

# Petty-bourgeois nationalism vs. Trotskyism: Brazil's Workers Cause Party (PCO) defends Erdo?an's repression in Turkey—Part 2

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10 June 2025

*This is the second part of a two-part article. Part one can be read [here](#).*

## An open defense of capitalist dictatorship

The fraudulent portrayal of Erdogan as an opponent of imperialism is employed by the PCO in justifying the creation of bourgeois dictatorships in Turkey and other parts of the globe.

Responding to the WSWs report of thousands of political arrests in Turkey, including of the leaderships of several left-wing parties, the PCO offers a criminal rationalization which we reproduce at length:

Part of the work of a revolutionary party does consist of defending democratic rights. Above all, however, it is necessary to analyze the general meaning of the political regime in question.

The Venezuelan government of Nicolás Maduro, for example, has arrested more than 2,000 people for their alleged involvement in a coup attempt against Chavismo. Is it possible that, strictly speaking, the government has committed an attack on the democratic rights of its opponents? Yes, it is possible. Were these attacks necessary? Probably not. However, much more important than that is the question: what is the Venezuelan government's repression at the service of?

You don't have to go very far to realize that the repression comes from the Venezuelan regime's struggle against imperialism. It's a regime that, despite its limitations, is trying to put the brakes on big business's offensive against its government. A regime that is even supported by a broad popular mobilization, with revolutionary characteristics.

The key thing in Venezuela is not to criticize the government's mistakes with regard to democratic rights, but to mobilize the Venezuelan people against imperialism. In this sense, the mistakes of the Chavista regime should only be pointed out when it is convenient to do so in order to promote an even more decisive struggle against the great enemies of humanity.

Similarly, Recep Erdo?an's government must be analyzed. What is the general meaning of the regime's repression? The WSWs doesn't answer, replacing real analysis with pseudo-revolutionary platitudes.

deliberate misrepresentation of the SEG statement. The SEG has placed the building of an authoritarian regime in Turkey within the context of mounting class antagonisms and decades of intensifying imperialist war throughout the region:

The establishment of an authoritarian regime in Turkey, as in the US, is not due to the intentions of this or that politician, but to the objective needs of the ruling class. The dictatorship of the capitalist oligarchy over the economy and society brings with it a regime of political dictatorship.

Turkey is a country divided by fierce class antagonisms and the ruling class is sitting on a social powder keg that is heading towards an explosion. The presidential dictatorship, which has entered a new phase with the arrest of ?mamo?lu, is above all targeting the working class. ...

Today, more than ever, the Turkish bourgeoisie needs a dictatorial regime to implement a policy in line with the growing aggression of US-NATO imperialism, which is hated by the overwhelming majority of the people.

Turkey is seen as a critical ally in the Trump administration's plans to recolonize the Middle East under the full domination of US imperialism.

In April, Trump—the leader of the world's main imperialist power, the United States—had this to say about Erdo?an, the “anti-imperialist” leader of “rebellious” Turkey: “I happen to like him [Erdo?an], and he likes me ... and we've never had a problem ... He's a tough guy. He's very smart.”

At the end of May, Erdo?an made an even more revealing comment: “Turkish-American relations are not as insignificant as some people think. Mr. Trump has a very positive view of Turkey. Our view of them is the same. We have a strong relationship based on mutual respect and sincerity.”

The PCO concludes:

?mamo?lu's arrest is, regardless of its legal merit, a defensive measure by Erdo?an. It is the government's attempt to prevent a proxy of imperialism from being victorious in the next elections, which would constitute a coup d'état against the Turkish people. In this sense, the demonstrations in reaction to his arrest have a pro-imperialist character. There is nothing revolutionary about them.

The claim that the WSWs did not answer this question is another

The WSWs “replaces real analysis with pseudo-revolutionary platitudes,” claim those who report finding “little information about ?mamo?lu” but defend his arrest “regardless of its legal merit”!

Their whole argumentation is a blunt admission that the role sought by the PCO is nothing more than that of a petty “left” advisor to bourgeois regimes.

Here we have a party that defines its attitude towards the bourgeois state and its repressive apparatus as being a matter of “convenience”: if the bourgeois regime backed by them commits “mistakes”, they may “point that out” when “it is convenient to do so.”

Completely out of the question, for the PCO, is the independent political mobilization of the working class against the bourgeoisie and its state in Venezuela, Turkey, or anywhere else in the world.

It is by no means accidental that in the PCO’s 3,300 words statement, focused on attacking the WSWs’s opposition to bourgeois nationalism and effectively backing the persecution of its members in Turkey, the term “working class” appears only twice – in both cases to proclaim its common interests with the national bourgeoisie against imperialism.

