

# On Guard

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## Solidarity with the workers of Brazil!

## Down with Bolsonaro and the far right!

### Who is Bolsonaro?

Bolsonaro is a Brazilian equivalent of Trump in America, Orban in Hungary, Salvini of Italy, Erdogan of Turkey or Duterte of the Philippines - only worse. He explicitly praises the military dictatorship which ran Brazil between 1964 and 1985 and has repeatedly expressed admiration for autocrats including Peru's Alberto Fujimori and Chile's Augusto Pinochet "I'm in favour of a dictatorship," he proudly says and that "Pinochet should have killed more people"!

**The election of Jair Bolsonaro, an extreme rightwinger, as president of Brazil last week 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, 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 twenty 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.

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

In the dictatorship, the union movement and workers more generally were the central targets of the military coup itself and of the repressive military regime

Repressive legal and police measures against strikes and independent union organization, including the firing, arrest, and sometimes murder of union militants, were central planks of the military regime. At least one quarter of the 434 direct political assassinations were of workers active in the labour movement. If we include "worker-students" - that is, university students who were expelled or abandoned their studies to participate in the labour movement and the struggle against the dictatorship - the number is much higher. 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 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.. This worked while economic conditions were favourable and while big business like landowners were willing to chip in. But 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.

### Workers' Government

This is a lesson for the labour movement everywhere. Workers government means more than tinkering with and bargaining within the system. It means putting workers organisations in the driving seat, rather than top down New Labour style politics. That means real democracy in Labour and in our unions.

### Bolsonaro on record

#### Refugees

*"The scum of the earth"* Sept 2015

#### Gay people

*"I'd rather my son died than was gay"* June 2011

#### Human rights

*"I'm in favour of torture"* May 1999

#### Women

*"I've got five kids. Four of them are men, but on the fifth I had a moment of weakness and it came out a woman"*. April 2017

#### Race

*"I don't run the risk of seeing my children date black women or being gay. My children were very well raised"*. March 2011

## local roundup



### Safety Culture at risk

There have been a spike in the number of safety incidents in the last year or so at Sheffield depot including the derailment on 9th October which caused huge disruption to services. Quite apart from the danger to passengers, and staff these incidents show up privatisation for what it really is.

Instead of trying to find out the truth behind the causes, the emphasis is on finding which company is to blame in an attempt to avoid the fines. And to avoid the company itself getting the blame, driver is pitted against signal worker. Since the RAIB (Rail Accident Investigation Board) or the Office of Rail and Road only get involved in very serious incidents, we are reliant on NR and the TOCs to put things right. This is not good for preventative action.

Workers know best what causes accidents because we do the jobs. Why don't they listen to us?

One of the reasons might be that so many new drivers are being taken at the same time that the one to one passing on of experience from old drivers to new is being missed out.

Our safety culture, that protects all rail workers and passengers, is suffering in the rush. This is frustrating for the older hands who have that knowledge, and dangerous for the new ones who are missing out on the benefits of learning from the best. Old and new should stick together against a management culture that puts cost cutting before safety and blame before improvement.

### Technology Should Not Mean Job Cuts

On Guard has noticed the recent introduction of 'self-checkout' machines at the M&S store in the station, something that has been present in the WH Smith store for some years now. Facebook users might have seen memes calling on people to boycott these machines in order to help maintain jobs for checkout staff.

We would like to hear from any M&S staff who have experienced a reduction in hours or any other negative changes in their work as a result of the arrival of the self-checkouts.

Technological improvements are often motivated by the bosses' desire to reduce their businesses' reliance on human labour. They hope this will cut down on wage bills, either by employing fewer skilled people to do the same work, or by reducing the overall number of people they need to get the job done.

If self-checkout machines are used to cut down on retail staff, it is the same process as the introduction of ticket machines and CCTV cameras on trains to try to justify getting rid of Guards. This has the added effect of reducing our industrial power - if machines can do more of our work, the bosses reason that they are better able to carry on the job without us and that it will hurt them to a lesser extent when we withdraw our labour.

In the hands of workers themselves, technology could be used to make life at work easier and safer for everyone rather than just to increase the profits of the few.

### Rail Gourmet

Rail Gourmet members who work on the LNER inter-city line took strike action in Edinburgh last week in fight for workplace justice. Management have continued to ignore RMT members concerns:

- Bullying and Harassment of Staff
- Abuse of the Disciplinary Procedures
- Non Payment of Additional Duties

The union said: "They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect just like any other group of transport workers".

Do Sheffield RG staff have concerns? Why not let On Guard know.

All contact is anonymous.

### What is On Guard?

On Guard is a monthly socialist bulletin by and for rank and file workers at Sheffield rail. It is published by socialist group Workers' Liberty.

We will be featuring a lot of updates and articles on Driver Only Operation, but welcome content on any issue from Sheffield rail workers, all grades and companies.

### Got a story for On Guard?

Contact us:  
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