

Fifty-four-day strike at São Paulo's universities: The political lessons

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Brazil)
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Between April and June of this year, a strike movement swept the state universities of São Paulo—the University of São Paulo (USP), the São Paulo State University (UNESP) and the University of Campinas (UNICAMP)—drawing students, staff and faculty into one of the largest movements in the history of higher education in Brazil's most populous and wealthiest state. The struggle that emerged from South America's leading university hub carries a political significance that transcends the boundaries of the campuses.

The strikes were a concentrated response to the accelerating deterioration of working and teaching conditions at the public universities: shortages of faculty, crumbling infrastructure, the advance of outsourcing and a market logic increasingly penetrating institutions of teaching and knowledge production. For students, this is compounded by ever more degraded social conditions, which directly impact their ability to enter and remain in the university.

The strongest movement took place among USP students, driven not by chance by the demand for increased need-based subsistence grants for low-income students. The student strike, begun on April 16, lasted 54 days and reached a historic scale. Picket lines went up at the entrances of numerous faculties and institutes at USP, UNESP and UNICAMP; local demonstrations and massive, unified street protests followed one after another between April and June; buildings at all three universities were occupied by students, and the movement was met with violent repression.

The strikes at the São Paulo universities were not an isolated occurrence. They formed part of a broader wave of mobilizations across education in São Paulo and Brazil, with a rising tide of protests and strikes since the start of the year by teachers, staff and students in both basic and higher education against precarious conditions, low wages and the advance of privatization schemes.

This is not a uniquely Brazilian phenomenon. Around the world, bourgeois governments of every political stripe are attacking education and social services amid capitalism's headlong turn toward war and dictatorship. Protests and mass strikes against these attacks are sweeping Latin America and the world.

In Argentina, the Fourth Federal University March brought 1.5 million people into the streets across the country on May 12 against the cuts imposed by the fascistic government of Javier Milei; in Chile, massive student mobilizations have been confronting the cuts and fascistic repression of the Pinochetist José Antonio Kast, sworn in as president in March; in Bolivia, teachers took part in a 51-day uprising, begun in May, against the government of Rodrigo Paz, which is carrying out attacks of the same character as Milei's and Kast's. Outside Latin America, in just the past few months, mass strikes against education cuts have taken place in Australia, Portugal, Spain, France, Canada and the United States.

The eruption of militarism, the drive toward dictatorship, and the rising movement of the international working class point to a political turning point. The reorganization of world society is on the agenda, and only two classes can carry it out: either the bourgeoisie, through fascism and war,

or the working class, through socialist revolution. The alternative of socialism or barbarism is emerging today in a more concrete form than it has in many decades—and it is in these terms that the experience of the strikes at the São Paulo universities must be examined.

The trajectory of the movement

Despite the strength shown by students, staff and faculty, the movement at the São Paulo universities ended isolated, exhausted and defeated.

At USP, the students' central demands were not met. The increase in the student stipend, a non-negotiable demand for thousands of students in situations of social vulnerability, remained a dead letter. This did not stop the pseudo-left organizations leading the Central Student Directory (DCE) at USP from proclaiming that the "strike was historic" and victorious.

Throughout the movement, these organizations systematically diverted the struggle into sterile negotiations with the university administration and the state government, denouncing their "intransigence" and blaming them for the failure to meet the demands. This claim conveniently masks the role played by the leadership itself. The formula adopted at the strike's closure, a "unified exit with a state of permanent mobilization," exposes its inability to specify what the proclaimed "victory" actually consisted of.

This outcome contains fundamental political lessons that emerge clearly from a reconstruction of the movement's trajectory.

The strike by USP staff

The USP student strike was preceded and directly set in motion by an explosive strike by university staff on April 14. The spark for the workers' strike was the approval by the University Council of a bonus scheme exclusively for faculty.

