

The October 8 Elections in Brazil

Liga Socialista, Brazil Tue, 25/09/2018 - 10:59

Liga Socialista, Brazil

On August 31, 2016, the members of the Senate approved the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff of the Workers' Party, Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT, who was removed from office without any evidence of impropriety. In fact, it was a coup by the reactionary right that could no longer bear to see the PT governing the country, even though it pursued a policy of class conciliation that served the interests of the bourgeoisie.

Since this coup, the government, together with Congress and the judiciary, has made its real purpose clear; to launch major attacks on labour and social security rights and on the public services, freezing the funds allocated to them for 20 years, together with attacks on democratic rights.

The coup, which has been denounced around the world, is resulting in the destruction of labour rights and the arrest of the leadership of the country's main popular organisations. Luiz Ignácio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil from 2003-2011, was convicted without any serious evidence and was held in custody in an isolated cell by the Federal Police. There is no way they can conceal the fact that Lula's arrest, in addition to the goal of ending his political life and that of his party, is aimed at preventing the return of the PT to power, since they are well aware that any right-wing candidate would lose to Lula at the polls.

Election without Lula is a fraud

The PT leadership approved a political line summarised in the phrase "an election without Lula is a fraud" and fought to the last minute for Lula to be their candidate for president, with Fernando Haddad, a former mayor of Sao Paulo, as vice president. With the challenge to Lula's candidacy, the PT appealed to all Brazil's judicial authorities, and even to the UN Human Rights Commission, which stated that Brazil should allow Lula's candidacy. However, because they were involved in the coup, the judges refused to heed the UN decision and confirmed that Lula's candidacy was blocked.

This intransigent attitude of the PT was very important since the mass protests it organised against the unjust sentence and imprisonment of Lula, demonstrated, to both the country and the world, what was happening, exposing the justice system and the coup government. In response, the vice presidential candidate on the fascist platform of Jair Bolsonaro, of the Social Liberal Party, Partido Social Liberal, PSL, General Hamilton Mourão, even said that he would not rule out a military intervention, if Lula were a candidate. All this only added to the militancy of the PT mobilisation, both its long term militants and new ones who are beginning to identify with the party.

On the last day of the period given by the Supreme Electoral Court, TSE, to change the name of their candidate, the PT replaced Lula with Haddad and as vice president chose Manuela D'Ávila, "Manu", of the Communist Party of Brazil, PCdoB. Now, the PT is getting Lula to work from his prison to ensure his massive popular vote is transferred to Haddad. Already opinion polls show Haddad's support is rising although he lacks Lula's enormous charisma with the working class and the oppressed.

The left and the elections

Unfortunately, it has not proved possible to create a united front of the left behind a single candidate for this electoral contest. The Socialism and Liberty Party, Partido Socialismo e Liberdade, PSOL, has chosen to stand as its candidate, Guilherme Boulos, the young leader of Brazil's Homeless Workers' Movement, MTST, for president, and to make an electoral alliance with the very small Brazilian Communist Party, Partido Comunista Brasileiro, PCB.

It is a candidacy that aims, by propaganda, to win militants to the PSOL and give a new direction to the Brazilian left. However, like PSOL's previous presidential candidacies, opinion polls show that it will not make much headway, especially given the ferocity of the present left-right confrontation, which means that a win for the right would have terrible consequences for the working class and popular organisations.

The Workers' Cause Party, Partido da Causa Operária, PCO, worked until the last moment with the slogan, "it's Lula or nothing", although it did not participate in the electoral bloc with the PT. It has continued with this political line, not joining the Haddad / Manu campaign and standing its own candidates for parliament.

The PT has now launched the Haddad / Manu platform, but before that it had agreed to an alliance with the Republican Party of Social Order, Partido Republicano da Ordem Social, PROS. This was consistent with its long term class collaborationist policy of forming an electoral bloc with bourgeois parties. That this was, as always, a disastrous error, was revealed by the fact that the PROS supported the coup and voted for the anti-working class labour reform.

