breakthrough.

Moreover, in São Paulo, the main left-wing candidate was Guilherme Boulos of the Party of Socialism and Liberty, PSOL, who won 40.62 percent of the votes, or over 2 million votes. In the equivalent elections of 2008, 2012 and 2016, the party won a combined total of 289,000 votes. These numbers show that, although the PSOL did not win the city hall, it had a great victory in São Paulo. In addition to São Paulo, the PSOL also won in Pará, getting Edmilson elected as mayor in the city of Belém.

The big mistake of the PT and the left with a few rare exceptions, was not to campaign on national issues. Failing to denounce the serious situation in which we live is a self-imposed defeat for the left which did not take the opportunity to use the municipal elections to mobilise the workers around the candidates and their leaders.

It also shows the root of the political and identity crisis of the left. This campaign should have denounced the coup, the Bolsonaro government and the attacks on workers' rights, demanded the repeal of the labour and social security "reforms", the renationalisation of Petrobras and the oil wells and the annulment of all lawsuits against Lula and the left-wing leaders. It should have been a campaign to mobilise militancy and prepare the class for future struggles.

Finally, we know very well what the bourgeois elections are for and who they are for. Under no circumstances do we believe that they can solve the problems imposed by capitalism. We are facing a political crisis of the Brazilian left and to find a solution we need to go beyond the current left parties. The illusion that everything will be resolved in the 2022 elections, through the election of a progressive government on the basis of a broad alliance, to defeat Bolsonaro, serves only to demobilise the working class.

For us, the real way forward is to mobilise the working class and the social movements and build a revolutionary party, with a programme that meets the agenda of immediate and transitional demands of the working class and opens the way to the overthrow of capitalism.

Bourgeois elections will not meet the demands of the working class, but they can and must be an opportunity to open the debate with the workers to mobilise and build the real way out. Only with a revolutionary programme will we succeed in destroying the bourgeois state and building on its ruins a socialist state under the command of the workers.

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/brazil-bolsonaro-loses-left-gains-ground-city-elections>