

Brazil's ruling Workers Party pays homage to Pierre Lambert for services rendered

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The death in January of Pierre Lambert, the long-time leader of the French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) and its successor, the Parti des Travailleurs (PT), occasioned widespread press reports in France as well as condolences from leading figures in the French Socialist Party and the Force Ouvrière (FO) trade union federation.

Also offering condolences and sending an official representative to Lambert's funeral was the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores—PT) of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

The roots of this connection between the ruling party of Brazil and Lambert go back at least three decades.

Lambert entered the Trotskyist movement as a youth in the 1930s and by 1952 had assumed the leadership of the organization that would become known as the OCI from 1968 to 1981, and later the PT. In the period between 1953 and 1963, he and the French section played a role in the founding of the International Committee of the Fourth International and the struggle against Pabloism, the tendency that sought the liquidation of the Trotskyist parties into Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism.

By the end of the 1960s, however, the OCI turned away from this struggle and, in 1971, formally broke with the International Committee. Within France, it became a significant base of support for the “unity of the left” platform advanced by Francois Mitterrand, who finally won the presidential election in 1981.

In Latin America, the Lambert group sought to unify with virtually every significant centrist party on the continent—the POR of Guillermo Lora in Bolivia, the Argentine group of Nahuel Moreno and the Política Obrera tendency led by Jorge Altamira, also in Argentina—only to have these opportunist alliances blow up in its face.

It was in Brazil that Lambertism registered its greatest “success.” But the nature of Lambert's supposed success—which saw the liquidation of the party of his Brazilian supporters and the creation of a new corrupt and reactionary bureaucratic apparatus—was determined by the methods of Lambertism. His was a political tendency that began with a rejection of the struggle to build a revolutionary Marxist party dedicated to the independent political mobilization of the working class in favor of seeking to influence existing reformist and trade union leaderships.

At the end of the 1970s, Brazil's military dictatorship was in severe political crisis. The workers' movement as well as the student movement had revived and were coming into struggle. Student demonstrations and street battles were frequent, with the students raising the slogan, “Down with the dictatorship.”

In 1978, the first mass workers' mobilizations erupted, triggering partial shutdowns of the Mercedes Benz and Ford plants in São Bernardo, the industrial town outside of São Paulo. Workers in the Saab-Scania factory struck on May 12, 1978. Then various plants in the ABC region (Santo Andre, São Bernardo do Campo, and São Caetano do Sul) went on strike one after another. On April 13, 1979, the metal workers in São Bernardo and Diadema began the first-ever general strike among this critical section of the workforce in what also was the first major mobilization of the

working class since 1964, when the military came to power in a CIA-backed coup.

In those tumultuous days of 1979, after 15 years of absolute rule, the dictatorship began to feel itself besieged by the movement of the masses.

In the face of these developments, which raised revolutionary hopes in the universities, the factories and the barracks, in the second half of 1979 the Organização Socialista Internacionalista (Internationalist Socialist Organization, known by its Portuguese acronym, OSI)—linked to the Committee for the Reorganization of the Fourth International identified with Lambert—carried out a decisive “turn” in terms of its political analysis of the conjuncture. Abandoning any perspective of building an independent revolutionary party, the OSI turned towards a policy that began a long process of betrayal of the Brazilian and world working class.

In the beginning of the process of the founding of the Workers Party [1] in 1979, the OSI had characterized it as a movement built to “betray the proletariat,” declaring its role to be “similar to that of Peronism” in Argentina. But, by the second half of 1979, it determined that it would be possible to carry out a policy of “entry” into the PT to build a Brazilian section of the Fourth International. Its leaders at the time declared that “the PT was the correct place to build an OSI of 2,000 members.” The congress of the OSI held in 1980 reaffirmed this political proposal and expelled those sections of the party opposed to entry into the PT.

Soon, the OSI's policy of entryism evolved in reality into an opportunist argument that it was possible to transform the PT into the Brazilian revolutionary party. But, even worse, within short order, the leadership of the OSI began an attempt to fuse with the syndicalist majority leadership of the party, led by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and José Dirceu, which would become known as the *Articulação* (linking) faction. Thus, the tactic of entryism emerged clearly as a policy of open liquidationism. The newspaper of the OSI, *O Trabalho*, began placing photographs of Lula on its front page—the same Lula who, at the beginning of 1979, had been characterized by the OSI leadership as a “*pelego* [company-union bureaucrat] similar to the gangsters of Peronist unionism” in Argentina. Then came the proposal to change the organization's weekly newspaper into a magazine, a proposal that was adopted for a certain period.

This liquidationist process was deepened in 1986 with the group's participation in parliamentary elections, which led to some electoral successes, such as Clara Ant's winning a state deputy's seat. A broad section of the OSI at that point went over to openly defending a perspective of dissolving the organization into the PT.

This strategy mirrored what was being carried out on an international scale by Lambert's organization, which pursued similar entryist methods in the French Socialist Party (PS) of Francois Mitterrand. As is now known, among the “entryist” cadre sent in by Lambert was Lionel Jospin, who beginning in 1987 became the prime minister of France.

