

As Brazil leads world in new COVID-19 deaths, Workers Party and pseudo-lefts rally behind capitalist state

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With Brazil overtaking the United States in the number of daily deaths, and the World Health Organization warning that the South American continent has now become the pandemic's global epicenter, the Brazilian ruling class is pushing for the full reopening of the economy.

Brazil yesterday recorded 1,086 new deaths and confirmed 21,000 new coronavirus cases, according to official numbers, bringing the total deaths to over 25,000, and cases to 414,000. Experts believe the real number of infections is at least 10 times higher due to the minimal level of testing.

Amid the uncontrolled coronavirus crisis and its drive to resume production, the Brazilian ruling class has found in the spiraling corruption allegations against the close circle surrounding the country's fascist President Jair Bolsonaro a means of diverting public attention from the massive disaster produced by Brazilian and international capitalism.

It is also testing out means for possibly removing Bolsonaro in what has been called the "least costly" way possible, that is, quickly replacing him with a more capable manager of the crisis and channeling mass opposition back behind the capitalist state. At the beginning of the pandemic's spread in Brazil, on March 30, that was the call made by the former "progressive" presidential candidates of the opposition, urging the nation to unite behind Bolsonaro's vice president, General Hamilton Mourão, and call for Bolsonaro's resignation.

The Bolsonaro government's indifference to the death and suffering of COVID-19 victims and to the millions facing poverty and unemployment as a result of the economic crisis resulting from the pandemic has sharply intensified Brazil's political crisis.

The Bolsonaro government has suffered the defection of two health ministers from the government within the space of a month due to its handling of the pandemic. A month ago, Bolsonaro's Justice Minister Sérgio Moro resigned, charging the president with interference in the Federal Police (PF).

Amid growing criticism of its passivity and inaction, the main party of the so-called opposition, the Workers Party (PT), has finally presented articles of impeachment against Bolsonaro.

The PT's impeachment petition is only the 35th presented

against the Brazilian president. It was preceded by a series of petitions, largely based on corruption charges, from right-wing and even far-right figures trying to disassociate themselves from the hated Bolsonaro administration.

The PT's indictment is centered on the reactionary claim that Bolsonaro's handling of the pandemic is a crime against the "internal security" of the Brazilian capitalist state. It goes so far as to quote from the 1950 Brazilian Impeachment Law in order to denounce Bolsonaro for stoking or neglecting to act to stifle a "violent attempt to change the current government framework."

Despite the PT's public claims that it is acting against Bolsonaro's fascistic threats against congress and the supreme court, the premise of the petition is clear: Bolsonaro must be removed for harming the interests of the Brazilian capitalist state and threatening its stability. To the extent that the PT condemns the fascist moods being whipped up by Bolsonaro, in the final analysis, it does so from the standpoint of capitalist stability and in order to preclude a mass working class reaction.

The PT has been joined in this petition by virtually every political force of the Brazilian pseudo left. The main pseudo-left force signing the petition is PSOL, the Socialism and Liberty Party, comprised of a dozen Pabloite, Morenoite and Lambertite "collectives." The PSOL had previously publicly denounced one of these "collectives," the Morenoite Left Socialist Movement (MES), for petitioning for Bolsonaro's impeachment through its four House members, and not respecting "party democracy"—that is, the PSOL's negotiations with the PT to present the reactionary joint petition in defense of the Brazilian state.

The PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party), Brazilian section of the Morenoite International Workers League, has also joined the petition, four years after being shunned by other pseudo-left tendencies for supporting the trumped-up impeachment of PT President Dilma Rousseff in 2016. Another force usually known for its "anti-parliamentarian" rhetoric, the Lambertite Workers Cause Party (PCO), also joined, as did both the Maoist and "Eurocommunist" wings of the Communist Party.

Leading Morenoite Valério Arcary, a former PT and PSTU

member currently working inside the PSOL, explained the class rationale behind the filing of the “left” impeachment petition, after the PT had spent a year and a half declaring that “a president should not be removed because we don’t like him” and that Bolsonaro had the “right to finish his term.” He wrote that “the political scenario has changed because the position of the ruling class towards the government has changed” under the impact of the pandemic. Dismissing his own party’s rhetoric against Bolsonaro, he wrote on the Esquerda Online website last Saturday that the petition was “symbolic” and had the goal of “tranquilizing, and helping to lift the mood of left activists, who are restless, tormented and anxious.”