Much more than a simple rhetorical exercise, the PCO’s arguments justify their active relationship to such reactionary bourgeois regimes. The PCO has joined and become responsible for the Brazilian section of the bankrupt “Antifascist International” recently founded by Maduro as he desperately tries to preserve his crisis-ridden regime in crisis.

This initiative involves also fraudulently presenting the Russian government and its reactionary war aims as a foundation for waging a consistent struggle against imperialism. A second meeting of Maduro’s forum, to which PCO sent its own delegates, was held in April in Moscow. It was convened by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) and received greetings from President Vladimir Putin.

A consistent struggle against imperialism demands a principled attitude on the part of revolutionary socialists. The Trotskyist movement systematically opposes the imperialist interventions against countries such as Venezuela and tirelessly exposes the cynical invocations of “democracy” to pursue regime-change operations.

But this doesn’t imply giving any support to bankrupt bourgeois governments such as that of Maduro, much less justifying the repressive measures it requires to hold on to power. The ICFI assigns exclusively to the Venezuelan working class, not imperialism and its local agencies, the task of overthrowing the reactionary bourgeois order and establishing its own government.

### **The fight for democratic rights and the political independence of the working class**

The PCO’s unprincipled attitude towards essential political questions such as the defense of democratic rights and the fight against fascism is exposed in the contrast between its approach to the recent developments in Turkey and those in Brazil.

In Turkey, the PCO defends the arrest of the presidential candidate leading the polls “regardless of its legal merit”, claiming that to allow him to win the elections “would constitute a coup d’etat”. On the same basis, it legitimizes the brutal repression of mass demonstrations and abolition of democratic rights as “defensive measures” by the Erdogan regime.

In Brazil, on the other hand, the PCO came out in defense of former president Jair Bolsonaro and his military cabal who attempted a coup d’etat in 2022-23. It has attacked the Brazilian Socialist Equality Group’s exposure of the fascist conspiracy, against which it provocatively wrote: “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.”

The PCO has dismissed the vast evidence against the fascists with juridical excuses that not even the coup plotters’ own lawyers had the audacity to present: testimony of key participants is “gossip” and “uncorroborated allegations”, phone messages revealing the execution of the plot constitute the “exercise of freedom of expression”, a document described as the “coup minutes” discussed between Bolsonaro and the military commanders is an “academic exercise.”

As it pursues a united front with Bolsonaro and his allies, the PCO refers to legal rights in quite a different language than what it used in relation to Turkey. Less than a month before publishing its recent attack against the WSWs, the PCO launched a call for a broad amnesty for the participants in the January 8 conspiracy. It concluded: “The defense of democratic rights must never take sides: it demands that illegalities be redressed, regardless of who suffered them.”

The self-contradictory positions taken by the PCO are different reactionary expressions of the same political method of unprincipled maneuvering around the bourgeois state.

A significant factor behind the PCO’s disoriented response to the political events in its own country is that it has also been targeted by the Supreme Court (STF), which has been tasked with suppressing the crisis of the Brazilian state.

As the WSWs has explained, none of the contending factions of the Brazilian bourgeoisie have a progressive answer to its crisis, and it continues its drive towards authoritarian forms of rule under the administration of President Lula da Silva, of the Workers Party (PT). The race to the right of the whole political system can only be stopped by the emergence of the working class as an independent force.

The Brazilian Trotskyists, just as the SEG in Turkey, maintain a principled defense of democratic rights, which is essential for the working class’s ability to organize itself against capitalism. It entrusts this task not to the reactionary bourgeoisie and its bankrupt institutions, but to the working masses themselves.

Consistent with its principles, the GSI came out against the state censorship of the PCO and defends its right to express its political positions, despite fundamentally disagreeing with them.

The PCO, on the other hand, attempts to rid itself of the growing difficulties imposed upon it by the capitalist crisis by seeking loopholes in the bourgeois political system itself: currying favor with the PT government, along with bourgeois regimes in other countries, sections of the Brazilian military that share its chauvinist ideology, or directly with fascists.

### **PCO’s reactionary trajectory**

These politics are the reactionary outcome of PCO’s trajectory which traces its origins back to the opportunist operations led by Pierre Lambert in Latin America after his break with the ICFI and Trotskyism.

In a document on the history of PCO, published on its 30th anniversary, they describe their break with the Brazilian Internationalist Socialist Organization (OSI) in 1978 as follows:

This split stems from yet another crisis in the international Trotskyist movement, with the split between various Latin American parties such as Política Obrera (Argentina) and the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (Bolivia) and the French organization Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI), led by Pierre Lambert, due to their abandonment of the most elementary premises of the Marxist program. However, it was not only or mainly in the international movement.

