

Morenoite union bureaucrats meet with the military and promote war industry in Brazil

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In the wake of the January 8 storming of government buildings in Brasília by fascist supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro, the Workers Party (PT) government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has made successive concessions to rabidly right-wing sections of the military and the state apparatus. It is seeking to accommodate itself to the promoters of what amounted to a coup attempt.

The pseudo-left parties and the trade unions are playing key roles in the PT's reactionary efforts, working not only to suppress the class struggle but to give a "left-wing" cover to Brazilian militarism and chauvinism. At the forefront of this right-wing policy is the Morenoite Unified Socialist Workers Party (PSTU).

While working for the last five months to isolate a strike at weapons manufacturer Avibras, the PSTU-led Metalworkers Union of São José dos Campos (SindMetalSJC) has spearheaded a campaign to identify the defense of workers' wages and rights with the massive arming of the Brazilian state.

Back in March 2022, Avibras started bankruptcy proceedings after declaring an accumulated debt of R\$640 million (US\$124 million). The company announced 420 layoffs on the same day as part of a "recovery plan" for its main plant in Jacareí, near the industrial city of São José dos Campos, which employs 1,400 workers.

The SindMetalSJC union officials kept silent for days, only to announce a trip to Brasília to demand that then President Bolsonaro and his generals agree to a meeting. Meanwhile, they prevented opposition from reaching workers in other factories and promoted the courts as the sole arbiters of the job cuts.

In September, when it became clear that opposition to years of job insecurity and overdue wages could not be contained and that the Bolsonaro government would not make concessions, the union called a strike in order to let off steam.

Once Lula won the elections, the SindMetalSJC immediately issued appeals for a meeting with the new PT administration to discuss an increase in military spending. In the third week of January, alongside representatives of the PSTU-led CSP-Conlutas and other trade union federations, the SindMetalSJC unionists traveled to Brasília to hold meetings with Lula and other government officials.

The government talks with the unions took place at a critical

moment, when Lula was to meet the military commanders to, in his own words, "discuss the strengthening of the defense industry in this country." Among the likely topics of conversation with the generals was, according to *Estado de São Paulo*, the purchase of a new batch of missiles developed by Avibras.

On January 25, SindMetalSJC officials were granted a meeting with military heads of the Defense Ministry in which they presented a 50-page document titled "Dossier Avibras." According to union President Weller Gonçalves, "They really liked the dossier because it contains technical data they need to sit with the Defense minister. It's enough to tell them to invest in Avibras. They wish to know what are the investments and projects."

The dossier produced by the Morenoites is a viciously militaristic and nationalist statement. Its language emits a conspicuous fascist stench.

The PSTU praises the company as Brazil's "leading manufacturer of heavy war material: missiles, rocket launchers, armored vehicles, smart bombs, satellite communication systems, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)," and celebrates its position as a big contender in the global arms trade. "It dominates 25 percent of the world market for its products, similar to the market that the United States, followed by Russia, with 20 percent, and China, with 10 percent," the document claims.

But they complain that "today 85 percent of its revenue comes from exports to the Armed Forces of other countries," and that this "subjugates all the technological development produced for decades ... to the will and instability of the world market."

In response, the PSTU proposes a massive program of public investments and a large reorientation of the country's economic and intellectual activities toward the erection of a gigantic war machine. They declare:

The strategic planning of national defense involves nationalizing the companies of the sector, integrating them with the scientific institutes and federal universities, to allow the manufacture of fighter planes,

heavy weapons, military cargo ships, warships, combat helicopters, rockets, missiles, submarines, its own aerospace and naval technology, electronic systems and command and control systems. Such a company with state funding could even design modern fighter jets and large aircraft to compete with Boeing and Airbus.

The Morenoites' bellicose campaign in Brazil is directly linked to the rapid escalation toward a new world war by the imperialist powers. Alongside most of the pseudo-left in the world, the PSTU and its International Workers League (IWL-FI) have enthusiastically supported the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

As the war in Ukraine develops ever more clearly into a direct confrontation between nuclear-armed powers, the Morenoites demand an escalation against Russia. In its most recent statement "The Shipment of Tanks and Weapons to Ukraine Is Insufficient" the IWL-FI writes:

It is imperative that we demand the necessary weaponry and military technology be sent to Ukraine to defeat Putin. In addition to the HIMARS multiple missile launcher system, the Ukrainians demand MGM-140 ATACMS missiles with a range of 300 kilometers. The Ukrainians are also asking for F-15, F-16, and A-10 Thunderbolt II fighter jets (specifically for infantry air support). Without these aircraft, it is impossible to control Ukrainian airspace.

The IWL-FI concludes that "The campaign 'Weapons for Ukraine for Putin's military defeat' needs to be intensified and taken up by all trade unions and workers' organizations." This statement helps to shed light on the objectives and opportunities detected by the PSTU as it demands a massive buildup of the war industry in Brazil.

Just last week, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Brazil and other Latin American countries in a campaign for support for the NATO war in Ukraine. While bowing to the demands to blame Russia as the culprit for the war, Lula has refused to send weapons and ammunition to Ukraine. The pseudo-left, with the PSTU at its head, is the strongest advocate that Brazil and other Latin American governments take part in this war.

As the PSTU and its union apparatus orient themselves to such counterrevolutionary activities, they seek to create confusion about their real political character with demands such as "workers' control" and "nationalization" of Avibras. They declare in their dossier that their aim is to "make Avibras a state-owned company, which is controlled with the participation of the workers and is not at the mercy of the instabilities of the global defense market."

With such rhetoric, the Morenoites attempt to lend a "left" veneer to an absolutely right-wing militarist program. Opposed to the interests of the working class, the PSTU and its union apparatus stand for the interests of a privileged bureaucracy, which seeks to expand its income and influence over the companies' administration and the state. Bearing the official title of "workers' organizations," they are in fact corporatist unions.

For more than a decade, the SindMetalSJC union bureaucrats declared that investments in Avibras through arms deals with the government would protect jobs and wages, while extolling the military apparatus. Programs promoted as central to "national sovereignty" include the Astros 2020 rocket-launcher system and the A-Darter air-to-air missile projected to equip the Swedish-made Gripen jet fighters, whose purchase was negotiated under the PT.

Such programs were sustained throughout the PT and Bolsonaro administrations as the military apparatus was evermore frequently used against the working class in major "law-and-order operations" in the poor districts and slums in the country. During the January 8 attack in Brasilia, armored cars were used by the military command to protect the fascists in the pro-Bolsonaro encampments outside the army headquarters from being arrested.

Under conditions in which the Brazilian military is being exposed as direct agents in a recent coup attempt and a breeding ground for fascist forces, the PSTU's attempt to expand its connections to the armed forces make it a direct accomplice in the authoritarian preparations of the ruling class.

In the coming weeks, the latest temporary layoff agreement with Avibras is coming to an end, while other workers have endured four months without wages. The machinations of the PSTU unionists with the government are completely opposed to workers' interests in fighting for their jobs and wages. To develop that fight, workers at Avibras must appeal not to the bourgeoisie and its state but to their class brothers and sisters.

In Brazil and internationally, workers are waging a growing wave of strikes and protests against the attempts of the capitalist oligarchies to make them pay for the economic crisis and the war. Breaking with the corporatist unions and the pseudo-left forces, this global movement requires a new revolutionary leadership, which will find political expression in the building of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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