

# Court ruling against Workers Cause Party (PCO) marks escalation of assault on democratic rights in Brazil

Socialist Equality Group (Brazil)

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In a grave attack on democratic rights in Brazil, on June 1, Supreme Court (STF) Justice Alexandre de Moraes ordered the blocking of all social networks of the Workers Cause Party (PCO).

The party was included in the so-called “fake news inquiry” due—in the words of the Justice—to “strong indications that the party infrastructure of the PCO, a political party that receives public funds, has been unduly and repeatedly used with the aim of enabling and boosting the propagation of criminal statements, through the party’s own official profiles, posted on its website.”

In his decision, Moraes cites as examples of “criminal practice” demands published by the PCO, such as “for the total dissolution of the court and for the election of judges with revocable mandates,” as well as excerpts from the party’s analyses such as “The STF is a court created to defend the bourgeoisie and its interests.”

The excerpts quoted in Moraes’ order are taken precisely from the PCO’s criticisms of the “fake news inquiry” in which it has now been included. In one of the last publications before the censorship order, the party criticized press reports that the Electoral Court (TSE) was preparing to disqualify candidates in the October general elections based on what it rules to be the dissemination of “fake news.”

The PCO stated in a tweet, “Alexandre de Moraes: candidates who ‘spread fake news’ will be disqualified. In pursuit of a dictatorship, the robe-wearing skinhead shreds the right to freedom of speech, and prepares a new coup in the elections. The suppression of rights will always be turned against the workers! Dissolution of the STF!”

The passages quoted by Moraes make it clear that his “fight against fake news” is nothing more than a pretext to make illegal any form of questioning of Brazil’s capitalist state institutions, particularly any reference to the fact that the Court’s stated goal of “defending democracy” does not correspond to its actual function in bourgeois society, which is essentially the validation of a system that denies the most fundamental rights of the working class.

This attack by the STF represents a leap in a long offensive by the ruling class against democratic rights in Brazil. Responding to mounting social inequality and the intensification of the class struggle internationally, which places working class revolutionary struggles on the agenda, the Brazilian bourgeoisie is preparing for dictatorial repression of social opposition, beginning with the suppression of free speech on the internet.

Moraes’ decision illegitimately equates the PCO’s propagation of political demands to the systematic machinations of Bolsonaro and his fascist supporters to mount a coup d’état and establish a presidential dictatorship in Brazil.

Among the targets of the inquiry is legislative deputy and former Rio de Janeiro Military Police officer Daniel Silveira. Silveira was arrested by order of the Tribunal after advocating the implementation of legislation

analogous to “Institutional Act number 5 (AI-5)”, the most brutal act of the 1964-1985 military dictatorship, which annulled political parties, closed Congress, suspended habeas corpus, and invalidated the authority of the Court to curb the violence of the regime.

Silveira’s statements came in the midst of a broad campaign led by Bolsonaro to incite violence by far-right groups against the Court and the president’s political opponents. At the same time, Bolsonaro and his supporters were encouraging police riots against measures to fight the pandemic, and the president was coordinating from Planalto Palace statements by leading military figures intimidating the legislative and judiciary branches.

By equating the organization of violent actions aimed at preparing a coup d’état with political speech opposing the bourgeois political setup, the inquiry conducted by Moraes reveals that its purpose is not to defend Brazilian democracy. Rather, its goal, even as it attacks the fascist conspirators linked to Bolsonaro, is to preserve the political stability of the capitalist regime by eschewing even its most minimal democratic traits.

Moraes’ decision treats the PCO with a severity not applied to the *Bolsonaristas* themselves. This is indicative of a dramatic shift to the right by the entire political establishment. The key impetus for Moraes’ censorship offensive is the massive support provided to the court’s inquiry and other authoritarian initiatives to combat “fake news” by the self-styled opposition to Bolsonaro, led by the Workers Party (PT).

