

# What is behind the pseudo-left's renewed support for Lula in Brazil?

Tomas Castanheira

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In one week, a second round of Brazil's presidential elections will take place between current fascist President Jair Bolsonaro and former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT).

Lining up with the most traditional representatives of the Brazilian bourgeoisie, the parties of the pseudo-left have expressed their support for the PT candidate. From the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) to the Stalinists of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and Popular Unity (UP), and the Morenoites of the Unified Socialist Workers Party (PSTU), all are calling for a vote for Lula on October 30.

Amid the explosion of the world capitalist crisis, growing social inequality and the deepest political crisis in Brazil in four decades, the pseudo-left's support for the PT is a vote for the ruling class to intensify levels of exploitation and break the ability of the working class to resist.

The last four years of Bolsonaro's administration have revealed that a dictatorial project has a fertile base of support in the bourgeoisie, the upper echelons of the state, and especially among the armed forces and the police.

Aided by these reactionary forces, Bolsonaro has attempted to cultivate a fascist movement politically associated with the military and the legacy of the brutal 1964-85 US-backed dictatorship in Brazil. He has made systematic advances against democratic forms of rule, including by preparing an electoral coup should he be defeated at the polls next Sunday.

The PT and Lula are incapable of even minimally confronting the mortal threats posed to the Brazilian working class. On the contrary, they represent and defend the same economic, social, and political system that produces mass misery and the destruction of democratic rights: capitalism.

Lula's candidacy has as its main thrust the defense of the interests of the financial elite and big business under an explosive global scenario of economic recession and the drive to world war. The PT and its capitalist backers argue that Bolsonaro is responsible for "institutional instability" that is harmful to the business environment and repels international investors.

The incompatibility of these capitalist goals with the most basic interests of the working class prevents the PT from making any meaningful social appeal. Challenging Bolsonaro for support within the right-wing camp, Lula is competing with Bolsonaro over who best embodies the ideals of religion, the fatherland, and its military.

At the same time, through the trade union federations, the PT is cultivating instruments to defend capital and repress workers' struggles in the workplaces.

In recent years, the unions have overseen the implementation of massive attacks on the working class in Brazil: job and wage cuts, plant closures, destruction of labor rights, and, most recently, the homicidal COVID-19 policies in the workplaces. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in the last decade more than a million industrial jobs were slashed and the average industrial worker's salary was reduced from 3.5 to 3 minimum wages.

As the CUT and Força Sindical union federations explain in the "Industry Plan 10" that they presented as a program proposal for Lula's potential government, their goal is not to promote struggles to achieve gains for the working class at the expense of the capitalist profits. On the contrary, they propose the creation of "multipartite" bodies—comprised of the companies, unions and the state—that will regulate labor power's value in favor of the competitiveness of national capitalism.

These anti-worker organizations, "unions" in name only, update the tradition of corporatism, inaugurated in Brazil by Getúlio Vargas' Estado Novo, that fostered a state-controlled unionism inspired by the police state model of the fascist trade unions.

The PT and the corporatist unions are not, in any real sense, workers' organizations. Without a definitive break with them and their national-bourgeois political perspective, the Brazilian working class is unable to confront the increasing attacks on its living conditions and democratic rights.

The sabotage of this necessary political advance is the fundamental role played by the pseudo-left organizations. Faced with the global resurgence of class struggle, they desperately seek to sever the ties of Brazilian workers to the international working class and redirect them to the union bureaucracy and the bourgeois state.

## The return of PSOL to PT's coalition

In order to fully support a return of Lula to state power, the PSOL refused to launch its own presidential candidate for the first time in its history. Founded in 2004 by parliamentarians expelled from the PT for voting against an assault on pensions by Lula's first administration, the party presented itself over the last two decades as the official "left opposition" to the PT.

The distinctive political trait of the PSOL was its explicit denial of the relevance of the working class in modern society and the promotion of middle-class identity politics in vogue in the universities. As a result, the party has forged itself as a central instrument for the current right-wing shift of the ruling class.

Adapting itself to the fascist moods resurging in bourgeois politics, in the 2020 elections the PSOL launched dozens of candidates from police and military backgrounds and allied itself locally with far-right parties such as the Christian Social Party (PSC). Guilherme Boulos, who ran in 2018 as the PSOL's presidential candidate, used his platform, this time running in the second round for mayor of São Paulo, to call for an "anti-Bolsonaro front" that would attract "sectors of the old Brazilian right."

In 2021, the PSOL acted alongside the PT to disorient mass demonstrations that exploded in opposition to the Bolsonaro government's homicidal COVID-19 policies. They sought to transform

the protests into mere instruments for the consolidation of their alliance with the right. PSOL president Juliano Medeiros attacked as “sectarian voices” anyone outraged at being forced to march alongside right-wing parties like the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB).

These criminal political services earned Medeiros and Boulos a prominent position in organizing Lula’s campaign and negotiating with the right-wing politicians and capitalist associations that gave him support.

The rapid lurch by the PSOL to the right exposes, above all, the various Pabloite tendencies—longtime renegades from Trotskyism—that claimed that the PSOL would be a vehicle for building socialist politics in Brazil.

Among such tendencies are different supporters of the Pabloite Unified Secretariat; the Morenoites of the International Workers Unity (IWU-FI), the International Socialist League (ISL) and the Trotskyist Fraction (FT-CI); and the “state capitalists” of the International Socialist Alternative (ISA) and the International Marxist Tendency (IMT).

