

Brazilian Morenoites support pro-military parties in mayoral elections

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With the first round of the Brazilian mayoral elections less than a month away, the Morenoites of the Workers Revolutionary Movement (MRT), affiliated with the French NPA's Révolution Permanente faction and the Argentine PTS, are lining up behind the pro-military campaigns being conducted by what passes for the opposition to fascist President Jair Bolsonaro, including Brazil's largest pseudo left formation, the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL).

Contrary to its Argentine counterpart, which placed fourth in the 2019 presidential elections and has two national representatives in Congress acting as a left faction of the Peronist government, the MRT has no ballot status in Brazil.

Determined not to let this stand in the way of its quest for positions in the bourgeois state, the MRT has launched slates within the PSOL, under conditions in which both the PSOL and the Workers Party (PT) are using the mayoral elections to promote Brazil's murderous Military Police—which kills more than 5,000 Brazilians a year—as a key constituency of opposition to Bolsonaro.

The PT and the PSOL are not concerned with Bolsonaro's criminal neglect of the COVID-19 pandemic, causing nearly 160,000 recorded deaths and 5.4 million infections, or the unprecedented rise in social inequality, with 10 million Brazilians losing their jobs, while the number of billionaires has risen by 16 percent. Their opposition to Bolsonaro is rooted both in the fears within the ruling class that he will provoke uncontrollable social opposition and in the dissatisfaction of national and international business interests with his alignment with Donald Trump's unilateral diplomacy.

Their attitude was summed up in the infamous words of former PT president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, according to whom “the gravest aspect” of the political situation in the country is not Bolsonaro's murderous herd immunity policy or the massive growth of poverty and social inequality, but that Bolsonaro “takes advantage of collective suffering to, covertly, commit crimes against the country” and “subjects our soldiers and ambassadors to vexing situations.”

In order to advance their right-wing, chauvinist policies, the PT and PSOL are running no less than 152 candidates for mayor, vice mayor and the city councils who come from the military and the police. Nationally, the number of armed forces

and military police officers running for mayor or vice mayor has doubled from the last mayoral elections in 2016. The PT has also openly aligned itself with the parties that elected Bolsonaro or his sons in 2018 in 145 cities. In the place where the PT was born, the industrial city of São Bernardo do Campo, it is sharing a slate with the Brazilian Labor Party (PTB), which as recently as July invited Bolsonaro to join. The PSOL itself has also forged local level alliances with the far-right Social Christian Party (PSC), to which one of Bolsonaro's sons belong.

The rationale behind the proliferation of military candidates was stated bluntly by Gen. Roberto Peternelli, a representative from São Paulo in the Brazilian congress House for the party that elected Bolsonaro, the Social Liberal Party (PSL). In an interview with the conservative daily *Estado de S. Paulo* on September 29, Peternelli welcomed the fact that more members of the military were running for all parties, “from PSOL to PSL.” He insisted that running for office as candidates for so-called left parties “doesn't weaken military principles.” In other words, the military High Command rests assured that, by running for the “left” parties, military candidates are not opposing those propping up the Bolsonaro government.

Both the PT and the PSOL are seeking to give this military takeover a “left” veneer by using the whole toolbox of petty-bourgeois identity politics and nationalism. They are trying to convince workers that their main military candidates—Military Police Maj. Denice Santiago for mayor of Salvador and Military Police Col. Íbis Souza for vice mayor of Rio de Janeiro—are not only “left” soldiers, but the representatives of a wider “left military” constituency.

Maj. Santiago took the opportunity in an interview with Brazil's largest daily, *Folha de S. Paulo*, to trace a straight line between herself and Carlos Lamarca, the iconic Army dissident who took up arms against the 1964-1985 dictatorship and is promoted in petty bourgeois circles as a Brazilian Che Guevara. She cited his example to tell the paper “we had many left-wing military officers.”

For his part, Col. Souza—who is nothing less than a former commander-general of Rio's military police, which kills 1,800 people a year, out of a population of just over 16 million—has also resorted to left-sounding phraseology. In a DW interview,

he declared that “one of the greatest left-wing leaders in Brazil was an Army officer, Luís Carlos Prestes,” the decades-long leader of the Communist Party, from the 1930s to the 1970s. In the same interview, Col. Souza preposterously attributes to Lenin platitudes about the “complexity of the world” to justify PSOL’s unprincipled political line, and adds with pseudo-academic charlatanism: “I try to show to the people that the state is a field under dispute.”

