

# Pseudo-left Workers' Cause Party (PCO) denounces WSWS for exposing fascist coup attempt in Brazil

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The petty-bourgeois nationalists of the Workers' Cause Party (PCO) have launched a new attack against the *World Socialist Web Site* and the struggle of the Socialist Equality Group (GSI) to establish the political independence of the working class in Brazil.

In response to the WSWS analysis, "One year since the January 8 fascist uprising in Brazil", the PCO's newspaper *Causa Operária* published a slanderous article titled "The left that doesn't understand coups d'état helps them."

The article consists of a miserable attempt to deny the established fact that former president Jair Bolsonaro and the Brazilian military top brass actively prepared a fascist coup d'état and, at the same time, to shield the Workers Party (PT) government from any criticism from the left.

In the narrative fabricated by the PCO, the systematic conspiracy by Bolsonaro and the generals to establish a dictatorial regime, culminating in the fascist insurrection of January 8 in Brasília, is nothing more than a "fictitious coup" that "only exists in the minds of the petty-bourgeois left."

On the other hand, they accuse the WSWS of fomenting a "real" coup d'état in Brazil by "attacking the broad front government" of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, particularly by denouncing its accommodation with the military and fascistic forces that continue to prepare a violent coup against the working class.

What a fraud!

Contrary to what the PCO would have its readers believe, its reactionary attacks against the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) did not suddenly emerge from the conflict with its positions on the January 8 events and the Lula government.

In July 2023, the WSWS published a devastating exposure of the PCO for its hailing the re-election of Turkey's right-wing president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as a "defeat" for imperialism. As we wrote at the time: "Despite focusing their activity entirely upon the national political sphere, it is in their choice of international allies that organizations like the PCO most openly expose their reactionary character."

Cornered, the PCO responded with hysterical chauvinist attacks against the ICFI, fraudulently accusing the Brazilian GSI of being a "gringo group" and "pro-imperialist." This attack failed miserably. It only further exposed the PCO's bankrupt nationalist outlook.

The PCO's slanders against the ICFI and its grotesque falsifications of Trotskyism were extensively debunked by the GSI in an analysis published in December. As political cowards, the PCO remained silent and retreated behind the scenes to prepare a new stage in its slander campaign against the ICFI.

In its latest piece, the PCO sought to refurbish its crude slanders against the WSWS in an even more underhanded fashion. After presenting the WSWS as an organization "that has an arm in the US," they conclude

their text with a cry: "Out with the imperialist NGOs that are behind various coup-plotting factions."

This obscure denunciation of "imperialist NGOs," thrown out with no explanation, has the aim of sowing unfounded suspicion about the ICFI's unblemished political record. It echoes unmistakably the "anti-globalist" conspiracy theories of fascist ideologues like Steve Bannon, which the PCO has admitted resemble its views on "anti-imperialism" (as we reported here).

The politically criminal methods employed by the PCO—insinuation, lies, covering up the facts, appeals to reactionary nationalist prejudices—are hallmarks of a terrified petty-bourgeois party seeing its class interests under threat.

The PCO recognizes the growing political influence of the ICFI, which fights for the Brazilian working class to break with the national bourgeoisie and assume a revolutionary internationalist orientation. This represents an intolerable challenge to the sacred political agreement between the pseudo-left organizations vying for space in the PT, the bureaucratic unions and the state apparatus.

## Why does the PCO deny that there was an attempted coup in Brazil?

The WSWS's realistic coverage of the dictatorial conspiracy of Bolsonaro and the military has become the target of the PCO's attacks precisely because it exposes, without embellishments, the advanced stage of the crisis of capitalism and the Brazilian bourgeois state.

Condemning the article by this author (mis-identified as "Thais Castanheira") because it "unabashedly exposes" that there has been an "attempted fascist coup" in Brazil, the PCO writes:

A very peculiar coup, with no armed demonstrators, no fascist militias and no mobilization of troops. It's the peaceful coup d'état that only exists in the minds of the petty-bourgeois left.

It adds:

The text goes on to demonstrate a lack of understanding of how a coup d'état works. It mentions that the military commanders discussed the possibility of a coup. This fact alone shows that it was not a coup d'état, but a mere demonstration.

The complete absurdity of these allegations was made even more explicit by the political events that followed. On February 8, less than a month after the PCO published its article, the Brazilian Federal Police (PF) launched an operation against Bolsonaro and a number of officers that revealed new details about the coup plans discussed and actively pursued by the former president and the military command.