It was also in 1987 that a major split took place in the international Lambertist current that, in practice, indicated an abandonment of any perspective of building or even “rebuilding” the Fourth International. In

France, a whole layer of Lambert's party left to dissolve themselves into the Socialist Party, while in Brazil, a broad section of the Lambertists did the same thing in relation to the PT.

The French-Argentine Luís Favre, who was active in the Lambertist organizations in both France and Brazil, played a major role in developing both the theoretical and practical sides of this liquidationist process. Favre fought the tendency within Lambertism that criticized the liquidation into the PS (identified with Stéphane Just) and defended as the central strategy of the party the "anti-imperialist united front," which translated into localized agreements with sections of the supposedly "progressive" bourgeoisie. Entryism into both the PT of Lula and the PS of Mitterrand fit perfectly into this opportunist strategy of Favre.

In Brazil, together with Favre, a large part of the leaders and cadres of the OSI abandoned the organization and dissolved into the PT, among them: Glauco Arbix, Clara Ant, Antônio Palocci, Luiz Gushiken and many others. Many of them carved out successful careers in the party and became well known figures in the Lula government. The process mirrored a similar development in France, where a whole wing of Lambert's organization followed the logic of liquidationism and left to join the PS, where a number of them rose to leading positions.

In Brazil, Favre occupied important posts as an international advisor, above all forging links between Lula's PT and the French Socialist Party. In addition, Favre became the campaign advisor to Marta Suplicy, the PT candidate for mayor of São Paulo in 2000, and ended up marrying her shortly after she took office.

In 2001, José Dirceu, Lula's long-time right-hand man and today one of the leaders who has lost his political rights because of corruption, told the Brazilian daily *Folha de São Paulo*: "Favre is a member of the globalized left, who speaks various languages, knows various different situations and can help the PT mayors a lot in forging agreements of exchange and cooperation with the left mayors in Europe." In the same article in *Folha*, Marta Suplicy is quoted as saying: "It would be great if he [Favre] could help us more closely, besides sending emails with analysis and ideas. Maybe it would be possible for him to find a means to live a little in Paris and a little here." [2]

Clara Ant, another ex-Lambertist militant, also made a "brilliant" parliamentary career for herself, in addition to occupying various administrative posts in the PT. For example, on the suggestion of then-Mayor Marta Suplicy, Ant, who was trained as an architect, was named to head the regional administration of Sé, a central neighborhood in the city of São Paulo. Afterwards, with the PT winning control of the federal government, Ant became the special advisor to President Lula, even taking charge of his daily schedule.

Luiz Gushiken, another ex-OSI militant, who also was a leader in the bank workers union, became an extremely close confidante of the president. Becoming a minister during Lula's first term in office, he became the target of various charges of corruption. Today, he serves as an advisor to Vale do Rio Doce, the world's second largest mining company, which was formerly state-owned, but was privatized under the government of President Henrique Cardoso. Paradoxically, it is reported that one of Gushiken's principal activities in the firm has been to convince sectors of the PT and the unions to abandon the campaign for the re-nationalization of Vale do Rio Doce which, according to the PT itself, had been privatized in a fraudulent deal that set the price of the company far below its market value.

A similarly illustrious fate was claimed by Antônio Palocci, another product of Lambertist entryism. After serving as mayor of Ribeirão Preto, an agricultural and industrial center in the state of São Paulo, he was named minister of the economy during Lula's first term in office. He was charged in a scandal involving the violation of privacy laws for obtaining the bank records of a housekeeper who had spoken to the press about orgies in which he and other PT leaders participated at a house in Brasília.

As a result, he was forced to resign his ministerial post. Today, despite being an elected federal deputy, he is facing multiple trials, including over charges related to his term as mayor of Ribeirão Preto. Among the accusations are participation in fraudulent contracts for school meals and garbage collection in the city. In 2007, he was sentenced to a loss of all public posts in two judicial decisions, both for administrative misconduct. As he appealed these decisions, the legal process is continuing.

As is evident, the destiny of the members of the OSI who took the path of entryism into the PT beginning in 1980 was not very honorable. The majority of the ex-Lambertists who adhered to the PT became involved in corruption cases and public scandals. But, above all, they made a class choice in this period, aligning themselves with the bourgeoisie.

As for those who remained in the PT as "orthodox" followers of Pierre Lambert, aside from calling themselves members of a supposed Fourth International, there was in truth very little to distinguish them from those who openly liquidated themselves into the majority *Articulação* tendency within the PT. Thus, the Lambertist OSI was dissolved many years ago in terms of an independent organization and now exists solely as a current within the PT, a numerically insignificant current known as *O Trabalho*, or Labor.

In the PT's last internal elections, which took place in December 2007, the *O Trabalho* current put forward its own slate, called "Land, work and freedom." It won a minimal vote (close to 1 percent), yielding it no seats on the party's 18-member executive board or on the five-member Council on Ethics and Finance. It guaranteed the tendency only one seat on the 81-member National Directorate. As can be seen, *O Trabalho* has merely a decorative function in the PT of Lula, that of legitimizing the ever-more right-wing course of a party that is tied inextricably to the class interests of the bourgeoisie.

