

Brazilian pseudo-left leader Guilherme Boulos seeks political accommodation with far right

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On April 18, Guilherme Boulos, the foremost figure within the Brazilian pseudo-left, held a private political meeting with the president of the Republicanos party, Marcos Pereira, a federal House deputy.

The Republicanos' leadership includes two sons of Brazil's fascistic President Jair Bolsonaro who are elected officials—Senator Flávio and Rio de Janeiro Councilor Carlos—and serves as a political front for the businesses of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD). The IURD is a neo-charismatic church which is based in Brazil but has international branches and is firmly aligned with Donald Trump's faction of the US Republican Party.

IURD's leader, Edir Macedo, is the wealthiest evangelical preacher in the country, listed by Forbes as worth 2 billion reais (US\$ 350 million). He and his closest allies in the IURD leadership face an extensive list of accusations in the US, Europe and Africa, from money laundering to child trafficking and forced sterilization of church functionaries.

The purpose of the meeting was to reassure these fascistic forces led by President Bolsonaro that they have nothing to fear from Boulos' Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL) as they gear up to suppress working class opposition.

On the contrary, with its approach to the far right, the PSOL is attempting to prove itself as a critical factor in avoiding the collapse of the whole edifice of Brazilian capitalist rule, under conditions of a raging pandemic that is adding 3,000 victims a day to a total of almost 400,000 dead. This has been combined with a skyrocketing of social inequality, with 60 percent of Brazilians facing food insecurity and over 20 million thrown into poverty, even as the billionaires have increased their wealth by 72 percent over the past year of mass death.

With the promotion of the Republicanos and the fascistic right as legitimate political partners of self-proclaimed "socialists," the PSOL aims to disarm and disorient working class opposition to the open and escalating fascistic conspiracies of President Bolsonaro and divert mass opposition from posing a threat to capitalism as a whole.

Boulos' meeting with Pereira has all the hallmarks of a political conspiracy. It has not been publicly addressed by either the PSOL or Boulos, who gave evasive answers when questioned by CNN and other media outlets, stating that the discussion merely showed

that "the left and the evangelicals seek dialogue."

In reporting the meeting, CNN quoted Boulos' aides as claiming he had asked wealthy allies within São Paulo business circles to help him "dispel the image, created by the right-wing, that if elected to an executive office, he will support the invasion of houses." Behind this dismissive and stupid press brief is the desire of Boulos to enter into closed-door talks with the Brazilian right with the aim of dispelling any association between himself and the PSOL with the slightest challenge to private property and the profit system.

A more honest version of the meeting was given by Republicanos leader Pereira two days later on April 21. In an article on the Poder360 website, he praised Boulos' "acute intelligence" and claimed that the conversation "reassured him that the way forward to a more just and efficient country is moderation," i.e., nothing should be feared from the "socialist" Boulos.

To the extent that that criticism has been raised within the PSOL over the meeting, it has been limited to objections over the talks being made public. PSOL House member Sâmia Bomfim decried the fact that the party was making the talks known. She posted a reply to a quote from Boulos on social media defending the "raprochement with evangelicals" saying: "I don't understand why this quote is on the party's page. There is a lot of discomfort in the rank and file with what happened and this goes into PSOL's official social media?" Far from a denunciation of Boulos, Bomfim's concern is that the publicizing of his open embrace of the fascistic right will undermine the PSOL's efforts to act as a "left" buffer against rising popular anger over the social situation in Brazil.

Boulos was elevated to international prominence by pseudo-left mouthpieces last year as he led PSOL, a party with just 10 out of 594 members in the Brazilian Congress, to receiving 40 percent of the votes and placing in second in the mayoral elections in Brazil's largest city, São Paulo, outflanking the Workers Party (PT) in all but two districts and almost tying with the reelected mayor Bruno Covasin some of the wealthiest districts in the city.

During the elections, the international pseudo-left, led by *Jacobin* magazine, promoted Boulos as a socialist. *Jacobin* posted a glowing profile of Boulos under the title, "Brazil's Largest City May Soon Have a Socialist Mayor." It described him as a rising

left, “grassroots” challenger to the Workers Party (PT) from 2003 on, as the PT’s unabashed pro-business policies, rampant corruption and brutal austerity provoked a desertion of working class members, particularly its youth.