Subjected to years of wage austerity and worsening conditions of exploitation, USP staff suddenly launched a mobilization. The longtime leader of the USP Workers' Union (SINTUSP), Magno de Carvalho, was compelled to acknowledge on April 22: "I won't say [that the strike began] independent of the union, but the way it happened was very spontaneous [...] It outraged everyone [the bonus for faculty alone], to the point that the union had to run to catch up and organize a spontaneous revolt."

This movement, soon joined by the student strike, alarmed the USP administration, headed by Aluísio Segurado, which resolved the staff strike within nine days. On April 23, it announced the creation of a bonus scheme for staff, immediately embraced by SINTUSP, which declared the

strike over. By this means, the administration broke the strike of one sector in order to isolate the other. This would become the administration's recurring method throughout the entire movement.

The strike spreads to all three universities

USP students had gone on strike on April 16, with student subsistence at the center of their demands. In early May, the student walkout spread to six UNESP campuses in the interior of São Paulo, while UNICAMP students voted to join on May 7, raising the same demands for housing and student assistance. That same day, USP students occupied the administration building in protest.

In the early hours of May 10, the state government of Tarcísio de Freitas, a protégé of fascist former president Jair Bolsonaro, launched a violent and illegal police operation against the USP students. A contingent of 50 Military Police officers stormed the occupied administration building without a court warrant, using stun grenades and tear gas, forcing students to run a gauntlet of club-wielding police officers with dozens left injured before being arrested.

This state repression, however, expanded the movement rather than containing it. Courses that had already resumed classes reversed the decision, and between May 11 and 14 students from all three state universities marched together, unified, through downtown São Paulo. These marches took place while staff and faculty at all three universities were negotiating their demands with the Council of Rectors of the São Paulo State Universities (CRUESP); by mid-May, deadlocks in these negotiations led UNICAMP and UNESP staff, as well as faculty at all three universities, to go on strike.

Blocking unity with the working class

Since the first year of the Tarcísio government, in 2023, a series of sectors have risen up against its plans to destroy public services and its sweeping privatization agenda—subway and railway workers, Sabesp water utility workers and teachers in the state and municipal school systems. During the university strike itself, municipal teachers in São Paulo carried out a strike with broad participation between April 28 and May 19 against the privatization of education, while state teachers had already struck in April.

The convergence of struggles across the three universities, the schools and public services in São Paulo directly raised the potential for a unified struggle under the leadership of the working class against the capitalist austerity policy carried out by the Tarcísio government, which consciously seeks to replicate locally the so-called “Milei model.”

The unification of these different struggles, and their conduct along class lines, however, collided head-on with the strategic political conception pursued by the bureaucracies at the head of the student councils and the staff and faculty unions. These leaderships consciously undermined this perspective, broke the potential unity of students with the working class, and channeled the movement, in segmented fashion, into negotiations with the administration and the state government.

This strategy was demonstrated at the high point of the strike. On May 20, 10,000 students, faculty and staff from the three universities marched to the Bandeirantes Palace, seat of the São Paulo state government, under the slogan “Tarcísio Out.”

During the march, students chanted: “Worker, look this way, I’m in the

street so your child can study”—a correct political instinct, pointing beyond the limits within which their leaderships confined them. The leadership of the student councils, however, insisted on being received at the Bandeirantes Palace to reopen negotiations with the governor. State deputy Mônica Seixas, of the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), escorted student council representatives to a meeting with representatives of the Tarcísio government, leaving the thousands of protesting students waiting with their arms crossed.

A fragmented end

The outcome of this isolation was predictable. Confined to the perimeter of the university, where the administration's “intransigence” led to exhaustion and depletion, the end of the strikes by students, staff and faculty at USP, UNESP and UNICAMP unfolded in a fragmented fashion throughout June: each sector ended its strike separately, each university on its own, and within each university, department by department.

