

Brazil's pseudo-lefts maneuver toward electoral front

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Five months after the massive demonstrations that shook Brazil last June, none of the issues that brought millions into the street—social inequality, neglect of essential social infrastructure and the corruption and self-dealing of the ruling Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores-PT) government—have been resolved in the slightest.

The prospect of another mass social explosion, outside of the control of the PT, the trade unions and the various pseudo-left organizations that orbit around them, remains the overriding fear within the country's ruling establishment.

Under conditions in which the broad masses of working people are profoundly alienated from the entire political setup, sections of Brazil's petty-bourgeois left are maneuvering to create a new political instrument designed to divert such a movement into channels that do not threaten the interests of imperialism and Brazil's corporate and financial aristocracy.

That is the significance of an open letter issued last month by the PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party), a party that originated in the revisionist movement led by the late Argentine centrist Nahuel Moreno and was part of the PT before it was expelled in the early 1990s. The objective of this statement was to initiate sordid political maneuvers aimed at cobbling together a “left front” electoral coalition.

With nearly a year to go until any ballots are cast, Brazil's ruling PT, its political opponents and its allies are already shifting into campaign mode for the 2014 election. The vote will determine whether the PT, which will have ruled the country for a dozen years, holds on to the presidency and will include races for federal and state legislatures, governorships and municipal offices.

President Dilma Rousseff of the PT, as well as Aécio Neves and José Serra, the two individuals vying for the nomination of the main right-wing opposition party, the PSDB (Brazilian Social Democratic Party), have been crisscrossing the country in escalating rounds of political speeches.

Smaller parties are aligning themselves with one or the other of these forces or preparing to run their own candidates, while new parties have been formed as part of the political machinations within the ruling establishment in preparation for the coming election.

These include Solidariedade (Solidarity), a party set up by Paulo Pereira da Silva, a federal deputy from Sao Paulo and leader of Força Sindical, which was formed as a “bread-and-butter” trade union federation in opposition to the larger CUT, (Unitary

Workers Confederation), which is politically aligned with the PT. Far from any bid to provide an independent voice for the working class, Solidariedade is merely a reconfiguration by various sitting politicians aimed at maximizing their personal power and access to funding.

A significant attempt to forge a new bourgeois party was that of Marina Silva, the environmental minister in the PT government of former union leader Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Marina (as she is universally referred to in the Brazilian media) ran as the Green Party presidential candidate in 2010, winning over 19 percent of the vote. Her Rede Sustentabilidade (Sustainability Network), though backed by major financial interests as a potentially even more “business-friendly” alternative to the PT, failed to clear the legal hurdles for ballot status. She has since aligned herself with the PSB (Brazilian Socialist Party) of Pernambuco Governor Eduardo Campos, and it is anticipated that she will join his ticket as vice-presidential candidate.

Rousseff saw her approval rating cut by more than half in the aftermath of the last June's protests—it has since rebounded somewhat, thanks to the revelations of the NSA spying on her and her government—prompting speculation that her once seemingly assured reelection in 2014 is now in serious doubt.

It is in this context that PSTU president Ze Maria issued his October 28 open letter. It was directed to the Stalinist Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and the PSOL (Socialism and Freedom Party), formed in 2004 by a faction of politicians expelled from the PT for opposing the pension reform introduced by the Lula government. Prominent among them were members of Democracia Socialista (DS), the Brazilian affiliate of the Pabloite movement. Even as some of its supporters were expelled from the PT and founded the PSOL, others stayed within the ruling party, holding on to top positions.

The last appearance of the Left Front in a national election was in 2006, when the PSTU and the PCB united behind the PSOL presidential candidate Heloisa Helena, a supporter of Democracia Socialista and a federal senator from the northeastern state of Alagoas. The front, whose campaign was waged on the basis of a thoroughly capitalist program that centered on the proposal to lower interest rates, won over 6.5 million votes or 6.85 percent of the ballots cast in the election's first round.

In the last presidential election in 2010, efforts to reconstitute the Left Front floundered, in large part because the PSOL was bitterly divided between those who wanted to throw its support to the

Green Party and its candidate Marina Silva and those who wanted to run the party's own candidate. Leading the faction that wanted unity with the Green Party, which was attracting substantial support from big business interests, was Heloisa Helena, who like Marina Silva is a devout Christian and fervent opponent of abortion rights.

The PSOL, PSTU and PCB each ran their own presidential candidate in the 2010 race—won by the PT's Dilma Rousseff—receiving less than one percent of the vote between them.