Some of these tendencies concluded that the PSOL’s blunt support for Lula since the first round undermined its false image of “political independence” with which they seek to sell themselves to youth and workers seeking an alternative to capitalism. In response, they declared support and launched their candidates through the PSTU-led electoral front, named “Revolutionary Socialist Pole.”

### **The “Revolutionary Socialist Pole”: a new fraudulent alternative of the pseudo-left**

On its website *Esquerda Diário*, the Revolutionary Workers Movement (MRT) promoted the “Revolutionary Socialist Pole” as a political front that stands for “class independence.” They claimed that it would fulfill a central role for the “necessary process of reorganization of the Brazilian left in the face of the even greater challenges ahead.”

The idea that the PSTU and its “Revolutionary Socialist Pole” stand for the political independence of the working class is yet another fraud promoted by the Morenoites of MRT. For the past seven years, the MRT called for building the PSOL, claiming that it would fulfill the same role they attribute to the PSTU today.

Despite its title, “A socialist program for Brazil!” the electoral program presented by the PSTU in the current elections revealed their clear orientation to the bourgeoisie and its state. In one of its points, they state: “We defend democratic liberties, but not bourgeois democracy. We will only defend that regime in the event of an attempted military coup.”

The idea that the threat of a fascist coup can be countered by defending Brazil’s rotting “bourgeois democracy” is radically contrary to the tradition of Trotskyism. Trotsky directly linked the crisis of bourgeois democratic forms of rule to the deadly crisis of the capitalist system itself, and explained that it could only be confronted through the international socialist revolution.

Attacking the same program advocated by the PSTU today, Trotsky wrote in 1929: “Democracy stands or falls with capitalism. By defending a democracy which has outlived itself, Social Democracy drives social development into the blind alley of fascism.”

The anti-Trotskyist position presented by the PSTU is not just a theoretical slip. It is firmly based on the reactionary tradition of Morenoism upon which it stands. That was precisely the criminal policy supported by Nahuel Moreno and his Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) on the eve of the bloody 1976 military coup in Argentina.

By publicly supporting the right-wing government of Isabel Perón and the formal bourgeois democracy established by the Argentine ruling class in 1973 through its “process of institutionalization,” Moreno’s PRT acted

to disarm the working class and pave the way for the fascist military coup.

Consistent with this reactionary program, the PSTU appealed resolutely to the repressive apparatus of the ruling class in the elections. “It is also necessary to have policy for the armed sectors of the state,” it declared in the program it presents as “socialist.” The PSTU has run military police officers as its candidates, among them Sergeant Guimarães for congressman, and even for state governor of Espírito Santo, Captain Sousa.

The reactionary defense of the bourgeois state by the PSTU springs not only from its own political history but also from its material bonds to the corporatist unions, which confront the effects of capitalist globalization with a bankrupt nationalist perspective.

Throughout the 26 pages of its program, the PSTU argues that the crisis faced by Brazilian workers should be solved through the “defense of sovereignty and a break with imperialism.” According to the PSTU, it is not world capitalism that faces a mortal crisis, but “*the country* [that] is in decay due to the rule of the multinationals,” which force Brazil to “have its economic center determined by the world market.”

In other words, imperialist capitalism does not need to be confronted through the unification of the global working class under the perspective of international socialism. Countries like Brazil can simply “break” from imperialism and develop their economies separately from the world market. This is a shameless replay of the Stalinist policy of socialism in one country, which Trotsky defined as a “reactionary utopia.” It is 10 times more reactionary today in the face of the profound integration achieved by the global productive forces.

This reactionary ideology reflects the PSTU’s practice in the unions it controls. In 2020, the party promoted through the Metalworkers Union of São José dos Campos a chauvinist campaign titled “Embraer for the Brazilians. Re-statification now,” which brought together the main leaderships of bourgeois parties like the PT and the Democratic Labor Party (PDT), and appealed to the supporters of “national sovereignty” within the Brazilian military. They argued against the sale of the company, which manufactures commercial and military aircraft, to the US-based Boeing on the grounds of defending the “strategic interests of the Brazilian nation.”

The very essence of this nationalist program is, in fact, the quest for an accommodation to imperialism. This is demonstrated by the unconditional alignment of the International Workers League (IWL-FI), which has the PSTU as its main section, to the “strategic interests” of US imperialism in the global arena.

Fervently supporting US-NATO in its proxy war against Russia over Ukraine, the IWL-FI dismisses the threats of a nuclear exchange and demands “taking the war until the end.” It declares in one of its statements: “We believe that it is absolutely correct to mobilize to demand that the governments (especially the imperialist countries) give the Ukrainian resistance arms and all the necessary materials (ammunition, food, medicine) directly and unconditionally.”

### **For the political independence of the working class and the construction of the Socialist Equality Party in Brazil**

The global crisis of capitalism, answered by the ruling class with a turn to world war, dictatorial regimes and destruction of living conditions of the masses, opens, at the same time, a new revolutionary epoch.

The explosive political situation in Brazil, an acute expression of the international crisis, has no progressive solution within the national framework of capitalist politics. To confront it, the working class must be mobilized as an independent, internationally unified political force under

the banner of world socialist revolution.

The development of that independent political movement in the working class does not pass through the national amalgamations of the political heirs of Stalinism and Pabloism. On the contrary, it demands a conscious repudiation of their treacherous political traditions.

To forge the revolutionary leadership demanded by the socialist tasks of the 21st century, the working class must settle accounts with its own history of colossal revolutionary victories and defeats over the last century. It must build in Brazil and elsewhere Socialist Equality Parties based on the program and history of the Trotskyist movement embodied in the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).



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