USP students ended their strike on June 9, in a close vote (323 to 255). Since the student council had already left the decision to end the strike up to each course, many students had already returned to class. The student council leadership described this process without reservation: Medicine students left “because they managed to make significant headway on demands regarding the [University] Hospital and the [Clinics] Hospital,” and Engineering students because they “won a historic demand”—a 24-hour study room.

Orientation toward the bourgeois state: the program of the DCE leadership

The USP student council has been led since 2022 by an alliance between the Stalinists of the Correnteza Movement—the youth wing of Popular Unity (UP)—and the Morenoites of Juntos!, the youth wing of the Socialist Left Movement (MES), an internal current of PSOL, together with Rebeldia, the youth wing of the Unified Socialist Workers' Party (PSTU). It was these organizations that led the defeat of the student strike, and the policies they applied flow from a definite programmatic conception.

The central axis of these pseudo-left organizations' perspective is their orientation toward the bourgeois national state, promoting illusions that the social demands of students and workers can be met through pressure on university administrators, governors and legislative assemblies. Its most fully developed expression is the promotion of the re-election of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his “broad front,” to which they sought to directly subordinate the students.

In a June 12 post announcing the end of the strike on Instagram, the DCE acknowledged that its “letter of demands” to the administration “may seem like proposals on specific university issues, but if read carefully, it becomes clear that it is in fact a program aimed at building a different kind of university,” “where Black, Indigenous, trans, poor and working-class youth have the right not only to access the university but to be able to remain in the university with dignity.”

Among the “specific issues” is the adoption at USP of quotas for transgender and disabled people, alongside an Indigenous admissions track. The same statement emphasized the strike's pseudo-radical tactics, with “the students' democratic self-organization reviving historic and legitimate methods of the student movement, such as the occupation of the USP administration building.”

The framing the DCE gives its demands is the hallmark of identity politics: it fragments what is a class question in one of the most unequal countries in the world. The struggle for free, quality higher education ceases to be a struggle to transform the conditions oppressing all working class students and becomes, instead, pressure for the inclusion of specific groups within the existing university.

The centrality of quotas in this program is no accident. In recent decades, the student movement has increasingly championed them after having largely abandoned demands for expanded enrollment and the abolition of the entrance exam—a selection mechanism that reproduces and legitimizes class inequality by requiring years of costly preparation that only students from privileged families can afford.

Quotas accept the entrance exam as a permanent structure and merely adjust who passes through it, replacing the question of universal access to public higher education with disputes over the demographic composition of a university elite that remains an elite. This is not a program of social transformation—it is a program of institutional diversification within capitalism, one that leaves the student movement progressively more disconnected from the working class and more integrated into the concerns of the petty-bourgeois layer that dominates the elite universities.

The “next steps” announced by the DCE confirm this orientation: “at USP we will continue the struggle, advancing our challenge to this undemocratic structure within the university, through the *Segurado Out*, *Direct Elections Now*, and parity on the central councils campaign.” From pressure for funding to pressure for reforms in the university’s power structure, it is always a matter of perfecting an institution of the capitalist state, presented to students as the strategic horizon of their struggle.

The logical conclusion of this orientation is electoral. The slogan “Tarcísio Out,” advanced by the DCE leadership, means, in the absence of an independent political orientation based upon the working class, support for the Workers’ Party (PT) candidate Fernando Haddad in the October election for governor of São Paulo—the state-level expression of the PT’s “broad front.”

Juntos! does not campaign openly for Haddad, seeking to preserve an image of radicalism before the youth. But Seixas, of the same MES, who took part in the DCE’s May 20 meeting with the Tarcísio government, told an assembly of teachers: “Nothing is more important right now than bringing down Tarcísio and, with him, bringing down the systematic assault on education. This is an election year, we have to stay alert [...] we want, for this election, our candidate Haddad’s commitment to urgently restoring public education in the state of São Paulo.”

