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Brazilian media, Workers Party and pseudo-lefts attempt to derail opposition to Bolsonaro

The Brazilian media and the official opposition led by the Workers Party (PT) has correctly perceived in the outpouring of working-class youth on May 15 not only a threat to Bolsonaro, but to the whole political establishment—including themselves. Acting accordingly, they have accelerated attempts to isolate the youth from broader layers of the working class that had marked the build-up for the demonstrations, in which the original slogans against the hated “pension reform” were buried under toothless calls for a “national consensus” in defense of education designed to placate Bolsonaro’s right-wing bourgeois opposition.

With Bolsonaro’s popularity falling lower than his disapproval rating for the first time this week—he has the lowest approval rating for any democratically elected president in Brazilian history with five months in office—the strategy devised by the ruling class is twofold.

While the corporate press rages against Bolsonaro for “politicizing” the education cuts, giving “pretexts” for the defiant mood of the demonstrations, the PT is attempting to isolate the youth and subordinate it to the “rational” opposition to Bolsonaro embodied in an alliance with the right-wing Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), which dominated the Brazilian political system with the PT for the last 30 years.

Brazil’s most read newspaper, *Folha de São Paulo*, an unabashed defender of the education cuts and of imposing tuition in public universities—which are free in Brazil—and which recently hired the PT’s 2016 presidential candidate, Fernando Haddad, as a

columnist, summed up the attitude in the ruling class in an aggressive editorial following the demonstrations titled “Useless Idiocy.”

Recognizing the anti-capitalist mood underlying the demonstrations in defense of the social right to education, it said: “The Bolsonaro government’s aggressive obscurantism converted the crucial debate over the financing of the public higher education system, already belated, into an ideological confrontation.”

The editorial rants: “There must be no doubt about the deficiencies of national learning, or of the opportunism of oppositional forces that seized the moment to attack the pension reform.”

From the start, these operations were compounded by the actions of the PT, through the National Education Workers Confederation (CNTE), which faced with the reality that in the whole country students were planning to flock to the teachers’ demonstrations precisely to show them their support in the struggle against the pension reform, buried the slogans against the reform and called a “national strike day against the cuts,” also excluding the fight against the reform from its later reports on the demonstration.

In São Paulo’s demonstration, speaking to thousands of teachers who had struck for 33 days in February and March against cuts to their pensions promoted by the city’s mayor—and were betrayed by their union at the hands of a bureaucracy filled with Bolsonaro supporters—Haddad was silent about the reform, and set the tone of unity with the right wing, calling Bolsonaro not a fascist, but a “lunatic.”

With a general strike set to take place on June 14, the National Student Union (UNE), controlled by PT’s staunchest ally in national politics, the Maoist Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), called a separate demonstration for May 30, with exclusive focus on the education cuts.

Meanwhile, the PT chose the aftermath of the demonstrations to make public that its representatives, including Haddad, have been holding meetings since November with representatives of the Brazilian right, including the PSDB and other parties the PT for years branded as coup-mongers for voting for the 2016 impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, to “isolate Bolsonaro and create a new resistance political spectrum.”

This bourgeois alliance is reportedly launching a manifesto in August under the name of “Rights, Now!” which is admittedly designed to attract “the center-right,” the participants declared to the press. The host of the meetings, law professor Pedro Serrano, declared the

participants will “cast differences aside and build a common program, around legality, human rights, fighting unemployment and *promoting identity issues* (emphasis added).”

With the PT conscious that it, as much as Bolsonaro, is a target of the growing social opposition, these policies are a full-fledged, conscious operation to cover up the essential agreement of every party on an agenda of austerity and an increase of state powers, as attested to by countless corporate press editorials. In its own raging editorial after the demonstrations, the powerful *O Globo* counseled the government to temper its “self-destructive behavior, very effective in creating more problems than the opposition itself.”

Such words make clear that, despite the mealy-mouthed charges by the corporate press that the PT is stirring up the demonstrations, the ruling classes understand that they represented a popular opposition that is beyond the control of and hostile to the self-declared political opposition.

But this whole conspiracy would not be possible without the bad-faith policies of the pseudo-lefts, with their particular influence in the universities. They are fully aware that the obsessive portrayal of Bolsonaro and his pack of fascist ministers as “lunatics” and political aberrations, as counterposed to his “rational” vice-president, the coup-mongering general, Hamilton Mourão, serves only to cover up the true consensus within the Brazilian bourgeoisie over every essential issue. From privatizations to the pension reform and the assault on living standards and social rights of workers, all bourgeois political factions are agreed.

From the height of their contempt for workers—whose slandering has been made a profession by the pseudo-lefts—the maneuvering is openly discussed in their press. The starkest example is a remarkable article from April 11 on *Esquerda Online*, the mouthpiece of the Morenoite Resistência current functioning inside the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), Brazil’s largest pseudo-left formation with 10 representatives in the Brazilian House.

Headlined “The nomination of Abraham Weintraub shows the weakness of the liberal opposition to Bolsonaro,” it admits that for four months, before newly installed education minister Weintraub’s predecessor Ricardo Vélez was fired due to the popular outcry over his far-right positions, the party was engaged in channeling social opposition behind the right-wing opposition to the government which complained, as now, that Vélez was “incompetent.” And it goes on to assert that the PSOL’s tactics would need to change, because the same “incompetence” would could not be expected of Weintraub. The author

writes: “[T]he wide field of oppositionists to Bolsonaro have now reached a deadlock. Contrary to the chaos of Véllez’s administration, Weintraub will likely offer the Ministry a minimum order and make it work,” concluding that the opposition “will likely have nothing to complain about the new minister.”

At no point does the author attempt to recount the PSOL’s position on the matter. The description of “the wide field of oppositionists” is enough as the PSOL worked as the most vocal defender of the treacherous concentration on the “lunacy” and “incompetency” of Véllez common to this “wide field.”

Now, with Weintraub coming under heavy criticism from the bourgeois media for “politicizing” the education cuts, the PSOL is ready to play the same role again. In his assessment of the May 15 demonstration, party ideologue Valério Arcary made that clear it had posed “‘Out with Weintraub’ as the slogan for action”—a sentiment with which any number of editorialists in the corporate media would agree.

As Brazilian workers and youth enter into struggle against Bolsonaro and the capitalist system that has produced him, these maneuvers must be relentlessly denounced. Nothing more horrifies the ruling class—and its petty-bourgeois apologists in the pseudo-left—than the independent action of workers. The pseudo-lefts—including the Morenoite United Socialist Workers Party (PSTU) and the union-entrenched Lambertites of the Workers Cause Party—correctly seeing themselves as just as much of a target of such a movement as the ruling class are all joining the PT’s operation or providing left cover for it, and will do everything in their power to disorient and divert the growing offensive of workers and youth.

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