The historical record and the fate of Carlos Lamarca and Luís Carlos Prestes expose the danger posed to the working class by the treacherous operations being mounted by the PT and PSOL. On the eve of the 1964 US-backed military coup, the Communist Party leader, Prestes, was overseeing the bankrupt Stalinist political line of subordinating the workers to “left” sections of the military and the bourgeois reformist president João Goulart. The case was made that there should be no break with the bourgeois state, but it should be “disputed.”

As the coup developed and the military stood loyal to the capitalist state, the only resistance coming from the Communist Party was by members who broke with the party line and desperately took to guerrilla warfare. Lamarca, who was not a party member, tragically took this route, and his small guerrilla group was quickly obliterated by the dictatorship. For his part, Prestes was flown to the Soviet Union, facing none of the consequences of the Stalinist betrayals.

By supporting the PSOL, the MRT is providing a left cover for precisely the same treacherous line.

In 2018, the MRT used its international feminist Bread and Roses wing to support an upper-middle class alliance known as “Ele Não” (Not Him, i.e., Bolsonaro) which called for a vote for the PT’s presidential candidate Fernando Haddad. Bread and Roses released a resolution titled “Against Bolsonaro, for women’s lives” in which it called for standing “side by side with the workers, women, blacks, youth and LGBTs who hate Bolsonaro and want to defeat him on the ballot by voting for Haddad.”

With the mayoral campaign exposing as a farce the claim that the PT and PSOL represent any “opposition” to Bolsonaro, the MRT has withdrawn its city council slate in Rio, feigning indignation over the nomination of Col. Souza. Yet it is maintaining its slates in cities like São Paulo, where the PSOL is running its 2018 presidential candidate, Guilherme Boulos for mayor. Boulos is a professional anti-Marxist academic who built his political career as the head of a squatters movement, the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST), one of several “social movements” that pseudo-left charlatans claim are a substitute for the working class.

As part of PSOL’s upper-middle-class politics, the MRT’s São Paulo slate is entirely directed at “identity” issues, beginning with its semi-anarchist “collective” character. The MRT advertises three candidates instead of one for the same electoral position—a political and legal farce, since only one representative will sit as a city councilor—claiming this

“collective” character—balanced with different gender and race “identities”—is a reassurance of “representativity.”

Its main campaign event so far was a “bike rally” for the legalization of marijuana, claiming that such a policy, already implemented in a number of capitalist countries, would curb the class-based violence of the capitalist state against workers, which they portray in racial terms as stemming from a racist police force. They also presented on September 1 a program for “blacks” centered on the demand for “equal pay” for blacks and whites.

Under conditions in which workers of all races, nationalities and ethnicities are facing mass unemployment, long-term poverty and destitution, this demand is being used in Brazil, as in other countries, as a means of settling accounts among the richest 10 percent of the population. The MRT supports the same identity politics used by the PT and PSOL to claim their mayoral candidates in Salvador and Rio will “transform” the cities by becoming their first black female mayors.

When the MRT makes any criticism of the PT, it characterizes it as a “class conciliationist” party as opposed to what it calls “directly bourgeois” parties. This intentionally muddled definition is designed to promote the illusion that workers can pressure the PT to change course. Thus, in a July 1 editorial, *Esquerda Diário* stated that “The left should unite in class struggle, not with putschists and bosses.” After making perfunctory criticism of what it calls PT’s “bet” in allying with the most reactionary elements, it states that “all of those who consider themselves as the socialist left *should bet everything* [emphasis added]” on “demanding that the union bureaucracies break their paralysis.”

This attempt to provide a left cover for bourgeois forces and the unions directly collaborating with the hated Bolsonaro is part of a long tradition of Morenoism, an extreme form of Pabloite liquidationism. This includes the Morenoite tendency’s collaboration with the Peronist government in Argentina in the 1970s, even as it set up fascist militias in the unions and paved the way to the 1976 military coup.

The mayoral elections in Brazil have provided further evidence that the pseudo-left MRT and its Morenoite affiliates in Argentina, France and elsewhere are in no sense Marxist organizations that speak for the interests of the working class or fight for genuinely revolutionary socialist politics.



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