The false ideological veneer for this subordination to the bourgeoisie is the argument for an “anti-fascist front”: faced with the threat of Tarcísio—and of Flávio Bolsonaro in the presidential election—the entire “left” should supposedly unite behind Haddad and Lula. But it was precisely the implementation of the capitalist austerity program by the Lula government that opened the door for the strengthening of the fascists. Supporting Lula and Haddad is not a response to fascism; it is one of the conditions that reproduce it.

The fraudulent “left-wing” opposition to the DCE leadership

The alleged opposition to this leadership, despite presenting itself as more radical, shares the same class orientation and bears no less responsibility for the trajectory the strike took. The most representative such group is *Faísca Revolucionária*, the youth wing of the Revolutionary Workers’ Movement (MRT), the Brazilian section of the Permanent Revolution Current (PRC).

Faísca confined its criticism of the DCE leadership to tactical terms:

delays in convening general assemblies, undemocratic methods in running them, the hollowing out of the strike committee, the fragmentation of the struggle at the departmental level. An opposition that remains within these limits, without challenging the leadership’s programmatic premises, amounts to a factional dispute waged upon the common political ground of the pseudo-left.

This is borne out in each of its “more radical” proposals. In its assessment published in *Esquerda Diário*, titled “Lessons from More Than 50 Days of Strike at USP: Against the Administration’s Intransigence, the Strength of a Unified, Rank-and-File-Organized Struggle Was Needed,” *Faísca* countered the DCE’s “Direct Elections Now” campaign for rector by advancing a “Free and Sovereign Constituent Assembly”—one that would be “capable of sweeping away the dictatorial statute, ending the office of rector and dissolving the university council, ensuring that students, staff and faculty, in proportion to their real weight in the university, can decide the direction of USP, its budget, its education, its research, placing it at the service of the entire working class and the poor.”

This proposal is merely a more radical alternative to the DCE’s demand. Such an assembly is, in essence, a demand for the internal democratization of an institution of the capitalist state. It remains entirely within the walls of the university, without questioning the relationship between the university and the state that finances and controls it. Marxism proceeds from the opposite premise: the capitalist state—and its institutions, including the public university—is an instrument of class domination that cannot simply be democratized, reorganized, or “placed at the service of the working class” by the will of an internal assembly. The transformation of the internal structures of a university like USP presupposes the conquest of political power by the working class. Students and staff who embraced these demands would face an indefinite horizon of assemblies, constituent processes and internal reorganizations. This is the dead end to which the formal radicalism of organizations like *Faísca* leads.

In the same statement, *Faísca* praised the movement for reviving “historic methods of the student movement such as the occupation of the administration building [...] but [said it] was unable, due to the strategy of the DCE leadership and the bureaucracies in São Paulo, to break the administration’s intransigence [...] and win the strike’s main demands.” Criticizing the DCE leadership for the absence of self-organization and for boycotting the strike committee, it called for “a real, living strike committee—like the workers’ strike committee driven by SINTUSP—in which hundreds of rank-and-file-elected delegates could think through the situation in each course on a daily basis, keeping the movement cohesive and unified.”

The fact that *Faísca* presents SINTUSP as a reference point reveals a great deal about its political orientation. The union is made up of many of the same pseudo-left organizations active in the student movement, led by its self-styled most radical wings—among them *Nossa Classe*, the labor wing of the MRT itself—and is affiliated with the Popular and Trade Union Confederation (CSP-Conlutas), controlled by the PSTU. No less than the Unified Workers’ Central (CUT) itself in its origins, CSP-Conlutas was built precisely to channel workers’ combativeness within limits acceptable to the bourgeois regime. Contrary to what it proclaims, CSP-Conlutas is not an “independent” federation—it is a trade union bureaucracy integrated into the Brazilian capitalist state, oriented toward nationalism and increasingly bound up with the war effort of American and European imperialism. CSP-Conlutas has been actively supporting the imperialist wars of the US-NATO axis against Russia in Ukraine, in Syria, and elsewhere in the world.

