

# Genocidal Bolsonaro, the Brazilian crisis and the VII Congress of the PSOL

Following Trump's defeat, Bolsonaro has turned Brazil into a key player for the global authoritarian right. The latter has been weakened by the defeat of its main leader and by elections in several European countries, but it remains a present and future threat amid the crisis of global domination.

For this reason, many eyes of the world and, in particular, of broad democratic sectors are now focused on Brazil. The anti-Bolsonaro mobilizations continue, and on October 2 they resumed in force, as did the possibilities of his electoral defeat in the face of the possibility that Lula – now free of the judicial charges – could return to government.

It goes without saying that Bolsonaro's defeat, which is the task posed, can be achieved in the streets with mobilization, if that opens up conditions for an impeachment, or with a vote for a future Lula government. Lula is leading in the polls in all scenarios and would win for now by a wide margin over Bolsonaro.

There is logically this expectation and sympathy in broad democratic and left sectors for Lula's return to power. Alongside these expectations, the vanguard further to the left, those that have emerged in the last processes of struggle and the anti-capitalist fronts, also have their gaze placed on the PSOL. These are looks that are linked, although more specific in the case of the PSOL, since it is rightly considered a more left-wing alternative that, although a minority in relation to the PT, has an impact on national politics in the struggle against Bolsonaro.

The fact that the two parties are from the opposition makes many sectors confuse the role that one and the other has been playing and should play in the future in national politics. We say this because this unity of immediate objective does not erase the qualitative differences that exist in these two parties marked in the decade and a half that has passed since the foundation of the PSOL, when Luciana Genero, Baba and Heloisa Helena were expelled from the PT for not voting in favor of the reform in the pensions of public employees. (The size of the PSOL can be measured in its number of affiliates, which would be like sympathizers, which reaches 200,000) It is the party that has grown the most, with a bloc of 9 deputies and about 20,000 active members.

The expulsion of the radicals was a measure consistent with the policy followed by the PT throughout its 15 years in government. Months before the elections that led to his victory in 2002, Lula published a "letter to the Brazilian people," which in reality was a letter to the bankers in which he promised to fulfill all IMF agreements and demands. And he did. It was a government that from the beginning incorporated high representatives of the bourgeoisie in its ministerial composition. A major soybean producer (Roberto Rodrigues) was agriculture minister, a former president of Bank Boston (Meirelles) managed the Central Bank, a representative of industry (Furlan) was the secretary of industries, and the Minas Gerais industrialist José de Alencar was its vice president. It was a period in which banks (finance capital) accumulated huge profits, and large construction companies were transformed into Brazilian multinationals that extended their arms to Latin America and Africa. Just one name says it all: Odebrecht, the construction company that dominated the construction of large projects in Latin America and some African countries, known for its corrupt practices to win tenders.

Politically it allied itself with two old bourgeois parties

that since the fall of the dictatorship have always been in power in all governments: the MDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement) of Dilma's vice president, Michael Temer, known for leading the parliamentary coup against her, and the PP (Progressive Party) with whom it shared positions and designed perks. Beyond the manipulation that occurred to remove Lula's rights with the Lava Jato orchestrated by Judge Sergio Moro, corruption existed and on a grand scale, to the point that some governors who are permanent allies of Lula are on trial or in jail.

The headwind that was experienced in the exporting countries due to the increase in the price of raw materials, which lasted until 2011-2012, allowed the PT governments to make concessions to the poorest sectors, creating an emergency aid program called "Bolsa Família", which granted about \$50 to needy families. It also opened access to university for new generations of young people. These were palliative measures that, when the crisis began in the region, came to an end and forced Dilma Rousseff's government to begin a policy of economic adjustment. With this, the government began to lose prestige in sectors of the mass movement.

The inability to take fundamental structural measures began to create disillusionment, skepticism, and rejection of the methods of a political caste accommodated to the advantages of power. These were the objective bases explaining the turn in the mass movement and the fertile ground for the search for a savior who presented himself as anti-system. That is where Bolsonaro emerged. You cannot explain it if not also in the disillusionment with the degeneration of the PT and its consequent bourgeois government. In Brazil, what has also happened in many countries of the world has happened in a more or less profound way. The extreme right is in power in the face of the failure of the progressive governments in which the workers and the people had placed their expectations.

**A pro-fascist government in a country in crisis**

The qualities of Bolsonaro's profascism are well known and there is no need to repeat them in this text. Every day a new fact surprises the eyes of Brazilians and the world. His intentions, since he took power, are to impose a dictatorial authoritarian regime. As some of his most recalcitrant supporters say, "a military government presided over by Bolsonaro," for whom the army is "his" army. Although Bolsonaro has made progress on some agendas, such as loosening the requirements for gun purchase by exercise, he could not take the quality step towards a dictatorial regime change.

