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Brazil's Bolsonaro founds new fascist party

On November 21, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro launched a new party, the Alliance for Brazil. It is a fascist formation explicitly based on loyalty to the president, according to an early manifesto released on November 12. It states that it is “more than a party, [it] is the dream and inspiration of people loyal to President Jair Bolsonaro of uniting the country with allies in ideals and patriotic intent.”



Jair Bolsonaro [Credit: Wikimedia Commons]

The party's name deliberately echoes that of the ARENA party created by the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1986. Its program, released at the launching event, is couched in the language of contemporary American neo-fascism as elaborated by Steve Bannon, with whom Bolsonaro's son Eduardo, the head of the Brazilian House's

Foreign Affairs Committee, maintains the closest relations. He is considered the leader of Bannon's "The Movement" in South America.

The program sets out the blueprint for a fascist movement based on the "complete identity" of Brazil as a nation "inseparable from Christ" and "part of Western civilization". It states that this is a program to be enacted by Bolsonaro as "successively attested by Divine Providence and repeatedly pointed out by the people."

In language obsessed with the "natural order" and "security", the program further sets out "complete opposition to all forms of communism," to "class struggle" and any limitation on private property. It also lays out plans to exempt the security forces from any legal restraint.

While "repudiating the class struggle" it asserts its aim to "restore the value of work" through the "collaboration of all, be it those directing or executing it."

In a whole chapter on the defense of the "family" as "the natural nucleus of society", the program states its "complete opposition to all forms of abortion", the right to which is described as a "death culture" and a "social treason" that if allowed would destroy "the whole moral and judicial foundation of the State." Predictably, it sets out to increase penalties on "pedophilia and child trafficking" while vowing to "completely banish" discussions on LGBT rights.

At the launching event, Bolsonaro received as a gift a sculpture of the party's name made out of bullet cartridges.

The launching of such a party represents a threat to not only Brazilian workers, but—given the history of US-Brazilian collaboration in imposing dictatorships across the continent—the whole South American working class. Its founding comes after repeated threats to impose police-state measures if large demonstrations inspired by those already sweeping Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile and now Colombia erupt in Brazil.

Both Eduardo Bolsonaro and the government's intelligence chief, Gen. Augusto Heleno, have referenced the dictatorship-era "Institutional Act No. 5", known as AI-5, which shut down Congress, outlawed political parties, suspended habeas corpus and institutionalized torture as a means of suppressing political opposition. Two weeks ago, Bolsonaro threatened the use of the dictatorship-era National Security Law against former Workers Party (PT) president Luis Inacio Lula da Silva for "subversion" after he made vague positive references to the Chile protests in front of thousands of supporters. This week,

Finance Minister Paulo Guedes told a business audience in the United States that “no one should be surprised” if calls for such a repressive measures are made—or, by implication, if they are actually enacted.

The prospect of a coup by Bolsonaro is now regularly discussed in the Brazilian press, with the main question raised being that of whether he has the political ability to head such a movement. Following Guedes’ US statements, market trends columnist for Brazil’s largest daily—*Folha de S. Paulo*—Daniela Lima wrote that investors speculate that, unable to overcome divisions in Congress, “the government may create a crisis in order to widen its powers beyond the Constitution.”

In the same week that he launched his party, Bolsonaro sent to Congress Law Project (PL) 6.125, guaranteeing that the military will go unpunished for murders “if they feel threatened” during so-called Guarantee of Law and Order operations in Brazil—acts decreed by the president that include the suspension of democratic rights.

This provision has been enacted no less than 138 times since created in the post-dictatorship 1988 Constitution. Its most notable use was the year-and-a-half-long intervention in the state of Rio de Janeiro during which state killings jumped 80 percent in some regions, and Rio city councillor Marielle Franco was brutally murdered. Yesterday, a similar revision was approved by the House Constitutional Committee, widening the concept of “legitimate defense” in the Military Criminal Code from situations of “unjust aggression” to those involving “unjust or imminent aggression.”

Bolsonaro directly related the move to the threat of mass demonstrations, stating on Tuesday that Congress must give him such powers in the case of “terrorism” such as “burning of buses” and “invasion of ministries,” also announcing that he would request the authorization to send the Army to clear camps of farmers demanding land reform.