Holding up the SINTUSP committee as a model for the student movement does not mean orienting students toward the working class, but rather reaffirming the bureaucratic union structure integrated into the political apparatus of the pseudo-left—the very field *Faísca* claims to

criticize. And this after the immediate experience of the USP staff strike had demonstrated that the “strike committee” and other organizational forms articulated by SINTUSP did nothing whatsoever to expand the prospects of the workers’ spontaneous movement.

The same logic applies to its proposal for “unifying” the different struggles across the state of São Paulo. Faísca called for a “state assembly of all sectors in struggle, that would set common measures for building the strikes and charting the course of the mobilization.” As Faísca proposes it, this assembly amounts to a body for exerting pressure on governments and administrators, organized by the same union and student bureaucracies subordinated to the bourgeois state, with the MRT and the various pseudo-left leaderships sitting at the same table.

Here lies the greatest danger of Faísca’s politics: it uses a revolutionary vocabulary—“self-organization,” “rank-and-file-elected delegates,” “a real, living committee”—without the political content that would make these forms genuinely independent. Rank-and-file committees elected by workers and students are a real necessity. But there is a fundamental difference between rank-and-file committees built against and independently of the union bureaucracies, on the basis of an internationalist socialist perspective, and committees built without any break from the bureaucratic union structure and the reactionary political field of the pseudo-left.

The historical roots of the pseudo-left student leaderships

From the DCE leadership to its alleged opposition, the tendencies that dominated the USP student strike are products of one and the same historical process: the political rot of the organizations that have dominated for decades what is called the “left” and the Brazilian student movement itself. The various factions within this political field—the PT itself, Stalinism and the Pabloite renegades from Trotskyism—have promoted one and the same orientation toward nationalism and class collaboration. The ostensible return of Stalinism to the head of the student movement, after more than half a century of political ostracism, is the most recent product of this history—and explaining it requires tracing that history back to its origins.

Until the military dictatorship of 1964–85, the Stalinist Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) had been the principal political force in the student movement, controlling the National Union of Students (UNE). Preaching a stagist strategy of unity with the national bourgeoisie for the accomplishment of a first “bourgeois-democratic” stage of revolution in Brazil, the PCB disarmed Brazilian workers in the face of the CIA-backed military conspiracy.

The 1964 coup profoundly demoralized the Stalinist leadership, provoking splits and strengthening political tendencies that embraced guerrillaism inspired by Castroism and Maoism. The Maoist Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB)—which went on to control the leadership of UNE, a position it holds to this day—was the most prominent of these forces which, despite adopting radical methods, preserved Stalinism’s bourgeois-nationalist strategy. Guerrilla ventures, such as the Araguaia Guerrilla organized by the PCdoB, led a courageous generation of young revolutionaries into isolated armed confrontations that resulted in massacres and the intensification of state repression.

Responsibility for these political catastrophes is shared by the Pabloite forces gathered in the Unified Secretariat, who promoted Castroism and petty-bourgeois nationalism as the alternative to building the Fourth International and its program based on internationalism and the struggle for the political independence of the working class. These Pabloite tendencies—Mandelites, Morenoites, Lambertists—grew strongly within the

Brazilian student movement in the 1960s and 1970s, exploiting the revolutionary legacy of Trotsky and the Fourth International to promote, in practice, a policy of national-opportunist adaptation.

The Pabloites’ blocking of the construction of a genuinely Trotskyist leadership in Brazil was instrumental in preventing the crisis of the military regime from reaching a revolutionary conclusion. Amid a wave of political radicalization in the late 1970s, *Liberdade e Luta* (Libelu)—the student tendency of the Internationalist Socialist Organization (OSI), affiliated with the international current of the French revisionist Pierre Lambert—gained enormous influence in the universities, especially at USP, having spearheaded the call for the first marches under the slogan “Down With the Dictatorship.” Alongside the Morenoites of *Convergência Socialista*, Libelu/OSI used the forces gathered within the student movement to divert the semi-insurrectionary strike wave of the working class in the ABC region of greater São Paulo in 1978–80 into the founding of the PT and into the transition to a civilian bourgeois regime.