In some federal states, the PT is supporting right-wing candidates such as Renan Calheiros, Renan Filho and Eunício Oliveira of the Democratic Movement of Brazil, MDB, and Paulo Câmara of the Socialist Party of Brazil, PSB. In the process, the PT bureaucracy has trampled on the decisions of its rank and file, with the excuse that such alliances are a necessary tactic for victory. We know that the real reason is very different. The PT bureaucracy is trying to show the bourgeoisie that the party is under control and that it is not dangerous.

On the other hand, the United Socialist Workers' Party, Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado, PSTU, affiliated to the Morenoist-Trotskyist organisation, the LIT-IV international, has taken an outrageously sectarian line towards the parties of the working class, while, at the same time, as often before, taking a grossly opportunist line towards the forces of the bourgeoisie. From the beginning of the anti-Dilma mobilisations, and even after the coup, they favoured the slogan, "Dilma Out, All of them Out!", thus demonstrating that the PSTU was prepared to join a united front with the right wing bourgeoisie to destroy the PT. This common front continues today, as is evidenced by their demand that Lula must remain incarcerated, because he was condemned by a judicial investigation ("Lava-Jato") that mainly condemns and arrests PT politicians and supports the coup.

Building Left Unity

Faced not only with a parliamentary and judicial coup but a far right force in the elections, the Left parties should ally themselves to defeat them and bring about a working class victory. We know that party differences are great, but they need to be overcome at the level of a united fight against the right. Certainly, the PT needs to make self-criticism of its past alliances with the right-wing parties, its governments of class conciliation, which made it vulnerable to the coup that ultimately brought about this setback for the entire working class. For the PT to lead the working class to victory, it has to break for good with the parties of the right-wing coup mongers.

The PCdoB, also participated in the PT government and therefore also needs to make a self-criticism of

the class conciliation governments and to break with the right parties. In Maranhão, where they hold the state government, with Flávio Dino, this practice is called "Sarneyism" by the bourgeois press in reference to former president José Sarney, MDB.

It is a great shame that it was not possible to have a united front of the left involving PSOL, PCB, PCdoB and PT, for the electoral contest. The PT is the party that has the largest working class base, despite the strength of its bureaucracy, and we cannot leave this base in its hands. The participation of the PT base is very important for the victory of the working class. PSOL proved strong in parliament in the fight against the coup, against labour reform and outsourcing, while the PCB also showed the strength and value of its militants in the fight against the coup. These forces could combat the PT bureaucracy far better using the tactics of the united front than they ever could by electoral rivalry. What is needed is unity in action together with the right of all parties to present their own programmes and to criticise those of their allies.

We in the Socialist League have argued that left-wing parties need to build a united front to face the coup and reactionary right, and also to defeat the combination of military bonapartism and fascism, whose leader is Bolsonaro. With that, we would have the necessary conditions to mobilise the working class and take it to victory, beyond the elections, regardless of the results.

The elections and beyond

When a political organisation makes a coup to seize power it plainly has no intention of surrendering that power after two years in an electoral process. So you can be sure that the coup makers will do everything they can to stay in power for years, or rather decades.

We must be prepared to face more adverse conditions of struggle for the working class. The assassination attempt on Bolsonaro calls our attention to this, since we know that the left does not engage in such actions. General Mourão, deputy of Bolsonaro, has already begun to dictate the political line. Probably the bourgeoisie will try to resort to military intervention, in case of a PT victory. In that case, only the unified working class can respond to it effectively with huge mass mobilisations.

Our struggle cannot end with an election result. On the contrary it must intensify, regardless of who wins. We have to organise working class resistance by creating committees at workplaces, schools, neighbourhoods not just for voting, but for the ongoing struggle for our rights and democratic freedoms.

In this sense, we call on the PT and the PCdoB to break completely with the parties that engage in right-wing coup politics and to organise their memberships to occupy the streets and workplaces of the country and guarantee the struggle for a just and egalitarian society. We recognise the importance of other leftist parties in the fight against the coup and against attacks on working class rights, and we also call on the PCB, PSOL and PCO to join together with the PT and PCdoB in this struggle. We are at a crucial point in the class struggle.