Among the significant revelations was the publication of messages by Bolsonaro's chief of staff, Gen. Walter Braga Netto, demanding that attacks be launched against then commanders of the Army, Gen. Marco Antônio Freire Gomes, and the Air Force, Brig. Carlos Baptista Júnior, to pressure them to adhere to the coup plan.

The PF operation also pointed to the central role, hitherto unknown to the public, of the former head of the Army's Land Operations Command (Coter), Gen. Stevan Theóphilo Gaspar de Oliveira. According to the PF, General Theóphilo met individually with Bolsonaro and offered his troops to ensure a seizure of power.

At the end of February and the beginning of March, former commanders Baptista Júnior and Freire Gomes gave sworn statements to the PF in which they confirmed their having taken part in several meetings with Bolsonaro and his representatives that discussed concrete plans for a coup d'état and the establishment of a dictatorial regime.

In Baptista Júnior's statement, released in full on March 15, the former Air Force commander testified that "in one of the meetings with the Commanders of the Forces, after the second round of the presidential elections... then-Navy Commander, Adm. Almir Garnier Santos, stated that he would put his troops at Jair Bolsonaro's disposal" to carry out the coup.

At a subsequent meeting, on December 14, 2022, two weeks before Lula's inauguration, the then-Minister of Defense, Gen. Paulo Sergio de Oliveira, presented the commanders with a version of the document that became known as the "coup minutes." Baptista Júnior claims that, before he left the room refusing to read the document, he "asked the minister the following question: 'Does this document provide that the new president-elect will not take office?'; that Paulo Sergio de Oliveira remained silent; that the deponent understood that there would be an order preventing the new elected government from taking office."

The PCO's response to these new revelations makes it clear that its cover-up of fascist conspiracies in the Brazilian state is not the result of a misunderstanding, but a conscious political decision.

On February 12, the PCO published an editorial (from which they never retreated) entitled "The badly told story of Bolsonaro's coup d'état." Assuming the role of lawyers for the fascist former president, they question: "if he couldn't carry out the coup when he was in power, why would he try to do it after losing the elections?"

The PCO continues:

It is crucial to emphasize that January 8 was not a coup d'état, a point that needs to be made absolutely clear. The petty-bourgeois left disagrees with this analysis. However, it is necessary to examine the facts impartially, avoiding any manipulation to meet political objectives.

... This is relevant because, in politics, it is crucial to maintain clarity for citizens, activists and militants. Confusion only harms. If a coup d'état is to be denounced, then precision is needed, because indiscriminate use of this story can obscure genuinely worrying events.

Nothing could expose more the politically criminal role played by this party. They demand that Brazilian workers and youth, facing the military's iron heel raised over their heads, take an "impartial" stand!

The PCO's policy is the most extreme manifestation of a criminal complacency that is common to the entire pseudo-left. The Morenoites of the Revolutionary Workers Movement (MRT), which publishes the website *Esquerda Diário*, despite clashing with the PCO in petty political disputes, completely agree with its conclusion that the fascist conspiracies in the Brazilian state do not represent "genuinely worrying events."

While admitting that the information revealed by the PF "indicates that there is evidence that part of the Armed Forces did act with coup intentions," the Morenoites reassure their audience: "Despite these intentions... we have always analyzed that there was no correlation of forces that could allow a coup to take place." The result of these actions, according to them, was the "isolation and weakening of hardcore *Bolsonaroism*," on the one hand, and, on the other, the securing of "political stability" by the "coalition of forces that make up the Broad Front" led by Lula.

The Morenoites cannot explain why, under such a categorically unfavorable "correlation of forces," fascistic forces similar to Bolsonaro and his military cabal are emerging at the center of official bourgeois politics not only in Brazil, but throughout Latin America and the whole world.

Obstinate in their political subordination to the bourgeois state and eternally pretending to "push to the left" parties like the PT and its bankrupt union bureaucracy, the pseudo-left groups are the staunchest defenders of the myth of the unshakeable stability of the capitalist system.

### **The lessons of history and the political tasks in Brazil**

In order to politically shield the PT-led "Broad Front" of the rotten Brazilian bourgeoisie, the PCO recognizes that it is essential to falsify the revolutionary historical experiences of the working class and prevent the assimilation of the lessons of its victories and defeats.