In 2018, the PT supported the attempt to nullify Bolsonaro’s election on the grounds that it had supposedly been the product of the mass spread of “fake news” through social media and the WhatsApp messaging app. The hysteria stirred up by the PT was such that its main pseudo-left ally, the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), even asked the STF for the total suspension of WhatsApp across Brazil on the weekend of the second round of the elections, in order to stop the circulation of “fake news.”

The actions of the PT and its allies directly mirror the reactionary opposition of the US Democratic Party to President Donald Trump, with whom Bolsonaro has identified politically. The Democrats mounted a campaign of neo-McCarthyism, seeking to purge the press and universities of “Russian interference”—as they called any criticism of Washington’s geopolitical role and America’s stark social inequality—blaming it for the “divisions” in American society and the election of Trump. The Democrats’ fundamental concern was to cover up the deep roots of Trump’s election in the decay of American bourgeois democracy and capitalism, with the aim of blocking a movement of working class opposition to the capitalist system as a whole.

After four electoral victories that demonstrated its inability to solve the fundamental problems of the working class, the main party responsible for the reemergence of the far right in Brazil is the PT. It expressed all of its political cowardice by emulating the Democrats and placing the “fake

news” narrative above any political accounting for its own bankruptcy. Bolsonaro’s rise from the depths of the fascist wing of the Brazilian military to the presidency, after he spent nearly a decade in the PT-led ruling coalition, was definitive proof of the fraud of the PT’s proposals to slowly reform Brazilian capitalism into a welfare state and even “democratic socialism.” As in the US, the hysterical adoption of the “fake news” narrative was aimed at maintaining capitalist stability and suppressing the inescapable conclusion that decades of lies about reform only allowed time for the resurgence of the far right.

The opening of the so-called “fake news inquiry,” just four months into the Bolsonaro government, represented the adoption of such a strategy by broad layers of the ruling elite concerned with the destabilizing effect of the president’s fascist offensive. The probe was opened as a classified investigation by the Chief Justice at the time, Dias Toffoli. It was based upon an interpretation that the internal regulations of the Court allowed for the opening of investigations without formal charges being brought by other bodies when the targeted crime involved the Court itself. In this case, the court was the target of slanders by the far right, which encouraged violence against the ministers with more or less open support from Bolsonaro.

Also based on these regulations, Toffoli handed over the leading role in the inquiry, without the usual rotation, to Moraes, the most right-wing of the STF judges. Moraes was appointed just one year after heading law enforcement in the state of São Paulo, including its murderous Military Police. He also led the Justice Ministry during an unprecedented intervention in the state of Rio de Janeiro that placed the civilian government under the control of a military “intervenor.”

In a cowardly and opportunistic fashion, the PT-led opposition turned a blind eye to the fact that, once the inquiry was established, the STF arrogated to itself the right to say what was true or “false” in any publication subject to Brazilian law. A stream of petitions to subject Bolsonaro and his supporters to the inquiry was the instinctive and obsessive reaction of the PT and the opposition as a whole. At the same time, in Congress, impeachment requests targeted Bolsonaro’s “stimulation of national divisions.” In other words, to every advance of Bolsonaro’s fascist campaign, the opposition responded not with a defense of democracy, but rather a reactionary movement for the strengthening of the state.

This has included the drive for broad censorship measures such as shutting down the operation of messaging apps and technology companies that do not sufficiently monitor their users and suppress content that the STF determines to be “fake.” The usefulness of the inquiry for Bolsonaro’s own political aims, due to its legal fragility, its political opportunism, and its authoritarian character, have not been missed by the president himself: both his solicitor general and his attorney general have voted in favor of the inquiry when requested to act to contain it.

Actions based on the inquiry, such as the arrest of Daniel Silveira and PTB President Roberto Jefferson, were tirelessly extolled by the PT and the opposition as acts of great courage and defense of democracy, even as the Electoral Court and Congress increasingly bowed to Bolsonaro’s voter fraud narrative, voting massively for his ultimately failed “printed ballot” amendment or calling on the military to submit “criticism” of the balloting system in order to “neutralize” the Armed Forces’ alliance with Bolsonaro.

