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Bowing to coup threats, Lula promises massive investments in Brazil's armed forces

Today, Brazil's newly inaugurated president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT), had his second meeting with the command of the armed forces since the January 8 fascist attack on government buildings in Brasilia.



Military parade on the commemoration of Brazil's independence, September 7, 2022. [Photo: Photo: Alan Santos/PR]

In an interview with *Globonews* on Wednesday, Lula said that the central topic of this meeting would be “to discuss the strengthening of the defense industry in this country.”

Explaining the agenda of the discussion, he said: “I asked each force to present me the difficulties they are experiencing in terms of functional structure ... so that we can have a process of rebuilding the productive capacity. Including using military technology to make a stronger, more modern defense industry.”

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The PT president said that his goals included to “dynamize the military patents that we already have, dynamize the development of the nuclear submarine and dynamize other things that Brazil needs to be a respected country. Our armed forces have to be prepared.”

In order to “effectively put into practice” these objectives, Lula invited the president of the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP), Josué Gomes, to participate in his meeting with the military command. He boasted that FIESP—the same big business lobby that seven years ago publicly campaigned for the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff of the PT—has a “project for the defense industry.”

The new PT government is promoting this militaristic campaign in the face of what Lula himself characterized as the threat of a military coup that confronted his administration less than two weeks ago.

In a press conference last week, Lula declared that if he had agreed to call for a Law and Order Operation (GLO) suggested by his defense minister and the Army commander, “the coup would have happened.” That would have meant, Lula said, his abdication of power “so that a general could take over the government.”

In Wednesday’s *Globonews* interview, Lula again talked about the background of the January 8 events. He essentially acknowledged having confronted an act of sabotage by the military top brass.

The president claimed to have left the Brazilian capital two days before the storming of government offices “with the information that there were only 150 people in the encampment [of Bolsonaro’s fascist supporters at the army headquarters] and they weren’t going to allow any more buses in. ... And after it happened, then you see that on social media this was being called for for more than a week!”

“Here we have army intelligence, we have intelligence from the Cabinet of Institutional Security (GSI), we have Navy intelligence, we have Air Force intelligence,” Lula said. “The truth is that none of this intelligence served to warn the president of the republic that this could have happened.”

The interviewer, Natuza Nery, asked the president why then he didn’t adopt a “more energetic attitude in relation to the military, the Ministry of Defense itself, the GSI,” or even the “immediate changing of the [military] command that had just taken over.” Lula responded, “We can’t have a witch hunt.” “My sorrow,” he added, “is that there was negligence.”

In the interview, Lula also presented for the first time an assessment of the role possibly played by his predecessor Jair Bolsonaro on January 8. Stating that the silence maintained

by the fascistic ex-president gave him the impression that “he had a lot to do with what was happening.” Lula concluded, “Possibly Bolsonaro was hoping to return to Brazil in the glory of a coup. I then could not allow a GLO.”

Since the attack in Brasilia, investigations into Bolsonaro and his allies have intensified. Bolsonaro’s minister of justice, Anderson Torres—who since the end of the presidential term had been acting as secretary of security of the Federal District, appointed by Governor Ibaneis Rocha—was arrested last Saturday, accused of collaborating with the pro-coup demonstrations.

Two days earlier, the Federal Police had seized at Torres’ residence the draft of a decree allowing Bolsonaro’s government to establish a state of defense (an even harsher military intervention than a GLO) over the Superior Electoral Court (TSE). The document was quickly dubbed the “coup draft.” This evidence indicates that over the two months between the election results and Lula’s inauguration, which Bolsonaro spent secluded from public life, the former fascistic president was prepared for a possible coup d’état based on the overthrow of the electoral system by the military.

The fact that the armed forces have in the meantime released their report on the elections, falsely claiming to have identified a “relevant risk to the security of the process,” demonstrates their direct involvement in Bolsonaro’s dictatorial plot.

The extension of these investigations is limited from the outset by Lula’s obstinacy in appeasing and getting closer to the military and the far-right political forces that dominate the Brazilian state.