Seeking to justify its slanderous portrayal of the policies pursued by the GSI as "left-wing coup-backing," the PCO cynically evokes the United Front against fascism advocated by Trotsky in Germany:

If the self-proclaimed Trotskyist organization really wants to fight the coup-plotting by the military in Brazil, it should follow what Trotsky and the other Bolsheviks taught. The fight against fascism involves a united front of the left, where the revolutionary party doesn't give up its own politics. Attacking the left-wing government when the extreme right is also attacking it can only have one result: becoming an auxiliary to the coup d'état.

The PCO doesn't bother to clarify, first of all, why a fight against fascism in Brazil is necessary when it does everything it can to prove that the fascist threat is just a delusion. Its only concern with this historical reference is to try to fraudulently associate the revolutionary legacy of Trotsky with the PCO's reactionary support of the PT's bourgeois government.

In every respect, the "united front of the left" advocated by the PCO is the polar opposite of the political methods defended by Trotsky.

By advocating a united front of the Communists and the Social Democrats, the two mass parties of the German working class, against fascism, Trotsky was in no way seeking to protect Social Democracy in government. The political aim of the united front tactic was precisely "to tear the workers away from their leaders," exposing in the course of struggle the prostration of the Social Democratic leadership towards

capitalism and fascist reaction, thus facilitating its working class ranks making a conscious bridge to the revolutionary party.

Trotsky explicitly stated that “this common front of direct struggle against fascism, embracing the entire proletariat, *must be utilized in the struggle against the Social Democracy, directed as a flank attack, but no less effective for all that.*” [For a Workers’ United Front Against Fascism, 1931]

The PCO’s demand that criticism of the “left government” be suspended, because to do otherwise would supposedly make one “an auxiliary of the coup d’état,” is precisely what Trotsky rejects as a criminal political capitulation.

Drawing an analogy between the methods of revolutionary struggle he was advocating in Germany and the resistance to Kornilov’s counter-revolutionary uprising during the Russian Revolution of 1917, Trotsky quotes Lenin on the attitude of the Bolsheviks towards the Kerensky government:

[We] are varying the forms of struggle against Kerensky. Without diminishing our hostility to him even by one single note, without taking back one word from what we have said against him, without giving up the task of overthrowing Kerensky, we say: we must calculate the moment. We will not overthrow Kerensky at present. We approach the question of the struggle against him differently: by explaining the weaknesses and vacillations of Kerensky to the people (who are fighting against Kornilov).

Trotsky then concludes:

We are proposing nothing different. Complete independence of the Communist organization and press, complete freedom of Communist criticism, the same for the Social Democracy and the trade unions. No retraction of our criticism of the Social Democracy. No forgetting of all that has been.

The “united front of the left” advocated by the PCO, while clashing directly with the principles defended by Trotsky, is deeply rooted in the counter-revolutionary political traditions of Stalinist Popular Frontism. The PCO’s aim with the calculated use of formulations such as “the left-wing government,” which consciously conceal the class character of the PT government, is to herd the working class behind the bourgeois enemy’s regime.

The reactionary essence of PCO’s Popular Frontist politics is exemplarily demonstrated by its attacks against the WSWS for exposing that Lula’s “Broad Front” government is in alliance with the very fascist conspirators who planned his overthrow:

Here’s the critical point: the WSWS doesn’t understand the contradictions within the Lula government, it doesn’t understand that [Defense Minister José] Múcio is precisely a central figure in a possible coup. The coup is carried out by figures inside the government, not outside. Nowadays, to say that Pinochet was a figure in the Allende government is absurd. However, according to the WSWS analysis, he would be placed on the same block as the Chilean president overthrown by a military coup led by Pinochet himself! This incomprehension could even exist in Allende’s head, after all, he himself appointed Pinochet as commander of the armed forces. But this misunderstanding cannot exist in the minds

of the left, which proposes to lead the revolutionary struggle of the workers. The difference between Lula and his right-wing ministers with coup tendencies must be made very clear.

Drawing its lessons from the catastrophic experience with Allende’s popular front in Chile, the PCO concludes: “The correct policy is not to attack the government of the broad front, it is to attack the right wing of the broad front.”

The example chosen by the PCO is absolutely self-incriminating. They are advocating an exact repetition of the criminal betrayal perpetrated by Stalinism and Social Democracy, aided by the Pabloite renegades of the Fourth International, which led to the brutal crushing of the Chilean proletarian revolution.