Central to *Jacobin’s* arguments was Boulos’ longstanding involvement with the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST). The MTST is one of Latin America’s myriad “social movements,” promoted for decades by the Stalinists and Pabloites. It has focused on occupying unused urban property owned by highly indebted speculators and pressuring the state to hand them to construction giants in order to build houses.

Despite some radical-sounding phraseology against “financial interests” and “land speculation,” the MTST has always acted as a middleman for construction profit interests. It lent a “left” cover to the vast subsidies provided by the PT to the same construction monopolies that would later be at the center of the corruption scandals overseen by the party.

Folha de S. Paulo recognized the procapitalist character of Boulos’ MTST, praising him as qualified for the office of mayor of Brazil’s financial center after “years of experience in leading popular movements.”

In his *Folha de S. Paulo* column published a day after the meeting with the Republicanos, Boulos defended his turn towards the fascistic right, invoking the Stalinist and left nationalist promotion of “liberation theology” in Latin America’s Catholic Church during the second half of the 20th century.

He cynically portrayed the image of a “depressed society where millions are humiliated” in order to claim that “40 years ago, the Catholic Church had a strong experience with the care network of the base ecclesial communities (CEBs).”

CEB members, many self-sacrificing youth drawn by the Stalinists and Pabloites into the dead end of guerrilla warfare, suffered brutal repression at the hands of the Latin American dictatorships in coordination with the Church itself. Significant layers of the leadership of the Workers Party and the dissenting currents, which would later form the PSOL in 2004, were drawn from these movements as the Stalinists and Pabloites attempted to stem the revolutionary tide in Latin America with a myriad of illusions in bourgeois nationalists and “unconscious Marxists.” In 2020, Boulos chose as his running mate in São Paulo the 86-year-old former PT Mayor Luiza Erundina, who had been herself recruited from the CEBs movement, with the stated goal of reviving those religious illusions.

In the 60s and 70s, the turn towards the CEB was justified in the name of approaching their mass membership, either in the peasantry or the young proletariat being drawn from the countryside under conditions of Catholic domination. Now, decades after the collapse of CEB membership in parallel with that of the so-called “social movements,” unions, and, more generally, bourgeois nationalism, these same forces are turning to the fascistic multimillionaire evangelical fakers to once again divert the working class from the struggle for socialism.

Such a swing towards virulent Christian chauvinist forces by the PSOL, a party aggressively promoting gender and racial politics, might appear as a contradiction. Even more so as in Rio de Janeiro, the PSOL’s main electoral base, it has for years allied

itself on the basis of identity politics with the Democratas, the successor to the ruling party of the former military dictatorship, in opposition to the Republicanos. The Republicanos candidate, the millionaire IURD preacher Marcelo Crivella, won the 2016 election for mayor of Rio, beating the PSOL’s candidate, Marcelo Freixo.

The driving force behind the PSOL’s maneuver is the deep crisis of Brazilian capitalism. The PSOL’s constituency in the petty bourgeoisie, while in conflict with dominant sections of the Brazilian ruling class over the distribution of wealth among the top 10 percent of society, is more fearful of the working class and of a real socialist movement than it is of the fascists. In the final analysis, the Christian chauvinism of the IURD and the identity politics of the PSOL serve the same goal: to divide the working class along religious, gender and racial lines and prevent it from uniting in a conscious struggle against capitalism under a socialist leadership.

As the WSWS warned during the last election, the PSOL is consciously preparing the same kind of betrayal carried out by its international counterparts, such as Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece and the Left Party in Germany. In the case of the latter two parties, this has meant an open embrace of fascistic forces, with Syriza bringing the ultranationalist Independent Greeks into its government coalition in 2015, and the Left Party’s formation of numerous de facto fronts with the neofascist Alternative for Germany across the country.

The 2020 elections saw the PSOL adapt itself to Bolsonaro’s fascistic agitation by running a pro-business and militarist campaign, claiming it could bring in more investments by being more trustworthy to national and international capital. It launched dozens of police officers as candidates across the country, with Boulos promising to hire 2,000 more cops in São Paulo, where he ran for mayor. While campaigning, Boulos refused to acknowledge the eruption of a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PSOL’s current effort to ally with the far right expresses a logical development, albeit a qualitative one, on this political trajectory, as the party closes ranks with the Republicanos against the rising tide of working class opposition, embodied in the growing strike activity against mass death and immiseration.



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