In his open letter, the PSTU's Ze Maria argues that the reconstitution of the Left Front for 2012 is urgent because “popular support” for the ruling PT “began to suffer a strong erosion beginning with the demonstrations in June.” He adds that this is “broadening the space and the possibilities for an alternative to the left.”

The task, according to the PSTU letter, is to present a “class and socialist alternative” that is “free of any relation to or participation of sectors of the bourgeoisie.”

What a fraud! The PSOL is itself a bourgeois party, formed by politicians whose aim is to revive the original project of the Workers Party, which has become the preferred instrument of rule for the Brazilian banks and corporations.

That the PSOL's entire existence is bound up with filthy political deals with even the most right-wing bourgeois parties in Brazil is no secret. Even Ze Maria feels compelled to note ongoing “processes and examples” of the PSOL's political activity that cause the Morenoites “concern.”

This included the PSOL's winning a mayoral election in Macapá, the capital of the northeastern state of Amapá, in a 2012 campaign that allied it with both the DEM (the successor of ARENA, the official party of Brazil's 20-year military dictatorship) and the PSDB, the country's main right-wing opposition party. In office, the party has continued this alliance, acting to suppress strikes by teachers and other public employees.

Ze Maria considerably made no mention of the current bitter divisions within the PSOL over Marina Silva's attempt to form a new right-wing bourgeois party. The PSOL suspended several leading members last March—including Heloisa Helena, the standard-bearer of the last Left Front ticket—for actively supporting this abortive effort. Only after Silva's Rede Sustentabilidade failed to gain ballot status did Heloisa Helena return to the PSOL fold to run on its ticket for the Alagoas senate seat.

“We also cannot ignore the episodes of businesses financing the candidates of this party in past elections,” Ze Maria adds in relation to the PSOL, whose candidate in Porto Alegre won funding from the major steel company, Gerdau. These criticisms are made more in sorrow than in anger, with the PSTU effectively telling its proposed ally, “Go and sin no more.”

As for the PCB, here too one could hardly find a less likely vehicle for conducting a political campaign based on the independence of the working class and the struggle for socialism. The rump of the main Brazilian Stalinist party, which dissolved itself in the wake of the Soviet Union's dissolution, it has held firm to the legacy of Stalinism, advancing its historic perspective of the popular front, subordinating the movement of the working

class to an alliance with the bourgeois parties in a “struggle for democratization” of the state.

In seeking an electoral alliance with these parties, the PSTU is acting as a bitter enemy of the political independence of the working class in the fight for socialism.

The Brazilian Morenoites reacted with shock, fear and hostility to the eruption of the mass struggles in the streets of Brazil last June. In the face of the hostility expressed at many of the demonstrations to the parties of the pseudo left—and the physical attacks that took place at some of them—the PSTU joined with the trade union apparatus and even the representatives of the ruling PT, which was overseeing the repressive attacks on the demonstration, in seeking a common front.

If it is now anxious to put together a “Left Front” coalition for the 2014 election, it is in order to breathe life into the disintegrating illusions that the demands of the working class can be met by reviving the political perspectives upon which the PT embarked in an earlier period. The effect of such a campaign can only be to divert the struggles of the working class and tie it more effectively to Brazil's ruling establishment.

The aim of this project is to advance the interests not of the workers and the oppressed, but of a privileged upper middle class layer that includes sections of the trade union bureaucracy, in which the PSTU holds posts, and political operatives who are only one step removed from the corrupt bourgeois politicians of the PT, whom they not long ago called “comrades.”

The real class orientation of this party which is calling for a “class and socialist alternative” in 2014 finds its most naked expression in the international line advanced by the PSTU, which is in direct support of US imperialism.

The PSTU has not only joined with other pseudo-left groupings internationally—the International Socialist Organization in the US, the New Anti-Capitalist Party in France, the Left Party in Germany and the Socialist Workers Party in Britain—in supporting the reactionary imperialist-orchestrated war for regime change in Syria.

It has gone a significant step further, insisting that the task of “socialists” is to wage a public campaign demanding that the US and the other major imperialist powers pour more and better weaponry into the Al Qaeda-led “rebels” serving as Washington's proxy forces.

Like Syriza in Greece or the Revolutionary Socialists in Egypt, the Brazilian PSTU is aligning itself more openly with the state and imperialism. Its promotion of the Left Front for the 2014 election is one more step along this increasingly reactionary path.



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