In the following decades, as the bourgeois regime stabilized, the PT and its satellites such as the PCdoB maintained their dominance over the Brazilian union and student movements. Lula’s rise to the presidency of Brazil in 2003, when these political parties took on the direct administration of Brazilian capitalism, marked the exhaustion of the previous cycle. Forces such as PSOL, created in 2004 as a split from the PT, and the PSTU rose to prominence in the USP student council and other student sectors as a “left opposition” to the government. The entire pseudo-left political milieu was severely shaken by the crisis that gripped the Brazilian bourgeois regime, whose turning point was the impeachment of PT president Dilma Rousseff in 2016. While the PSTU provided a left cover for the overthrow of the PT government with the slogan “Everyone Out,” PSOL went the opposite route, integrating itself almost entirely into the PT. The crisis of these organizations opened the way for the PT and the PCdoB to retake the USP student council in 2017, on the eve of the electoral victory of fascist president Jair Bolsonaro.

The PT’s return to government with the election of Lula’s “broad front” in 2022, far from signaling new life for bourgeois democracy in Brazil, deepened the crisis that had preceded it. The crisis of the capitalist system and the global imperialist war intensified radically, reflected internally in the sharpening of social contradictions and the lurch of the bourgeois political system toward fascism. The maturing of objectively revolutionary conditions in Brazilian and world society stands in direct contradiction with the bankrupt national-reformist perspectives of the PT and the pseudo-left.

The political radicalization beginning to take shape among broad layers of the population, particularly among youth, was reflected in a distorted fashion within the student movement in the growth of forces that falsely present themselves as a “renewal” and that make more explicit reference to “communism,” that is, to changing the established social system. In 2022, Correnteza, the youth wing of Popular Unity (UP), was elected to the USP student council.

UP, registered as a party in 2019, is a new political-electoral front for the Revolutionary Communist Party (PCR), founded in 1966 in Recife as a split from the PCdoB. Aligned with the anti-revisionist current associated with Enver Hoxha, who defended Stalinism’s monstrous crimes against the world revolution in opposition to the post-Khrushchev-speech “revisionism,” the PCR explicitly claims Stalin as its own. Its official website lists him among its theoretical references, describing him as one who “built socialism in post-tsarist Russia”—which means vindicating the extermination of the Left Opposition, the Moscow Trials and the assassination of Trotsky.

UP, its more public and politically palatable face, takes its name from Salvador Allende’s Popular Unity—the popular-front coalition between Stalinism and social democracy in Chile that subordinated the revolutionary masses to the bourgeois state and prepared the conditions

for Pinochet's fascist coup in 1973. The PCR's rotten political trajectory includes mergers and political alliances with a series of reactionary bourgeois parties, including its entry into the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB) in 1995, and, more recently, coalitions with the PT, the PSB and the PDT, and support for Lula's "broad front" in the second round of 2022.

Correnteza rose to prominence at USP by concentrating its activity on immediate, day-to-day university issues—the state of the student cafeterias, student housing, subsistence support—drawing in students without prior ties to the PT, PSOL or the PSTU. Its reactionary political perspective was defined with unwitting precision by Dany de Oliveira, Correnteza's leading figure at USP and a candidate for federal deputy on the Popular Unity ticket: "We need to build socialism. But for now, what's the way out we can build? We need more funding for the universities."

The arrival of an openly Stalinist organization, in alliance with Morenoism, at the head of the USP student council is not a sign of the political vitality of Stalinism and its nationalist program. It is the product of the decay and political demoralization of the Pabloite and Morenoite forces that drove forward the PT and, later, the PSTU and PSOL, both of which have exposed their bankruptcy through successive experiences of the working class and youth. It is precisely this general bankruptcy that places before students the necessity of an alternative founded on other principles.

Build the IYSSE in Brazil!