PCO never made a serious assessment of the political development of

the Lambert current and what constituted its “abandonment of the most elementary premises of the Marxist program.” Such an analysis would necessarily lead to an exposure of the Pabloite conceptions developed by Lambert and the OCI dating back to the late 1960’s.

Lambert’s political capitulation had its starkest manifestation in the proclamation that the Fourth International had been effectively destroyed by Pabloism and that it had to be “reconstructed”. Lambert’s policy of “reconstruction” of the Trotskyist movement did not involve a struggle to assimilate and develop the political gains of the struggle against Pabloite revisionism. On the contrary, it meant liquidating those gains in order to free the OCI’s hands to establish unprincipled relations with tendencies of any origin.

The unification with the Bolivian POR and Argentina’s *Política Obrera* occupied a central place in the opportunist operations of the OCI, leading to the foundation of the Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (CORQUI) in 1972. What united the different members of this political amalgam was not agreement on program and history, but rather a common need to lend their national opportunist practices an international façade.

By illegitimately appropriating the prestige won by the International Committee in its unbending struggle against revisionism, the OCI provided criminal cover for the betrayals these organizations carried out against the Latin American working class.

They embraced the POR precisely at the moment when the centrist party led by Guillermo Lora—who had sided with the Pabloites in the 1953 split—was being exposed for paving the way to the defeat of the Bolivian Revolution at the hands of fascist reaction by subordinating the working class to the bourgeois state headed by Gen. J.J. Torres.

The Lambertites’ “reconstruction” policy resulted only in new splits, bitter recriminations, and political disorientation, preparing the groundwork for their liquidation into bourgeois parties and governments, from the Socialist Party (PS) in France to the Workers Party (PT) in Brazil.

The PCO’s acknowledgment that the origins of its foundational split with the OCI lay not “mainly in the international movement” is extremely revealing. From its inception, Causa Operária (the name of its publication since 1979) has defined its politics exclusively around national issues. The “international” relations between PCO, PO, and POR were abandoned without any assessment, each organization turning to its own national practice.

The PCO’s pretensions of opposing the treachery of Lambertism from a national perspective meant, in fact, reaffirming the very essence of Lambert’s Pabloite degeneration.

The PCO’s history is fundamentally that of a tendency within—and later in the orbit of—the Brazilian Workers Party. In 1980, Causa Operária joined the PT, following the Lambertite OSI and other Pabloite currents associated with the United Secretariat of Ernst Mandel and Nahuel Moreno in Argentina. The Pabloites were one of the main tendencies responsible for diverting the revolutionary struggles of the Brazilian working class that undermined the military regime in the late 1970s. By promoting Lula and his union bureaucracy as the legitimate political leadership of the working class, they worked to subordinate its struggles to the reestablishment of the bourgeois order in Brazil.

The OSI leaders integrated themselves almost immediately into Lula’s faction and rose to high positions in the bureaucracy of the PT, the unions and the bourgeois state. Causa Operária, while oriented to the exact same forces, maintained a radical façade. It ended up being expelled from the PT in 1995 and was forced to establish itself as a separate party.

Up until 2010’s, the PCO sought to present itself as a revolutionary opponent of the PT leadership. It spoke of the “Lulaist union bureaucracy and the petty-bourgeois currents that supported it” as having a “counterrevolutionary and bourgeois line in defense of the political

regime and a semi-nationalist bourgeois state.” It presented itself as an advocate of the “independence of the working class against the bourgeoisie.”

But the eruption of an immense crisis of Brazilian bourgeois order and of the PT itself, leading to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016, led the PCO to make an abrupt shift. The demoralization of the PT and its unions among the working class and the loss of their ability to provide stability to Brazilian capitalism broke down the whole framework of the PCO’s pseudo-revolutionary politics. It emerged as an open defender of Lula, the PT and national capitalism.

As the GSI wrote in its previous answer to the PCO: “The political conditions that gave rise to the opportunist national activity of the PCO and other Pabloite organizations are now collapsing under the impact of the capitalist crisis and the advance of global war.”

The PCO’s new attack against the WSWs takes place amid violent shifts in the global situation which are fueling massive eruptions of the international working class with revolutionary implications.

While the ICFI fights in every country to give conscious expression to the independent interests of the working class, parties such as the PCO have diametrically opposed aims. Their petty-bourgeois left nationalist posturing is only a tool for preventing the emergence of the working class as an independent political actor. Once this process erupts, they take ever more openly the side of bourgeois reaction.

The political questions raised by the Turkish crisis have the most direct implications for workers in Brazil. As the SEG statement emphasized, the critical problems confronting the working class stem from the basic contradictions of the imperialist epoch of capitalism, exacerbated by the last decades of globalization, and can only be resolved in the fight for the international socialist revolution.



To contact the WSWs and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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