Lula’s Win: A Blow to the Far Right Throughout the World

Lula’s extraordinary victory overnight in Brazil is the most important defeat for the far right we have seen anywhere in the world in recent times, and its impact will be felt worldwide.

Seeing those millions and millions of people pour onto the streets across this vast country to celebrate was enough to make you weep.

The seemingly impossible turnaround in the second round is not a simple electoral victory. It was won in the streets and on socials. Immediately after the far-right candidate, Flavio Bolsonaro, won in the first round, thousands of mainly very young people took to streets in Niteroi, across the bay from Rio de Janeiro, to demonstrate against the likelihood of a neo-fascist government in Brazil. The same thing happened in cities in the Northeast, the most impoverished region. This was repeated throughout the country in the three weeks between the rounds.

In parallel, younger members of congress from a smaller party supporting Lula’s Workers Party, completely revamped the campaign’s lacklustre social media presence. ‘Lula’s Army’, a WhatsApp channel launched by Janones of the Rede party, went from 50,000 followers to a million in two days. Now it has 10 million.

The next stage will be difficult, and possibly violent. As I write, Flavio Bolsonaro is refusing to recognise the results and calling on his supporters not to either. He’s promising a legal challenge, but last time, when his father, Jair Bolsonaro lost, they invaded the congress and presidential palace. President Trump looks ready to back him.

Even if the immediate threat recedes, Lula’s presidency will confront big far-right and traditional right majorities in both houses of congress. If he is not to capitulate completely, he will have to govern with the streets, and with his new found digital army. This in turn is likely to lead to confrontation. The far right is deeply embedded in large sections of society. And it could draw on the sympathies of at least parts of the armed forces.

What the Brazilian people have achieved can be a huge inspiration for all of us facing resurgent varieties of neo-fascism and the far right in different parts of the world. But they will also need support. We should be thinking now about how to organise that solidarity. The Scottish working class has a proud tradition in this area. ‘Nae pasaran.’

But developing our own struggles is also part of building solidarity. There is little doubt that the kids on the streets in Brazil have been encouraged by what they see in France and the Spanish state. No doubt the Serbian students who just defeated Vucic have been too. A new form of internationalism appears to be taking shape and we need to be part of that.

We live in interesting, if dangerous, times.

Iain Bruce 26th October 2026

Brazil’s Decision to Drill for Oil Off the Amazon Shows

Limitations of Government's Approach

[On 20 October, exactly three weeks before the beginning of COP30 in Belem, Brazil's environmental regulator, IBAMA, finally approved a licence for the state-controlled oil company, Petrobras, to drill an exploratory well off the coast of Amazonia, close to the mouth of the Amazon River. That same Monday, within hours of the announcement, drilling began. A couple of days later, Petrobras said it would need to sink three more wells in Block 59 to evaluate the exact extent of the reserves. Petrobras is hoping these deep-sea oil fields will prove to hold reserves similar in size to the estimated 11 billion barrels that Exxon-Mobil has begun to exploit further north off Guyana, in waters disputed with Venezuela. That's more than 30 times the amount of oil held in the Rosebank field off Shetland, which the UK government is about to rule on.

On 23 October, eight Brazilian NGOs sought a legal order to block the drilling. They pointed to the lack of any proper consultation with Indigenous peoples in the region, and the failure of any full evaluation of the environmental impact, both locally and globally. They suggested the move made a mockery of the Brazilian government's commitments for the coming COP30. But it seemed unlikely their injunction request would succeed. President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, of the Workers Party (PT), regretted that "nobody is in a position to do without fossil fuels". He said the income from the Amazon oil would be used to combat poverty and pay for the transition away from fossil fuels.

Subverta, one of the currents in the PSOL that makes up the Brazilian section of the Fourth International, says the decision reflects a much more fundamental limitation in the government's approach to the environment.]

On the eve of COP 30, to be held in Belém in Pará, this decision is by no means just a technical choice, but rather a political repositioning of Brazil in the face of the global climate crisis; it contradicts the image of a country seeking to lead a global just transition and reinforces the perception that Brazil remains trapped in a historical cycle of dependence and extraction.

Although the current government's programme is based on an ecological transition with social and environmental justice, this authorisation of oil exploration in one of the most sensitive regions of the planet highlights the contradictions between theory and practice. The rhetoric of a 'just transition' collides with the continuation of an extractive model that depends on fossil fuels, and which is justified on the grounds of energy sovereignty and national self-sufficiency.

Exploration on the Equatorial Margin will have an impact well beyond Brazilian territory. Much of the oil extracted would go for export, transferring emissions to other countries and undermining Brazil's global climate responsibility. According to estimates by climate organisations, burning the oil potentially extracted from this region could release more than 11 billion tonnes of CO_2. That is about 5% of the total remaining carbon budget available if warming is to be limited to 1.5 °C. In other words, this has a planetary impact, not just a regional one, which compromises the country's role in the international climate fight.

This puts us in a situation of even greater climate insecurity and uncertainty. The planet has already exceeded seven of the nine planetary boundaries (defined by the scientific community as the limits of stability for the planet's ecosystems), and the fossil fuel industry is primarily responsible for this. It is a mistake to expand drilling for more wells, wherever they may be.