This balance sheet takes on its full gravity within the political framework in which the strike unfolded. The student movement collided directly with the fascistic drift of the Brazilian political regime—police repression, criminalization, punitive legislation from Tarcísio and the far-right parliamentary bloc—which traces back to Jair Bolsonaro's attempted coup and the unresolved crisis it expressed.

Less than three months from the October presidential election, the first since the 2022-23 attempted coup, Brazil finds itself under direct intervention by American imperialism, with the Trump administration escalating tariffs and threats of extraterritorial action openly aimed at installing Flávio Bolsonaro. This picture is a verdict on the strategy of the "broad front" applied by the PT and the pseudo-left over the past four years: it has not buried fascism; by carrying out the capitalist austerity program against the working class, it has merely opened the way for the forces tied to Bolsonaro to carry their conspiracy forward. The leaderships that confined students to pressuring this same state thereby disarmed them twice over: before the university administration, and before the fascist reaction advancing through it.

What confronts students is not a tactical correction to the student movement, but a program founded on entirely different principles. That program is championed by International Students and Youth for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth organization of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

The starting point of the IYSSE is internationalism. The working class is a world class, and the crisis that produced the strikes at the São Paulo universities—the subordination of education to the demands of the market, the dismantling of public services, militarization—is the same crisis that brought students in Latin America and throughout the world into the streets this same year. There is no national solution to a world crisis. Every perspective that subordinates Brazilian students and workers to the defense of "national development," of "sovereignty," or of a supposedly progressive faction of the bourgeoisie leads to defeat, and the twentieth-century history of Latin America records not a single exception.

Capitalism is not reformable, and the institutions of the bourgeois state—university administrations, university councils, legislative assemblies—cannot be turned into instruments of the oppressed through pressure or internal constituent processes. The IYSSE fights for the socialist reorganization of society: the transfer of productive and financial resources to the democratic control of the working class, under planning oriented to social needs. It is from this program, and not from calculations about what the administration might be willing to concede, that the demand for free, universally accessible public higher education follows.

The IYSSE orients students and youth to the working class, the sole revolutionary force in society, and fights for the political independence of that class from every party and faction of the bourgeoisie. The working class is not a force to be invoked for acts of solidarity: it is the social force whose position in production gives it the power to reorganize society on a rational socialist basis. The unity of the working class is the necessary condition for any serious confrontation with capitalism. For this reason, the IYSSE rejects the reactionary identity politics of the pseudo-left, which fragments the working class along lines of race and gender, serving the interests of the affluent middle class that disputes over positions within the existing order.

This political independence is exercised, in practice, against the union and student bureaucracies. There is no path to unifying the struggles through the CUT, through CSP-Conlutas, through pseudo-left-controlled student councils, or through assemblies organized by these same apparatuses. The IYSSE backs the development of a mass movement of the working class by supporting workers to build rank-and-file committees, genuinely independent of these bureaucratic structures, linked internationally to the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

It is within this framework that the role of students is defined. They comprise a social layer that is not embedded in capitalist production, and their heterogeneous social composition means they cannot transform society on their own. But they possess a capacity for political expression that the working class, subjected to daily exploitation, generally lacks, and they can play a critical political role—to the extent that they orient themselves toward the working class, rather than toward a "student self-organization" turned into an end in itself. The strike demonstrated this capacity; what was missing was the conscious orientation, which the leaderships blocked systematically.

The explosive crisis of world imperialist capitalism and of the subordinated bourgeois order in Brazil is necessarily bringing about giant class battles in the coming period. The strikes at the São Paulo universities politically awakened a generation of students. Building the IYSSE on the campuses means preparing that generation for the revolutionary needs of the epoch. The alternative before students is the same one confronting all of society: the barbarism of fascism and imperialist war, or the socialist reorganization of the world by the working class. Assimilating the lessons of this experience and building the IYSSE is the concrete form this choice takes today at Brazil's universities.



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