The idea that Pinochet’s appointment by Allende was the result of a “misunderstanding,” that the historical course could have been altered by putting pressure on the “left government” to differentiate itself from its right wing, is absolutely false. Allende’s submission to the coup-plotting military was the expression of what Trotsky defined as “the very essence” of the Popular Front as “a government of capitulation to the bureaucracy and the officers.”

The playbook of the betrayals carried out in the 1930s under the Stalinist banner of the Popular Front, including most infamously that of the Spanish Revolution, was followed to the letter by Allende’s Socialist Party and the Chilean Communist Party allied with Christian Democracy in the Popular Unity government of 1970-73.

While arguing that the Chilean “popular revolution” would develop within the structures of the old bourgeois state, in harmony with the armed forces, the treacherous Stalinist and Social Democratic bureaucracies acted feverishly to disarm the militias formed by workers and peasants and to return the companies expropriated by the revolutionary working class to their capitalist owners.

In June 1973, a rebel wing of the army made the first attempt at a military coup, the *Tanquetazo*, which was thwarted by the troops commanded by Generals Carlos Prats and Augusto Pinochet. Three months later, the “loyal forces” praised by Allende carried out the successful fascist coup that drowned the revolution in blood.

Exactly as Trotsky wrote in 1936: “Thus it became clear that the People’s Front government had maintained the military caste with the people’s money, furnished them with authority, power and arms, gave them command over young workers and peasants, thereby facilitating the preparations for a crushing attack on the workers and peasants.”

All the talk by the PCO about “understanding the contradictions” within the Allende or the Lula government is a justification for the historical crimes committed and being prepared by these bourgeois regimes against the working class. Their attitude is precisely described in Trotsky’s words: “The fear of the petty bourgeois before the big bourgeois, of the petty bureaucrat before the big bureaucrat, they covered up with lachrymose speeches about the sanctity of the united front (between a victim and the executioners).”

The decisive element in the defeat of the Chilean proletariat was, as in the Spanish Revolution, the absence of a revolutionary party. The main obstacle to building such a party in Spain was the centrist POUM, which adapted to the Popular Front instead of mobilizing the masses to oppose it. In Chile, this role was fulfilled by the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR).

However, if there was an element of tragedy in the inability of the POUM leaders to break with their petty-bourgeois orientation, in Chile, the building of a revolutionary party was directly sabotaged by the Pabloite liquidationists of the Fourth International. On the eve of the Chilean proletarian uprising, the Pabloites deliberately disbanded the Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers’ Party (POR) to amalgamate it with a

series of bankrupt petty-bourgeois tendencies forming the MIR.

The International Committee stood alone in its appeal to the Chilean and international working class in the immediate wake of the September 1973 coup:

Defend your democratic rights not through Popular Fronts and parliament, but through the overthrow of the capitalist state and the establishment of workers' power. Place no confidence in Stalinism, social democracy, centrism, revisionism or the liberal bourgeoisie, but build a revolutionary party of the Fourth International whose program will be the revolution in permanence.

The GSI is committed to fighting for this orientation within the Brazilian working class and to preventing a repetition of the bloody defeats of the past. Its warnings of the real threat posed by the attempted coup by Bolsonaro and the military do not even remotely translate into a pessimistic outlook.

The brutal methods of fascism and dictatorship being rehabilitated by the bourgeoisie worldwide signal their extreme fear of the resurgence of class struggles in response to the deepening capitalist crisis. They are the ruling class's pre-emptive response to the revolutionary battles that it senses are unescapable.

The ICFI and the GSI take the revolutionary movement of the working class as seriously as the bourgeoisie does. Its focus is on building the political leadership necessary to orient the developing struggles towards the overthrow of capitalism and the building of world socialism.

The objective potential for realizing this program has never been greater. The international working class is today the most massive and powerful social force in the world, deeply interconnected by the globalized process of production. The labor movement's old treacherous leaderships, which succeeded in diverting revolutionary struggles in the past, have been completely discredited in the eyes of the masses.

Forces like Lula, the PT and the reactionary union bureaucracy affiliated with them remain as a dead weight over the working class but are no longer capable of identifying themselves with socialism or workers' aspirations for social change. In order to wage its most fundamental struggles against capitalism, the working class must establish new forms of organization, which will only develop in tandem with the building of revolutionary Trotskyist parties affiliated to the ICFI.

The desperate attacks against the ICFI by the PCO, one of the demoralized offshoots from Pabloism, are themselves indicative that the objective and subjective conditions for the realization of this historical task are rapidly maturing in Brazil.



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