

# FIFA World Cup: Wave of protests and strikes unleashed in Brazil

(Abridged from) *Marxist.com*, Tuesday, 10 June 2014

**The World Cup events being held in 12 cities across Brazil are set to begin in several days. Half a million tourists are expected to flood into Brazil. However, instead of the expected celebrations and weeks of national rejoicing in a country long-known for its proud football traditions, there is enormous tension as the events are set to begin on June 12th.**

The entire country has been rocked by a wave of strikes and protests of different sections of the working class bringing their grievances forward in the lead-up to the Soccer tournament. Demands for wage increases have led to strikes in various sectors, from bus drivers, police officers, metro operators to teachers throwing major cities into chaos and traffic congestion.

Youth, homeless workers, indigenous people and slum-dwellers in the favelas have also organized protests. The opulence and lavish spending for the World Cup stands in sharp contrast to the poverty and deteriorated services that the masses depend upon. This has created an enormous backlash in Brazilian society. The masses challenge the obvious hypocrisy; if there is \$14 billion to spend on stadiums and other associated spending, how can the government refuse to fund transport, health, education, housing and proper wages for workers?

The incompetence of the authorities in regards to stadium building and infrastructure projects that have been delayed or cancelled, seen cost-overruns as well as fatal workplace deaths of construction workers, have only discredited the government further.

The World Cup festivities have become a focal point for all the burning anger and frustrations in Brazilian society.

It is enough to simply highlight the cost of tickets to the football matches, with prices for the matches ranging from \$300 to \$6,000. The majority of Brazilians live on monthly wages of below \$215 and cannot dream of purchasing such tickets. The fact that football has a very prominent position in Brazilian culture makes these facts even more insulting.

A mural painting went viral displaying a thin boy seated at a table for dinner and crying, with only a soccer ball served on a plate.

The masses are asking: who is all of this for?

(...)

Indeed President Dilma and FIFA head Sepp Blatter have announced that they will not be making speeches at the opening ceremonies of the World Cup. They fear that they will be booed and jeered at by the crowds (as occurred during the Confederations Cup one year ago).

The past period of a booming economy in Brazil meant that the PT government, under then-president Lula, could offer concessions to the workers. Collective agreements would generally result in wage increases, while poverty programs lifted millions out of poverty. This lent itself to social stability and to the significant popularity of Lula.

Many mainstream commentators presented Brazil as a miracle economy.

Since then, growth rates have collapsed standing below 2% in the country and the forecast is for the downward trend to continue. The Brazilian miracle has become a nightmare. As export markets, particularly China, Europe and the USA slow down, the repercussions are felt in Brazil. This is in line with the process across the so-called “emerging economies” of the BRICS (1) and others that have seen rapid drops in growth in the last few years.

The economic slowdown has meant that the material basis that allowed for concessions to the working class has narrowed down significantly.

(1) *Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa*