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**Brazil**

# **Brazil: Bolsonaro attempts show of strength**

- IV Online magazine - 2021 - IV560 - September 2021 -

Publication date: Sunday 12 September 2021

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**Brazil's independence dates from 7 September 1822, when the Prince Regent ousted his father Joao VI and became Pedro 1st, Emperor of Brazil. An independence finally achieved without much drama and consolidated by a financial transaction between Brazil and Portugal under the auspices of Great Britain. It's the occasion of a military parade. It was this date that Brazil's beleaguered president Jair Bolsonaro had chosen to make a big show of strength.**

## A show of force to mask weakness

The Bolsonaro clan chose this date of 7 September to make a show of force, prepared for a long time, with a lot of money, from the state budget and also dirty money (the Bolsonarist mayor of a small town in southern Brazil was intercepted last Thursday with more than 80,000 euros hidden in his briefs!) Not being over reckless, the Bolsonarists had decided to concentrate most of these demonstrations in Brasilia in the morning, and São Paulo in the afternoon.

Bolsonaro certainly needs this show of force! He is down in all the polls, harassed by the progress of the ICC (Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry) on the Pandemic which demonstrates a little more every day not only his disastrous, negationist and criminal management of the pandemic but also the involvement of his entourage in the corruption that reigns in the health ministry. His two sons Flavio and Carlos are the subject of police investigations into the practices of *rachadinha* (cutting the pear in half) by which they have, for years, taxed for their benefit a share of the salaries of the employees of their cabinet as deputy (Flavio) or Rio city councillor (Carlos). Finally, his repeated verbal excesses against the STF (Federal High Court), against democracy and the Brazilian constitution reinforce his isolation; the financial sector and the agribusiness export sector for example have publicly distanced themselves. Bolsonaro's great fear is that he will be impeached and that his sons will be imprisoned.

Bolsonaro still has a majority in parliament. It protects him from impeachment, but not beyond that. And it is a mercenary majority, made up of these deputies from the soft centre of Brazilian political life. Their loyalty must be constantly maintained by positions in the administration and money for their constituency. They will also be the first to leave the ship at the first headwind signal.

## A mixed balance sheet

Visibly, the yellow and green tide (the colours of Brazil) desired by the Bolsonarists did not take place. In Brasilia, on the morning of 7 September, there were 50,000, perhaps 60,000. Some members of the clan even let their disappointment shine through. In his speech Bolsonaro repeated the eternal attacks on the judicial and legislative powers and announced the convening of the Council of the Republic, a consultative body with ill-defined contours. Finally, the highlight in this part of Brasilia were the riots impelled by the president's supporters the night before in a grotesque attempt to dismantle the security barriers installed to protect the parliament and the STF.

Many more people were in São Paulo in the afternoon. 120,000 people filled Paulista Avenue. Bolsonaro, even more aggressive, this time attacking STF judge Alexandre Moraes (his *bête noire* of the moment) by name. He returned to criticism of the electronic voting system used in Brazil to defend the printing of the vote by a printer linked to the ballot box, questioning in advance the result of the upcoming elections (he already sees himself losing) which will not use

this system.

In the other capitals of Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte and) demonstrations took place. As the Bolsonaroists had chosen to favour Brasilia and São Paulo, they were neither a scathing failure nor a great success.

## The response of the left

A part of the left (the PT and even part of the PSOL) is betting everything on an electoral strategy to elect Lula in 2022 and did not really want to tackle the task of calling counter-demonstrations. As Roberto Robaina anticipated on 6 September in the magazine *Movimento*, in the absence of a systematic mobilization effort, it could not be expected that the counter-demonstrations of the left would be larger than those of the fascist right. In many cities the left forces had chosen to join the procession of the "Grito dos excluídos" ("the cry of those left behind"), which since 1995 traditionally brings together all those, women, black people, the poor, the inhabitants of the favelas that Independence and later the Republic have left aside.

This led to significant processions in Rio, Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte and especially in São Paulo where the left gathered 15,000 participants in a vibrant meeting. In Brasilia, protesters joined delegations of indigenous peoples who have been camping for more than a week near the STF to oppose a restriction of their rights to their historic lands.

In all these demonstrations, young people, women, inhabitants of favelas and peripheral neighbourhoods, and some trade union delegations were present. And more generally, in all neighbourhoods, Bolsonaro's speeches were punctuated by "panelaços", the now traditional concerts of pots and pans.

## And now? Unity in the streets to oust Bolsonaro

7 September was therefore a day when, according to Roberto Robaina, Bolsonaro showed his strength and let his weakness shine through. In fact, no effective large-scale action against the bourgeois-dominated democratic institutions has been attempted; Bolsonaro and his people did not dare to go beyond words. But the appearance of this force should of course not be underestimated. The far right has raised its head and is in government. The executive branch has a force of attraction and assets. The coup is a policy of the government itself. It turns out that Bolsonaro has failed to use executive power to hegemonize the ruling class. Its orientations have produced an irreversible division. A significant part of the bourgeoisie decided, after many attempts at conciliation and cohabitation, to confront him. Hence the sympathy that the actions of Supreme Court judges, for example, arouse in millions of people of democratic consciousness.

The Bolsonaroists' demonstration did not reverse the government's dynamic of erosion. After 7 September, it is the scenario of pandemic, unemployment, prices rising generally and for energy in particular, the possibility of rationing, which returns to the scene. As will accusations of government corruption and social discontent against Bolsonaro. None of this is going to change. Weakness will always be the hallmark of the government and the possibility of overthrowing it remains on the agenda.

An optical effect can momentarily give the impression that the forces of the government and the extreme right taking to the streets are superior to those of the opposition in the streets. This is not the case: the demonstrations of 19 June and especially 24 July against Bolsonaro did not have the support of the state apparatus but they gathered

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more people, in more cities than the Bolsonarists today. That is why we must reject any policy that does not rely on the strength of the workers and the currents and parties that claim to be left in the streets, with determination and in an organized way. We refuse to depend solely on the reaction of bourgeois democratic institutions. We are stronger, more conscious, even if this day of 7 September saw us on the defensive. And we must prepare for new actions and argue within the political forces of the "Bolsonaro out" campaign for this battle to be won on the streets and in unity.

*PS:*

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