The government is reactionary and wants to make this regime change by dissolving the other two powers (Judiciary and Parliament), it is a coup and is attempting a dictatorship, but it has not succeeded and does not seem to have the political conditions today to do so. After his coup d'état in two major events on September 7 (Brasília and São Paulo) where he harshly attacked the STF (Supreme Court), the next day he had to back down. It turns out that parliament and the judiciary maintain a life of their own. In parliament, in order to avoid impeachment, he depends on the votes of the so-called "centrão" (the right-wing political parties, especially the PP (Progressive Party), which was once a fundamental part of the PT governments. These deputies support him not only because they are right-wing, but also and especially because they receive economic benefits and millions for projects in their cities, and do not look favorably on a dictatorship that would end their own privileges. They would be if there were a revolutionary situation in the country, but we are far from that.

The government is weakened in the eyes of the people. According to the polls, it retains 25% of the population. This downward trend is consolidating as the government is solving nothing and prices are rising while wages remain stagnant. The economic crisis can be felt and the social crisis is deep and there are no signs of improvement in the year leading up to

the elections. But this widespread passive rejection has not yet been transformed into a more forceful irruption of the mass movement. The acts of unity of the left parties and the unions are important, but there is no mass eruption as happened in Chile. The people seem to be waiting to be able to defeat him in the electoral arena and the bourgeoisie, although it has very discontented sectors, is not prepared to play the impeachment card.

Neither is Lula, who prefers to wear down the government in the belief that elections will bring him back to power. However, unpredictability is one of Bolsonaro's trademarks that pervades the situation. A new pro-dictatorship bravado could lead to "Bolsonaro Out" being put directly into action. As Roberto Robaina says in his notes after the October 2 rally, "The 2nd, despite the victory represented by the cry of Bolsonaro Out taking the streets again after weeks of no unified national action, opened a stalemate. It could have the significance of being the last true mass mobilization to put Bolsonaro off the streets by force and have been the first electoral mobilization. Or it could be a resumption, a new attempt demanded by the streets for Bolsonaro Out." That is the uncertainty we are talking about; with an increasing likelihood that we are facing the first option, since there are no signs of an irruption of the mass movement. An objective stalemate, with pressure toward an electoral exit because the masses won't break through, and Lula is betting on that exit. Although we can also add that it is not only that Lula is "waiting for the elections," but also that the CUT, its unions, and the structures of the PT have lost the connection they had decades ago with the mass movement.

This is the political structure in which the PSOL held its seventh congress.

### **Unity of action and defense of an anti-capitalist program**

In this political context where this unstable situation is

being experienced, the policy advocated by the MES has been to take the lead in unity of action to bring down Bolsonaro. It was the MES deputies who in 2019 were at the forefront of the first impeachment that had the support of important intellectuals and a million signatures, which unfortunately was not supported by the rest of the PSOL and PT. A while later, a more collective request from the left for impeachment was achieved; a lot of time lost to appear as an alternative for that sector of the PSOL that is in the majority in the leadership. It is worth noticing that it was thanks to this action of the MES that the PSOL appeared at that time as a vanguard and not later as a simple wagon of the opposition parties that are part of the regime.

The MES maintains that along with the broadest possible unity of action under the slogan "Bolsonaro Out", it is necessary to have an anti-capitalist program in propaganda agitation; in other words, one cannot for a moment abandon the socialist strategy. It is not a matter of acting in mass agitation with the whole program, but with transitional consignments felt by the mass movement in the face of the current crisis. Establish a system of demands that respond to the needs that can only be solved by attacking the capitalist system in some sector. For example, it is about asking for a price freeze, but we cannot limit ourselves to that. We have to find slogans that show that the crisis has to be paid by the rich, that the big fortunes have to be taxed, that speculative financial capital has to end, that banks have to be national and user-controlled in order to dedicate resources to the construction of popular housing. To take over the power of the banks so that they stop making huge profits and the money goes to the construction of affordable housing, to conduct an audit of the public debt, suspending its payment.

Whoever cannot participate in a rally with reformists and bourgeois without supporting slogans that show our character as a class party ends up being diluted. And since the anti-

capitalists (in this case the PSOL) are a party logically smaller in political and social dimension in relation to the PT, the current course of the majority leadership means that the PSOL ends up being known or recognized only as a minor brother or partner of the PT. This leads to the total mischaracterization of the party, as it is one step away from leading to the thought that better the big original than the small copy. Consistent with this policy, the MES together with the left bloc, took to the Congress the defense of the independent PSOL with its own candidacy in the first round in order to defend this policy.

### **The Congress showed a party alive with two political blocs**

The congress was held on September 25 and 26. From that date until today, the balances of the different tendencies have emerged. This text is based on the text written on the same Sunday by Roberto Robaina, leader of the MES, entitled "PSOL: A necessary party under construction". In this case, it has become more explanatory both for the Brazilian vanguard and militancy and for the entire anti-capitalist left, interested in knowing the results of the Congress and the directions that are developing.