While various other groups claiming to be Trotskyist that carried out entryism in the PT were expelled at the beginning of the 1990s (like *Convergência Socialista* and *Causa Operária*)[3], the Lambertist current of *O Trabalho* managed to coexist peacefully with the majority tendency led by José Dirceu [before he was forced out over corruption scandals] and today by Ricardo Berzoini. Today, *O Trabalho* voices only a verbal opposition to the economic policies of the Lula government, but, in reality, remains within the PT to provide cover for what has become a bourgeois party, helping to somehow portray it as a party of the so-called "left." *O Trabalho* plays a similarly treacherous role in relation to the CUT, the official union federation that is totally subordinate to the government.

This is the real political history behind the condolences sent by the leaders of the PT on the occasion of Lambert's death. Among those lamenting Lambert's death was the current president of the national party, Ricardo Berzoini, a man who is repudiated even by his own PT colleagues, a confidante of Lula who headed the recent pension reform and who was involved in the scandal over the purchase of a false dossier on Lula's opponent in the last elections, Geraldo Alckmin.

In the face of the death of Lambert, this same Berzoini felt obligated to issue a note to the press on January 16, 2008, recognizing the services lent by "comrade Lambert" to the PT:

"It was with pain that we learned of the death of comrade Pierre Lambert on the morning of this Wednesday, January 16. French, Lambert from the age of 14 was on the side of the workers for their emancipation. He was a principal leader of the socialist Fourth International, he was an tireless fighter against exploitation all over the world. He was also a leader of the metalworkers union and helped to maintain the activity of the General Confederation of Workers (CGT) in his country.

"I affirm my recognition of his actions and my admiration for his history as a working class and internationalist militant. To Pierre Lambert, my homage and my gratitude."

In the same manner, the CUT (Central Única dos Trabalhadores), the

union organization of the Lula government, issued a note of condolences on the death of Lambert signed by the federation's current president, Artur Henrique da Silva Santos, by its secretary for international relations, José Antônio Felício, and by its executive director, Júlio Turra, the last being one of the founders of the OSI:

"To the family, comrades and friends of Pierre Lambert:

"The National Executive Leadership of the CUT received with sadness the news of the death of comrade Pierre Lambert on the morning of this day, January 16, 2008...

"As an internationalist militant, Lambert helped organize various meetings of unionists held in Geneva during the annual conferences of the ILO (the UN-linked International Labor Organization), placing at their center the defense of union independence and of the ILO conventions that protect workers' rights.

"With his co-thinkers in Brazil, many of them members of our confederation, Pierre Lambert insisted on the necessity of defending the CUT, a conquest of the working class, against policies leading to its division and weakening.

"Thus, in expressing our sadness and sending our condolences to the comrades, friends and family of Pierre Lambert, we pay homage to the memory of an old militant of the French and international workers movement who was always in solidarity with the CUT."

The meaning of the CUT's statement is abundantly clear. Lambert's role was valued because he advocated the "independence" of the union leadership—not from the PT government, of course, but rather from the criticism of Marxists—and because he opposed "policies leading to its division and weakening;" i.e., he was against the intervention of revolutionaries seeking to mobilize the rank and file against the corrupt bureaucracy.

Significantly, a leader of the French FO trade union federation delivered a eulogy at Lambert's funeral praising Lambert for this very same orientation towards the union bureaucracy in France.

The PT was officially represented at Lambert's funeral in France, sending as its representative the main leader of the *O Trabalho* current, Markus Sokol. As the web site of the PT reported:

"The PT leader Markus Sokol will represent the party at the funeral of Pierre Lambert, historic leader of the French left, who died at the age of 87 on January 16. The funeral will be held this Friday (January 25) at the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, where Lambert will be cremated. Sokol will also carry the message of condolences issued by the president of the PT, Ricardo Berzoini."

It is obvious today—from the right-wing capitalist economic policies of the Lula government, to the generalized corruption during his two terms in office, the government's alliances with international capital and its agreements with the Bush administration in Washington—that the PT long ago forgot the Brazilian and world working class. It has not forgotten, however, the valuable services rendered by Pierre Lambert and his followers in helping to organize the historical class betrayal carried out by the Workers Party of Brazil.

Notes:

[1] The PT would be officially founded on February 10, 1980 at the Colégio Sion in São Paulo.

[2] <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/cotidiano/ult95u19266.shtml>

[3] Convergência Socialista was made up of followers of Nahuel Moreno of Argentina and also adopted a policy of entryism from the PT's very beginnings. Causa Operária is the current linked to the Argentine Jorge Altamira, the brother of Luís Favre. While the basic orientation of these so-called Trotskyists was the same as the Lambertists, they did not subordinate themselves as fully to the demands of the PT's leadership and were consequently expelled. But without a doubt, both the Morenoites and Causa Operária, thanks to their entryist politics, contributed to the construction of this counterrevolutionary apparatus known as the PT.



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