The unprecedented crisis affecting bourgeois rule in Brazil—the motive force behind the formation of Bolsonaro’s new party—has found sharp expression in the reactions of the country’s oldest newspaper, *Estado de S. Paulo*, to an apparently unrelated issue, a comment made by the Bolsonaro loyalist who heads the Education Ministry, Abraham Weintraub, who is known for paraphrasing the Nazis by saying that “communists are at the top of the country, the top of financial institutions, the owners of the papers, the big companies and the monopolies.”

On the holiday commemorating the ousting of Brazilian Emperor Pedro II and proclamation of a republic on November 15, 1889, Weintraub called the country’s first

president, Marshall Manuel Deodoro da Fonseca, a “traitor” and defended the monarchy. *Estado de S. Paulo*, which acts as a mouthpiece for the Army High Command, regularly featuring generals in its opinion pages, demanded his firing in an editorial titled “Red Line.” Right-wing columnist Demetrio Magnoli, who is generally aligned with the *Estado* editorial board, wrote in *Folha*: “Weintraub’s problem is not [Marshall] Deodoro, but the political break inaugurating the modern era” and “the Republic, a city without a God”, later adding that as a Bolsonaro loyalist, he believes that positivism—the official ideology of the Army High Command at the turn of the 20th century—“inevitably opens the door to Communism.”

Many columnists have noted that the fascist language presented by Bolsonaro’s new party is unprecedented even for the ruling ARENA under the US-backed dictatorship.

In the face of such unprecedented threats, however, every political force—from bourgeois editorial boards to the pseudo-left—is attempting to minimize them as the product of mundane disputes over electoral campaign financing or corruption schemes, when not dismissing them entirely as an inconsequential.

Estado editorialized on November 16: “At this point, it is clear that the motivation of Bolsonaro to leave the party that harbored him is purely finances,” contending that “the formation of a new party in Brazil is not reasonable” given the fragmented political landscape. Even more cowardly was the reaction of *Folha*, the mouthpiece of Bolsonaro’s “liberal” opposition, which editorialized in relation to the new party’s program that “such texts mean close to nothing in practice”, while taking issue with the fact that it is “not really economically liberal”.

Not surprisingly, an equally unserious tone is echoed by the upper-middle-class pseudo-left types that hysterically called for a vote for the PT in 2018 to “prevent fascism.” One month before the launching of the party, writing for the *Intercept* about the disputes over electoral funds within Bolsonaro’s former PSL, João Filho concluded: “Bolsonaroism is a project to destroy democracy. But everything leads us to believe that the presidential chimpanzee and his ever less numerous allies will self-implode before reaching this goal.”

It is a fact that Bolsonaro has virtually no mass support for such a project, let alone the mass middle-class base that characterized fascism in the 1930s. But for his pseudo-left critics, the actions of the masses are irrelevant. With an utter lack of seriousness they seek to predict the fate of Brazilian democracy based on the wit—or lack thereof—of the “presidential chimpanzee”. Nothing is to be gained either in terms of an analysis from the

statements of PT officials on Bolsonaro's new party. In fact, Bolsonaro's example of "burning buses" as terrorist acts justifying wider executive powers has been textually stated many times by PT governors, with Bolsonaro himself complimenting PT's Ceará state Governor Camilo Santana for "proving that you can't fight crime with human rights."

The Brazilian bourgeoisie is seeking an unprecedented alignment with US imperialism at the time of its greatest crisis, with both countries seeing the regurgitation of fascistic filth in the form of Bolsonaro and Trump. The Brazilian upper-middle class "left" aping the US Democratic party—and sections of the state and its intelligence agencies for which it speaks—present Bolsonaro as an "aberration" unrelated to the deepening crisis of capitalism and to be dealt with by the capitalist state itself by the methods of palace coup or a similar operation.

The threat of fascism originates not in the mind of Bolsonaro, but in the outlook of a significant section of the Brazilian capitalist class, which is looking toward dictatorship as the means of defending its wealth against a rising working class. Only the independent mobilization of the working class, armed with an internationalist socialist strategy and in conscious opposition to the politics of the Workers Party and its pseudo-left satellites, will be able to defeat the threat of fascism by putting an end to its source, the capitalist system.

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