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SOLIDARITY WITH WORKERS IN BRAZIL

Down with Bolsonaro! Resist the rise of fascism!



A placard on an anti-Bolsonaro protest reads "Dictatorship never again".

The election of Jair Bolsonaro, an extreme right winger, as president of Brazil in late October should raise alarm bells for workers and oppressed groups across the globe. Now is the time for international solidarity.

What this election means

Hate crimes were on the rise during the election campaign. LGBT people, feminist activists, and other social groups have been on the receiving end of acts of physical violence.

The new president's support of draconian police action may lead to an increase in extrajudicial killings and other forms of human rights violations. Bolsonaro has said he wants to give rich farmers guns to help them enclose land and terrorise farm labourers.

Troops invaded 20 universities, confiscating educational materials, questioning professors, and ripping up displays. This was under the pretext of stopping electoral violations, but it is widely accepted that it was a clamp down on oppositional views, reminiscent of Nazi Germany. Bolsonaro also has a radical policy for the Amazon rainforest, where he plans to disregard environmental protections and give free reign to logging companies and agricultural corporations. This will have a devastating impact for the indigenous communities of the Amazon, and for the world's climate.

What did the 1964 dictatorship mean for workers and trade unionists?

Brazil was ruled by military dictatorship from 1964-1984. The union movement

and workers more generally were the central targets of the military coup itself and of the repressive military regime.

At least one quarter of the 434 direct political assassinations were of workers active in the labour movement. More than 1,500 rural workers were killed during the dictatorship by employers' thugs. This is what Bolsonaro wants to see again.

Why has this happened?

Failures of the left government under Lula da Silva, from 2003, has disillusioned many.

The Workers Party (PT) did tackle unemployment and extreme poverty through job creation and a benefits system, making Lula very popular. However, like Tony Blair's New Labour government after 1997, democracy within the party was shut down and working-class activists had their say in the party taken away in favour of middle-class experts and friends in big business. As the global economic crisis hit, Lula's party had to make concessions to the rich at the expense of the working poor and make unsavoury alliances to stay in power.

When the election time came around, Lula was in prison for corruption and the party was beset by scandal. Protests in 2013 that began as a fight against high public transport fares were channelled by the right into general "anti-corruption" protests against PT and other politicians. With the help of a radically socially-conservative push by evangelical churches such as the United Church of the Kingdom of God, Bolsonaro has fanned this sentiment into far-right flames.

The resistance

Bolsonaro's regime will encounter resistance from many quarters: from workers' organisations like the Landless Workers' Movement; from LGBT rights groups; from indigenous people's organisations and Afro-Brazilian community groups; and others.

Transport workers in Brazil are well-unionised and *Tubeworker* will be exploring opportunities to twin our union branches with theirs and help support any resistance to Bolsonaro's inevitable attacks on unions and workers' rights.

FIGHTBACK ON STATIONS

At Baker Street, workers are balloting to demand the reinstatement of CSA Mahoney, a probationer sacked after an outrageous abuse of the probation process. They are also demanding unnecessary disciplinary procedures against two workers, including the local RMT rep, be dropped.

On the Bakerloo South stations group (Oxford Circus, Piccadilly Circus, Charing Cross, Lambeth North, and Elephant and Castle), RMT is balloting members for strikes against short staffing. The situation is now so acute that station staff report sometimes having to work on Oxford Circus's busy exit gateline on their own during peak hours.

Short staffing is a growing epidemic across the whole job. Despite the 325 reversals we won to the "Fit for the Future" job cuts, there are simply not enough staff on stations to deal with the workload. As soon as any gaps appear in coverage, the staff that remain are having to bear the brunt. And with funding cut to the bone, management insist there's no money to cover uncovered duties on overtime.

Our January 2017 strike on stations was magnificent, and proved to management that station staff have the power to stop the jobs. The concessions we won as a consequence were important.

But since then, management have had nearly two years of industrial peace. Now's the time to say: enough.

STRIKE BALLOTS

BAKER STREET STATION STAFF: VOTE YES FOR STRIKES BY 6 DECEMBER

BAKERLOO SOUTH STAFF: VOTE YES FOR STRIKES BY 11 DECEMBER

NEW PROTOTYPE FOR CAB SECURITY

Progress on cab security been marred somewhat by intra-union conflict, with Aslef using the opportunity to take swipes at the RMT.