This treacherous operation is being coordinated from the top down in all of these organizations. A day after the petition was presented, the leading oppositional candidate for Rio de Janeiro’s October mayoral election, the PSOL’s Marcelo Freixo, dropped out of the race in protest against his party’s resistance to allying with right-wing forces. He later explained to *Folha de S. Paulo* that such unity was necessary because Brazil was not living in “normal times, in which traditional political polarization” could be contained within bourgeois democracy.

The same reasoning was presented in a debate between Morenoite leaders hosted by the Esquerda Diário website, the online publication of the Brazilian sister organization to the Argentine PTS. PSOL leader Roberto Robaina reminded the participants that they were “all Morenoites” and defended the policy of throwing Bolsonaro out “by all means necessary,” an indiscriminate category that could include a coup by the military.

The reaction of the debate’s Esquerda Diário hosts was to chide the PSOL for its unity with the most right-wing forces, while calling on it to join it and other pseudo-left forces in creating a Brazilian version of the Argentinian “United Left Front,” which gives a left cover to the Peronist government and union bureaucracy, while also calling for a constituent assembly.

In the brief week since these developments—a long time in the intense crisis of bourgeois rule in Brazil—this pro-capitalist campaign has been intensified in reaction to the public release of the chief piece of evidence presented by Sérgio Moro against Bolsonaro: a video of an April 22 cabinet meeting in which Bolsonaro declared that he would replace the head of the Federal Police (PF), Maurício Valeixo, in order to bring the Rio de Janeiro branch of the PF under his control and prevent the “persecution” of his family.

The video exposed the vicious and sociopathic character of Bolsonaro and his cabinet, which spent only 20 minutes of the two-hour meeting discussing the COVID-19 pandemic. They dedicated the rest of their discussion to echoing Trump’s anti-China slanders, advocating increased public access to guns to counter the “dictatorship” of quarantine restrictions by state governors and conspiring to exploit the pandemic to lavish aid

on the financial markets and agribusiness.

The video only served to further demoralize the PT-led opposition, which saw in it no immediate grounds for impeachment within the narrow confines of capitalist legality and ousting Bolsonaro by “the least costly” means.

The reference to the Federal Police, the main focus of everyone from the PSTU to the corporate press and the most right-wing governors, was considered oblique and brief. The financial markets even registered an upswing on Friday. The mood among the “progressives” was summarized by The Intercept’s editor Leandro Demori, who wrote that the video had only proven that Moro had “done Bolsonaro a favor” with his charges, and that the fascist president had been strengthened.

In a remarkable move yesterday, Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who presides over the inquiry into a “fake news” campaign during the 2018 election and the incitement of far-right demonstrations, ordered 29 search-and-seizure operations against some of Bolsonaro’s far-right supporters, including Brazilian allies of the US-based fascist demagogue Olavo de Carvalho.

Maria Cristina Fernandes, former editor of the leading financial daily *Valor*, wrote last Thursday that the election fraud allegation within the Moraes inquiry might be the “shortest” way to remove Bolsonaro, depending on “just four votes” in the Electoral Court. The request that the election be annulled was presented to the Electoral Court by former PSOL presidential candidate Guilherme Boulos, and has for more than a year served as a basis for the PSOL and the PT’s reactionary narrative that electoral fraud, and not mass rejection of the PT, caused Bolsonaro’s rise to power.

The chief concern among all factions within the Brazilian ruling class—including those represented by the PT—is that Bolsonaro’s criminal neglect of the pandemic, while only representing more bluntly the real interests of Brazilian capitalism, exposes the whole bourgeois setup and threatens to provoke what the government has obsessively warned against: “social chaos,” i.e., mass social opposition in the working class. Their sole goal is to channel the rising opposition to Bolsonaro back behind the capitalist state and disarm workers in face of the authoritarian drive that must accompany the pursuit of capitalist profit.



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