These efforts are being welcomed by the Brazilian bourgeoisie. The right-wing *Estado de São Paulo*, which acts as a mouthpiece of a section of the armed forces, praised Lula for his conciliation with the pro-coup military. In its lead article on Friday, the newspaper acknowledged that in Lula’s first two terms (from 2003 to 2010) “the three forces had the most spectacular renovation program in decades.”

However, *Estado* added, today “the commanders also have other, more subjective demands.” These include the guarantee of political autonomy for the armed forces and nonintervention by the government in the curricula of military schools, which extol the military coup of 1964 and the two-decades long brutal dictatorship that it imposed upon Brazil.

Referring to the political significance of today’s meeting between Lula and the military, *Estado* described it as “a pact of coexistence.”

The PT's response to the violent fascist threats that have emerged in its first weeks in office have a purely reactionary character. At the same time that it seeks to balance itself in power by leveraging the strength of the military—which can only fuel the potential for a future coup—the Lula government is using these threats to declare any infringement upon capitalist profit interests impossible.

This week, the minister of economy, and one of the main leaders of the PT, Fernando Haddad, participated in the World Economic Forum in Davos. On the sidelines of the event, Haddad told the *Financial Times* that the recent attack in Brasilia demonstrated that “the opposition to Lula will be made of extremists” and, consequently, that “the speed of the implementation of our program will need to be considered very carefully ... as to avoid being the target of fake news and rioting.”

In other words, Haddad announced to the billionaires present at Davos that they have nothing to fear from the PT government in Brazil. Clarifying the practical meaning of his words, the minister declared: “It is not easy to raise taxes on rich people because a lot of congressmen have wealth and income . . . We have to start to change the mindset of people first.”

Next to taxing the richest, the main social promise of the PT presidential campaign was to raise the minimum wage in Brazil. Last week, Haddad announced that even the meager 18 real (US\$3.46) increase in the monthly minimum wage—currently set at 1,302 reais (US\$250)—cannot be met this year.

Under conditions of soaring inflation, exploding social inequality and widespread hunger in Brazil, the supposedly “left-wing” PT government is orienting itself, already in its first weeks in office, to raising military spending and freezing social spending. In the name of appeasing fascist forces and the military, the pro-capitalist PT government is paving the way for an explosion of working class fury.

Under these conditions, the unions and the pseudo-left parties have renewed their support for this anti-working class government. Also on Wednesday, Lula received representatives of the different Brazilian trade union federations. While the trade unionists “expressed solidarity with the government,” Lula promised to establish new means of financing the unions.

A particularly criminal role was played by the pseudo-left trade union federation CSP-Conlutas, controlled by the Morenoite Unified Socialist Workers Party (PSTU). Just two days before Lula's meeting with the military command, the PSTU unionists demanded

massive federal investments in the defense industry, fraudulently presenting the proposal as a means of defending workers' jobs.

The militarist turn of the PT and the pseudo-left in Brazil is intimately connected to the drive toward a third world imperialist war.

In his Wednesday interview, Lula was asked about the similarities between the far-right movement promoted by Bolsonaro in Brazil and that of his ally and political mentor, Donald Trump, in the United States. The PT president admitted the global character of the phenomenon, stating that “everywhere a far-right grouping is being born.”

As a reaction to this global political threat, Lula said: “I’ve already talked to French people, Spanish people, German people. We need to unite the progressive and democratic people of the world to have a meeting so that we can establish a confrontational action to prevent the resurgence of Nazism or fascism.”

In particular, he pointed to his meetings scheduled in the coming weeks with US President Joe Biden and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz as key arenas to elaborate an “anti-fascist” political strategy.

All the countries named by Lula are NATO members, engaged in escalating the proxy war against Russia, employing openly fascist forces such as the Azov Battalion in Ukraine. In particular, Biden and Scholz, heads of US and German imperialism, are responsible for this criminal war, which has unleashed the largest military confrontation since World War II.

The militaristic campaign, the deepening of capitalist attacks and the covering up the developing fascist forces in the Brazilian state, jointly promoted by the PT and its pseudo-left satellites, require a direct response by the Brazilian working class.

The main task of the moment is to build a mass political movement that will raise the independent interests of the working class, unifying it globally against capitalism and imperialism in the struggle for the reorganization of society upon socialist guidelines. This requires a fight to build the political leadership for this revolutionary process: sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International in Brazil and around the world.

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