Aslef's impressive strike ballot result over the issue was a key source of pressure on management. But RMT have also consistently raised the issue. Conflict and division between workers' organisations only serves the bosses.

WHEELY GOOD SERVICE?

The Piccadilly Line has recently faced extensive delays due to "flatted wheels".

London Underground still advertises a "Good Service", leading to confrontation at affected stations and platform overcrowding. Station staff and union reps have repeatedly ask for this to change and feel dismissed by the responses they've received.

LU needs to be honest with passengers and staff.

HOW DIVERTING

Westminster was looking like it wouldn't have the minimum numbers to open, so a staff taxi carrying someone bound for Canada Water was diverted to make up the numbers.

This sets a pretty bad precedent. Can staff now be expected to be diverted to any station on the route of our taxis that might need the extra body? If staffing levels hadn't been cut to the bone, maybe these emergency panics wouldn't arise...

FURTHER CODE 36 ADVENTURES

Gates at 15 stations have been modified to have a lower exit threshold, meaning someone with "insufficient PAYG" can exit. If this trial is successful it will be made standard.

Staff have now been told to assist customers on their way in to resolve previous journeys, contradicting previous advice.

Alternatively they could always put a system in place of a staffed office with teams dedicated to assisting customers with their tickets...

4LM DELAYED

The "Four Lines Modernisation" (4LM) upgrade on the District, Met, Circle, and H&C missed the November date for the first phase of automatic train operation.

It has been put back to next year. £85 million was wasted paying Bombardier, who failed to complete the upgrade. Now Thales seem to be failing too.

OUT IN THE COLD

In the cold weather, we need to use the GLAP to keep warm.

But the heaters are practically useless. Our employer would rather we freeze than sit down for a few minutes.

We would love to see managers who made this decision work extreme shifts all winter in unheated offices.

"HERE TO HELP"?

From the new year, LU wants station staff to wear red tabards with the slogan "here to help".

More staff, not extra uniform, is the answer! Why should we dress like clowns to cover up for staff shortages?

CLEANERS RESIST JOB CUTS

RMT held a campaign organising day recently to discuss cleaners' struggles.

ABM recently let slip its plan to slash jobs. Cleaners are planning to fight back: other grades must support them.

AND FINALLY...

It's been revealed that senior stations boss Brian Woodhead received a 74% salary bump this year, taking his pay to nearly £300k.

While we don't doubt for a second that Brian is worth every penny of that (after all... if he didn't come to work, stations wouldn't open and trains wouldn't run... right?), but surely lower paid frontline staff deserve the same? 74% increase all round, anyone?

Despite their claims of poverty, there's clearly still money for some things at LU.

Tubeworker has switched to a sans-serif font, which we will use for our bulletin from now on. Sans-serif fonts are better for neurodiverse readers.

ALL OUT ON THE CENTRAL LINE

Central Line drivers strike again on 21-22 December, demanding reinstatement for Paul Bailey, a driver unjustly sacked despite passing a drugs test.

The strike doubles up as further action in RMT's dispute against what it calls a "breakdown in industrial relations" on the line. Translated out of union jargon, this means that drivers are justifiably fed up with being pushed around by bullying bosses, who maintain an increasingly authoritarian culture.

The strike will involve Night Tube drivers on the Central Line, only the second time Night Tube workers have taken industrial action since the service was launched.

The strike is likely to have a huge impact, on what is normally the busiest pre-Christmas shopping weekend of the year. But there's every possibility one more push won't be enough. RMT is rightly looking to convene an assembly of driver reps and activists to map out an ongoing strategy for the dispute.

A plan needs to be put in place for sustained and escalating action if management don't back down.

Unfortunately, Aslef have bailed out of the dispute, claiming that a rather weakly-worded communique from management on the application of 5.2 of the attendance policy satisfies their demands.

This is regrettable indeed; we appeal to rank-and-file Aslef members to respect RMT pickets.

What is Tubeworker?

Tubeworker is a rank-and-file socialist bulletin, published at least monthly, written by Tube workers, for Tube workers. It is published by the socialist group Workers' Liberty, but is produced in editorial meetings open to all workers.

Supporters from outside London Underground can help with public distribution.

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