The attack on the PCO, unprecedented since the fall of the military dictatorship in 1985, exposes all those who have encouraged and applauded the actions of the STF against Bolsonaro, calling them major “levees” against fascism, as co-responsible for the authoritarian drive in Brazil.

While declaring our unrestricted opposition to Moraes’ authoritarian attack and defending the PCO’s right to freedom of speech, the Socialist Equality Group (Brazil) maintains its fundamental political opposition to

the PCO. Sharing its origins with the Argentinian Partido Obrero (Workers Party, PO) and the opportunist policies of the Lambertite renegades of the Fourth International in Latin America, the PCO established itself as an ultra-nationalist tendency of the Brazilian pseudo-left. The response of the party to the development of the world capitalist crisis has been an ever-deepening turn to reactionary bourgeois nationalism and the promotion of a nefarious alliance with the fascist far-right.

The PCO’s reaction to Moraes’ attack was to reaffirm this policy of a “red-brown” alliance, seeking support from the most openly fascist elements of Bolsonaro’s political base, as well as from within the far-right media. One of the party’s first responses to his censorship was to set up an interview of its president, Rui Costa Pimenta, with the Brazilian followers of Russian fascist theorist Alexander Dugin, extolled by the PCO as “a nationalist channel attentive to the freedoms of speech, opinion and press.”

The PCO’s political orientation to the extreme right coincides with the trajectory of different elements linked to petty-bourgeois radicalism around the world. Like Brazilian-based American journalist, [Glenn Greenwald](#), the PCO was an open apologist for Donald Trump’s attempted fascist coup on January 6, 2021, which serves as a model for Bolsonaro’s undisguised plans for an electoral coup. Pimenta characterized the invasion of the Capitol as a “protest movement seeking to occupy a public building” and declared that “fascism is what they did to Trump.”

Drawing on the same reactionary arguments of the various petty-bourgeois libertarians who have turned to fascist forces, the PCO seeks to equate defending workers rights to free speech and organization to defending the freedom of fascists to organize and effectively impose a coup d’état.

Marxists maintain that the strengthening of the bourgeois state under the pretext of fighting fascism will ultimately be turned against the working class, and that only an independent political movement of the working class for socialism is capable of effectively confronting the authoritarian drive by the bourgeoisie. The PCO, in direct opposition to these principles, maintains that democratic rights can be defended through an alliance with the fascist extreme right against the bourgeois establishment.

This blending of the party with openly fascist forces is quite conscious. In an interview with *Folha de S. Paulo* on February 18, Pimenta declared, when asked about the use of party material by the right wing: “I think it is natural, it is a point of intersection that exists. Just as there are right-wing sectors that are nationalists. We also maintain that; we are anti-imperialist. In some cases, you could act in alliance with those sectors.”

As the PCO itself confesses through its president, the basis of such opportunistic politics is the nationalism adopted in common with “sectors of the right.” This is the same reactionary political axis that motivates the PCO’s systematic orientation to the PT and its adulation of Lula. Behind the party’s radical rhetoric, its political goals do not go beyond the defense of Brazilian capitalism.

The PCO’s response to the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine also obeys the same law of submission to the interests of the Brazilian bourgeois state. While growing sections of the [pseudo-left in Latin America](#) and internationally align themselves unreservedly with NATO’s war propaganda and the Ukrainian fascist forces that serve as its front line soldiers, the PCO saw a unique opportunity in advancing outright support for Putin’s reactionary military operation and far-right Russian chauvinism.

For the PCO, the presumed ability of the Russian bourgeoisie to assert its national interests in the face of increasing intervention by US and European imperialism represents, also signals the viability of Brazilian capitalism’s independent development. These hopes—whether in relation to Russia or Brazil—are as false as they are reactionary.

Confronting growing social inequality, the threat of dictatorship and the drift towards a new world war—in other words the preservation and development of humanity—comes down to the ability of the working class to organize itself as a world force and establish socialism internationally.

This political perspective is advocated exclusively by the International Committee of the Fourth International (CIQI) and its Brazilian section in formation, the GSI.



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