

## ROUSSEFF'S COUNTERATTACK

# 'Do Not Expect from Me The Obsequious Silence of Cowards'

*The following are excerpts from the 45-minute speech given on Aug. 29, 2016 by Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, at her impeachment trial before the Brazilian Senate.*

"I was elected with more than 54 million votes. At my inauguration, I assumed the commitment to defend and obey our Constitution, whether in the observation of our laws, the promotion of the general welfare of the Brazilian people, or maintaining the unity, integrity, and independence of Brazil. In exercising the Presidency of the Republic, I faithfully respected the commitment I assumed before the nation and those who elected me. And I am proud of that ...

"I have also heard harsh criticisms of my government, of the errors which were committed and the measures and policies which were not adopted. I welcome those criticisms with humility. Because, like everyone, I have defects and I make mistakes. But disloyalty and cowardice are not among my defects. I do not betray the commitments I assume, the principles I defend, or those who fight at my side. In the fight against the dictatorship, I received on my body the marks of torture. I endured the suffering of jail for years ... But I did not change sides ... I fought for a society where there would not be misery or excluded ones. I fought for a sovereign, more equitable Brazil, where there would be justice. I am also proud of that. Those who believe, fight ...

"Do not expect from me the obsequious silence of cowards. In the past, with arms, and today, with juridi-



Marcelo Camargo/Agency Brazil

*President Rousseff defending herself during the impeachment trial in the Senate.*

cal rhetoric, they again intend to attack democracy and the Rule of Law ...

"I am not fighting for my term of office ... I know that I am about to be judged, once again. And it is because I have an absolutely clear conscience regarding what I did, in the exercise of the Presidency of the Republic, that I come personally into the presence of those who will judge me ... to say, with the serenity of those who have nothing to hide, that I did not commit any crime of responsibility ...

"Today Brazil, the world, and history are watching us and await the outcome of this impeachment process. In Latin America and Brazil's past, whenever the interests of the economic and political elite were hurt at the polls, and there were no legal grounds for a legitimate removal of the government, conspiracies were plotted which led to coups d'etat ...

"Today, once again, finding the interests of the

economic and political elite thwarted and hurt at the polls, we are facing the risk of a rupture of democracy. The dominant political standards in the world reject explicit violence. Now, the rupture of democracy occurs by moral violence and constitutional pretexts to lend the appearance of legitimacy to a government which is taking power without support from the polls. The Constitution is invoked so that the world of appearances hypocritically covers up the world of facts . . .

“They are pretext, only pretexts, to overthrow, by a process of impeachment where there is no crime of responsibility, a legitimate government chosen through direct elections and with the participation of 110 million Brazilian men and women. The government of a woman who dared to win two consecutive presidential elections. They are pretexts to justify a coup against the Constitution. A coup which, if it is consummated, will result in the indirect election of a usurping government . . .

“What is at stake is respect for the polls, the sovereign will of the Brazilian people, and the Constitution. What is at stake are the conquests of the last 13 years: the advances of the population, of the poorest people and of the middle class, the protection of children; the youth going to universities and technical schools; the improvement of the minimum wage; the doctors caring for the population; the realization of the dream of having your own house. What is at stake is the investment in public works to ensure survival during droughts and semi-arid conditions, and the conclusion of the long awaited and dreamed of project for the integration of the San Francisco river. What is at stake, as well, is Brazil’s great discovery, the pre-salt oil deposits. What is at stake is our country’s sovereign insertion into the world stage, guided by ethics and the search for common interests. What is at stake is the self-respect of Brazilian men and women . . . What is at stake is the future of the country, the opportunity and the hope of always progressing further . . .

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**“What is at stake is the future of the country, the opportunity and the hope of always progressing further. . . The most frightening threat of this impeachment process is the freezing for 20 years of all spending on health, education, sanitation, housing.”**

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“The most frightening threat of this impeachment process without any crime of responsibility, is the freezing for 20 years of all spending on health, education, sanitation, housing. It is preventing for 20 years that more children and youth have access to schools; that for 20 years, people be able to receive better health care; that for 20 years, families be able to dream of having their own house . . .

“As is characteristic of the conservative and authoritarian elites, they did not see in the will of the people the legitimizing element of a government. They wanted power, at any price. They did everything to de-

stabilize me and my government . . .

“Everyone knows that I did not enrich myself through the exercise of public posts, that I did not embezzle public funds to my personal benefit nor to that of my relatives, and that I do not own accounts or property abroad. I have always acted with absolute probity in public posts that I have held throughout my life . . .

“We are one step away from consummating a grave institutional rupture. We are one step away from concretizing a true coup d’etat . . .

“Twice I have looked death in the face: when I was tortured for days on end, subjected to cruelty which makes one doubt humanity and the meaning of life itself; and when a serious and very painful illness threatened to shorten my existence. Today, I only fear for the death of democracy, for which many of us, here in this plenary, fought with our best efforts. . . .

“Remember that in a presidential system and under the aegis of our Constitution, a political conviction necessarily requires that a crime of responsibility have happened, committed intentionally, and that it be thoroughly proven. Remember the terrible precedent that this decision may create for other presidents, governors, and mayors. To convict without substantive evidence. To convict an innocent person. I make a final appeal to all the Senators: Do not accept a coup which will only worsen, rather than solve, the Brazilian crisis.”

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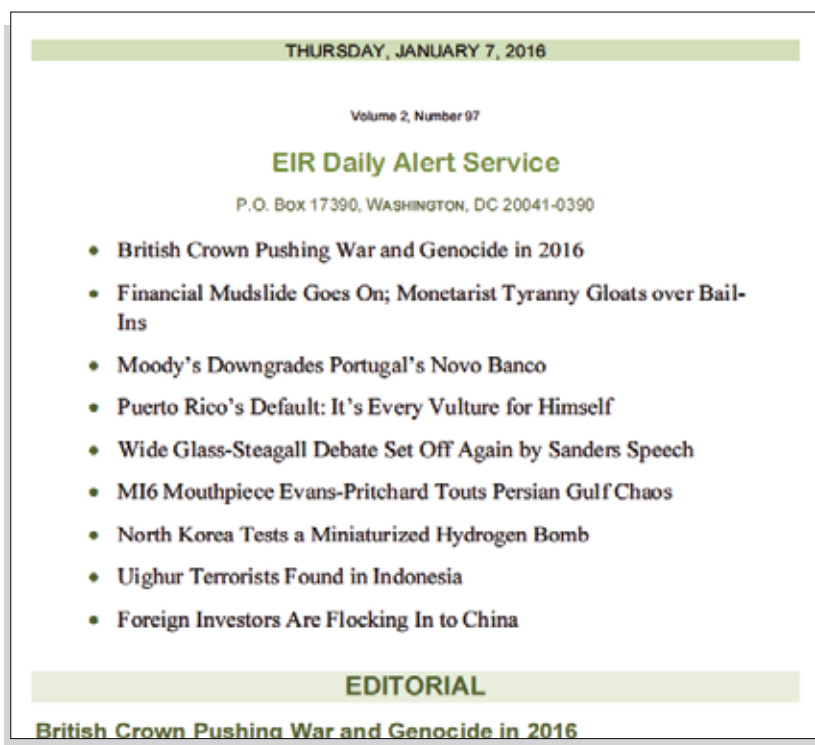
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