In addition to the environmental and climate impacts, there is also an economic argument that cannot be ignored. Several international studies, such as those by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), warn that Petrobras' oil expansion represents a high-risk investment. They estimate that up to 85% of new production projects would only be profitable in a scenario of global warming above 2.4°C, i.e., in a context incompatible with the Paris Agreement targets. Although economic factors and figures alone should not be our main motivation for rejecting exploration, they show that, even according to the logic of profit, the country is investing in assets that may quickly become stranded by the global transition to renewable sources.

Petrobras, as a strategic company, occupies a paradoxical position in this situation. While seeking to reposition itself as a leader in the energy transition, with many renewable energy projects (despite a number of conflicts around wind and solar power plants in the Northeast of Brazil) and a lot of green advertising, it is also investing heavily in new oil fields. IBAMA's decision legitimises this ambiguity, and puts off confronting the need for a social and territorial restructuring of the energy sector.

The Equatorial Margin coastal region, stretching from Natal in the Brazilian Northeast to the border with French Guyana, is renowned for its high marine and river biodiversity, as well as being home to artisanal fishing communities, quilombolas and indigenous peoples who depend directly on coastal ecosystems. Even the installation of infrastructure for research and exploration in the Amazon estuary region will have a significant impact, not to mention the future risk of oil spills and contamination that could damage entire ecological chains, affecting fishing, water quality and traditional ways of life.

From an eco-socialist perspective, the permit given to Petrobras shows that territories on the periphery continue to

be sacrificed for the sake of a centralised, dependent development project; it illustrates in practice the impasse of a ‘transition’ that has been captured by capital. It is not a question of denying the need for energy, but of questioning who produces it, according to what logic, and in the service of what kind of society.

Drilling for oil in the Amazon estuary reveals a conflict between two kinds of rationale: the productivist rationale (of ‘commodity peoples’, in the words of Davi Kopenawa), which transforms nature into a commodity, and the ecological rationale (of the forest peoples), which understands the interdependence between living systems, territories and cultures. Defending the Amazon is not an ‘environmentalist’ demand in the narrow sense, but a political struggle for other ways of living and other kinds of social reproduction. Protecting the mouth of the Amazon means fighting for a future for our civilisation that cannot be measured in barrels of oil, but in flows of life, autonomy and socio-environmental diversity.

This dispute between different rationales also reveals how the path of more drilling for oil reproduces historical inequalities. The indigenous, quilombola and traditional communities that live on the Amazonian coast find themselves confronting the advance of the energy frontier with no access to real decision-making mechanisms. The absence of any free, prior and informed consultation, as laid down in ILO Convention 169, reinforces the marginalisation of these peoples. The colonial logic of exploitation and environmental racism is revived, imposing socio-environmental risks on those who benefit least from the extracted wealth.

The challenge facing the progressive camp, especially those who make up the social and political base of the government, is to insist that there can be no socio-environmental justice without a break with fossil capitalism. We need to strengthen initiatives that contribute to the development of a new energy

infrastructure, with communities playing an active part from the planning stage onwards the aim must be to replace thermal power and fossil fuels with decentralised, accessible, renewable and low-pollution public infrastructure at all levels.

We are opposed to any new thermal power plants, to drilling new oil wells and all other polluting projects, as well as to renewable power projects that lack socio-environmental justice. We must continue to promote dialogue with oil workers' unions and other workers in the fossil fuel sector. Only organised struggle will be able to stop fossil capitalism, and we call on everyone to join us in this struggle!

22 October 2025

End of the Nightmare in Brazil?

The result of the first round of the Brazilian elections on 2nd October is mixed, *writes Michael Löwy*. Certainly, Lula, the candidate of the Workers' Party, is in the lead, with 48.4% of the vote. But the hope of a victory in the first round has vanished and, above all, he is closely followed by Jair Bolsonaro, the neo-fascist candidate, with 43.2%—much more than the polls predicted. There will therefore be a second round on October 30, which, barring an unexpected reversal, should be won by Lula. However, Bolsonaro's supporters appear to be in control of parliament as well as several regional governments. In short, the neo-fascist current will probably lose the presidency, but remains an

extremely powerful political force.

Brazil’s dominant classes have never had a great fondness for democracy. Inheritors of three centuries of European colonization and four centuries of slavery, they have shown, in the last hundred years, a strong propensity for an authoritarian state from 1930 to 1945 under the personal power of the caudillo Getulio Vargas; 1964-1985, a military dictatorship; in 2016, a pseudo-parliamentary coup against President-elect Dilma Rousseff; from 2018-2022: neo-fascist government of Jair Bolsonaro. The more or less democratic periods seem to be parenthesis between two authoritarian regimes.

The four years of Bolsonaro’s presidency have been a huge disaster for the Brazilian people. Elected with the support of the bourgeois press, business circles, landowners, banks, and neo-Pentecostal churches, he took advantage of the fact that Lula, the only opponent capable of beating him, had been put in prison, under false accusations. The former captain was unable to fulfil his dream of re-establishing a military dictatorship and shooting “thirty thousand communists.” But he has sabotaged every health policy in the face of Covid, resulting in more than 600 thousand deaths; he has ravaged Brazil’s fragile public services (health, education, etc.); he has reduced tens of millions of Brazilian women to poverty; he has actively supported the destruction of the Amazon by the kings of soybeans and cattle; he has promoted neo-fascist, homophobic, misogynist, and climate-sceptic ideas; he supported the paramilitary militias (responsible for the assassination of Marielle Franco); and he has not ceased to try to set up an authoritarian regime.

Will the October 2022 elections put an end to this nightmare? Lula is likely to win in the second round on October 30. But Bolsonaro, following the example of his political model, Donald Trump, has already announced that he will not recognize an unfavorable result: “If I lose, it is because the vote has

been falsified." A part of the Army, strongly represented in his government, seems to support him: will it go so far as to take the initiative of a military coup against the elected president, i.e. Lula? This hypothesis cannot be ruled out, even if it does not seem the most likely: the Brazilian Army is not used to moving without the green light from the Pentagon and the State Department. But right now, Biden has no interest in supporting a tropical Trump at the helm of Brazil. Bolsonaro tried to mobilize his supporters—police, militiamen, retired generals, neo-Pentecostal pastors, etc.—to create a crisis situation comparable to that caused by Trump around the Capitol after his electoral defeat. Will he have the same success as his North American idol?

Despite the highly questionable choice of a reactionary bourgeois politician (Geraldo Alckmin) as his running mate for for vice-president, it is clear that Lula—Luis Inacio da Silva, former metalworker, trade union leader of the great strikes of 1979, and founder of the Workers' Party—is currently embodying the hope of the Brazilian people to put an end to the neo-fascist episode of the last four years. He is supported by a broad coalition of forces, which includes not only most of the organizations of the left and the social movement—trade unions, the landless movement, the homeless movement—but also the broad sectors of the industrial bourgeoisie, which unlike the land owners, who remain loyal to Bolsonaro, came to the conclusion that the ex-captain was not a good option for business. It must be acknowledged that the electoral battle was not preceded by a rise in popular mobilization as in Colombia.

The Party of Socialism and Freedom (PSOL), the main force of the radical and/or anti-capitalist left in Brazil—where there are several currents associated, in one form or another, with the Fourth International—decided, after a long internal debate, to support Lula from the first round. A small dissident current, led by the economist Plinio de Aruda

Sampaio Jr, who disagreed with this choice, left the party, but the main left currents of the PSOL—such as the Movement of the Socialist Left (MES), whose spokeswoman, Luciana Genro, was the presidential candidate of the PSOL in 2014—have, despite their desire for a PSOL's own candidacy in the first round, accepted the majority decision and actively participated in the campaign in support of Lula.

Most PSOL activists have no illusions about what the government led by Lula and the Workers Party (PT) would be: probably an even more unbalanced version of the social-liberal policies of class conciliation of previous experiences under the aegis of the PT. Admittedly, these experiments have allowed some social advances, but it is not certain that this will be the case this time. This will depend, of course, on the ability of the radical left and, above all, of the social movements, of the exploited and the oppressed to move, autonomously and independently. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the vote for Lula is an unavoidable necessity to free the Brazilian people from the sinister nightmare that the regime of Jair Bolsonaro has signified.

Once elected, Lula will face many difficulties: fierce opposition from sectors of the Army, the kings of cattle and soybeans, neo-Pentecostal churches, fanatical (often armed) supporters of Bolsonaro. He risks having before him a hostile Congress, dominated by reactionary forces; the present Chamber is governed by the so-called "4 Bs: beef, banks, Bibles, bullets", i.e. landowners, finance capital, evangelical sects and paramilitary militias. One of the decisive battles of the future will be the rescue of the Amazon, which is being destroyed by agro-capitalism.

In addition, Lula will be, like Dilma Rousseff, under the permanent threat of a "parliamentary coup." This results from a disastrous choice for the vice-presidency: Geraldo Alckmin, former governor of Sâo Paulo, the former right-wing opponent beaten by Dilma Rousseff in 2014. Lula probably chose him to

give pledges to the bourgeoisie and disarm the right-wing opposition. But he has thus given a decisive weapon to the ruling classes. If Lula takes any action that does not please the Brazilian oligarchs, who controls the majority of the parliament, he will be the subject of impeachment proceedings, as was the case with Dilma in 2016. In this sad precedent, she was punished under ridiculous pretexts, and replaced by the vice-president, Temer, a reactionary of the so-called bourgeois "center". The same could happen to Lula: impeachment and substitution by Alckmin. The Colombian Gustavo Petro was more skilful, choosing as running mate Francia Marquez, an Afro-Colombian woman, feminist and environmentalist.

That said, the imperative of the moment, in October 2022, is, without a doubt, the vote for Lula. As Trotsky explained so well almost a century ago, the broadest unity of all the forces of the workers' movement is the necessary condition for defeating fascism.

3 October 2022

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