The Socialist League and the October elections

This election is very different from those which preceded it, even taking into account the last one, when the dispute between Aécio Neves, Social Democratic Party of Brazil, PSDB, and Dilma Rousseff, PT, was very close. In this electoral contest, the coup makers are naturally making every effort to stay in power. When we say every effort, we are referring to the most dirty and violent methods. On the other hand, the reaction of the masses against the coup plotters is clear. But we need something more, we need to unify the working class for a bigger fight, against the coup makers and against imperialism that seeks to profit from the coup.

The semi-fascist Jair Bolsonaro, now able to pose as a martyr, is heading the polls. This is a man who

praises the military regime regimes of 1964-85, who openly derides democracy, and has been touring the military bases around the country to canvass the officers' support. He would clearly be willing to come to power by an outright military coup, that would make the 'constitutional coup' look like a picnic. But obviously, if he could gain the popular endorsement of an election with the spectrum of right wing bourgeois parties behind him, this would be a great benefit to him in unleashing massive repression against the workers and plebeian masses. He could claim it was a legal action, mandated by 'the people'.

The military-bonapartist side of his politics is thus clear. But there is also another side to Bolsonaro, his fomenting of outright racism against 'non-white' citizens, uttering hatred and even death threats against the militants and the leaders of the left, particularly the PT. Women and LGTB people, too, can expect repressive and patriarchal policies that will put them back decades. All this is aimed at mobilising a plebeian mass base on the streets for use against the working class. Thus, Bolsonaro is a semi-fascist, and a semi-bonapartist figure.

Whatever the precise character of any regime he headed, we can be sure that he would unleash a veritable civil war against the working class, the poor peasants and the indigenous people with the aim of destroying their organisations. To fight him and the spectrum of right wing parties that back him, a united front of struggle of all the parties of the left, of all the organisations of the working class, is vitally important. The election itself is a part of this struggle but it should be neither the beginning nor the end. The election campaign should be used to ring the alarm bells amongst every section of the masses, to mobilise them in marches and rallies, in the workplaces and the favelas.

As part of this struggle, and to make it easier to unite with the mass membership of the PT, the CUT and the MST, alongside the forces of the far left, we advocate a vote for the PT/PCdoB presidential and vice presidential candidates. At the same time, we will criticise their weakness and evasiveness in the fight against the right, urging the PT rank and file to correct these and to take as much control as they can into their own hands.

In the parliamentary elections, on the other hand, in each district, we call for a vote for whichever party has the majority of the organised workers, providing they oppose the coup and support the workers' united front. In both the presidential and the parliamentary elections we present a powerful message of working class unity to stop the right, to restore and defend democratic rights, and to open the road to a workers' government. A workers' government must break the power and demolish the apparatus of repression, repeal and reverse all the abuses of the right and meet the needs of the masses by forcing through major social reforms. These should be paid for by taxation of the wealth of the rich and the big imperialist banks and corporations.

Therefore we say, no vote for the coup makers. No vote for parties that voted in favour of labour reform and outsourcing. We should vote for the PT/PCdoB presidential slate in both the first and the second rounds, despite all our criticisms of the PT both in government and in opposition, because a win for it would face the coup makers with a dilemma. They would either have to come out into the open with a full scale military-fascist coup, at a time when the masses were already mobilised in their millions against them, or they would have to slink back into their sewers.

In the parliamentary elections, our votes are for the parties that have joined in the defence of the working class. In this turbulent scenario of attacks on democratic freedoms, rights and achievements, and in the face of the fascist threat, we advocate that the working class votes for the left, PT, PCdoB, PSOL, PCB and PCO parties that fought against the coup and against the attacks of the coup government.

? Stop the coup by the right and Bolsonaro!

- ? Down with the pension and labour reforms!
- ? Form committees of resistance in every workplace and favella, each with workers' self defence units!
- ? Occupy the streets in defence of rights and past achievements!
- ? For the repeal of all the coup government's legal attacks!

The original text of this statement, in Portuguese, can be found at <https://www.ligasocialista.com/news/as-eleicoes-no-brasil/> ^[1]

Source URL: <https://fifthinternational.org/content/october-8-elections-brazil>

Links:

[1] <https://www.ligasocialista.com/news/as-eleicoes-no-brasil/>