The Congress was held in a remote (online) format, with 402 delegates from all over the country, representing almost 51 thousand affiliates who went to the polls to vote in the municipal stages of the process. The previous congress, held when the country was not yet under Bolsonaro's government, brought together 27,000 affiliates at the grassroots in plenary sessions to debate the different positions under discussion. This congress had only virtual plenary sessions in which attendance was low, 5,000 affiliates. This in itself shows the error of holding the congress under these conditions and the justness of its postponement, as demanded by the Left Bloc and other tendencies. Contradictorily, despite this very low turnout for the debates, 51,000 members turned out to vote in the physical polls at designated facilities around the

country.

This number shows that the party is growing and that its congress could have been much more representative and democratic if it had been held when sanitary conditions allowed for face-to-face plenary sessions and not simple voting at the ballot box; a passive voting that resembles the bourgeois parties and the PT. But this rush to do it in these precarious conditions was a consequence of the politics of the majority leadership that wanted at all costs, as we will see later, to change the correlation of forces and establish a new two-thirds (70%) majority in the party leadership.

A balance sheet has to be rigorous with the facts, regardless of the different positions. This was not the case with the balance presented by the majority of the leadership. If we take the official website of the PSOL ([www.psol50.com.br](http://www.psol50.com.br)) we will only see several of the resolutions voted in majority, when it would be the duty of the leadership (following the practice of socialist democracy and Marxism) to inform the majority and minority votes. We have to find out the results of the votes from the reports of the tendencies, some of which, as we will see, are loaded with lack of objectivity or half-truths, the result of a balance sheet that justifies their positions.

**Two opposing positions. The majority is already with Lula in the first round, but the opposition still has a lot of life ahead of it**

First of all, the congress reflected a living party that is at the crossroads of an intense controversy that has not yet been fully resolved. There were two confrontational blocs at the congress. A majority bloc that obtained 56% of the votes in the most important vote (to support Lula in the first round) against 44% of the anti-capitalist bloc that defended that the PSOL in the first round had to present itself with its "own face" and for this it defended the pre-candidacy of federal



deputy Glauber Braga to defend an anti-capitalist program before the masses.

It is worth saying that those who defended the policy of supporting Lula with a left front did not put programmatic points to condition this support. Their resolution says: "...we want a left government, committed to social rights, the environment, national sovereignty...". And it speaks of "an arc of alliances and synthesis", general statements like "social justice" which are phrases that would be accepted by any bourgeois center party like the PSDB (Partido Social Democrata Brasileiro), faithful representative of the São Paulo bourgeoisie, the strongest in the country. About the public debt, salaries, financial capital, taxation of big fortunes, not a word. There were sectors that before the Congress conditioned the formation of a front led by Lula on the raising of an anti-capitalist program, as the comrades of the Resistencia wrote on several occasions.

The majority made the Congress a test of realpolitik. They knew that it is impossible and a mistake to present the issues in this way. Because it is well known that Lula in no way advocates a program of minimal ruptures. He went so far as to make statements saying that "taxing large fortunes is wrong because they would go to tax havens", as if a third of them were not already there according to Credit Suisse.

It is right to take the single front policy systematically whenever and wherever there are possibilities; some disposition or "attitude to the single front" as Trotsky put it in his writings about Germany. Without this it is to create illusions in the mass movement, to give confusing signals that end up strengthening the opportunists. It is like asking for oranges from the banana tree.

It is well known that Lula does not want a left front. He wants a very broad front that includes sectors of the right. He has already taken steps in this direction in the Northeast

where he has made pacts with caudillos from the MDB and PP, the latter being the fundamental base of Bolsonaro's support. He is in search of a bourgeois vice-president and in this sense he has given signals to Luiza Trajano, owner of one of the largest home appliance and internet sales chains in the country.

The Left Bloc's position made it explicit that in the second round it will support the candidate who faces Bolsonaro and if, as everything indicates, it is Lula, it will bet with all its militancy on his victory. And we added in our arguments that if there was a danger of the genocidal Bolsonaro winning in the first round, we would support Lula's candidacy with our views.

The position of the bloc has been consistent with the defense of a PSOL with its own face, which in this way can support the anti-capitalist consignments and program that derives from the confrontation of the crisis. In addition, and although for us it does not have the same level of importance, the PSOL needs to support its candidates for national and state deputies with its independent presence. It has to overcome a barrier clause that determines that, in order to have access to the party fund, a party must pass 2% of the national vote and must do so in at least eleven states in which it has to have a minimum of 1.5%. Diluted in the first round on a front, this task seems to be more difficult, since there is no national candidacy to call a vote.

Although the resolution defers the candidacy vote to an electoral convention to be held in April 2022, "A national conference with the members of the National Direction in order to make conclusive decisions..." this paragraph is contradictory to the whole resolution, it leaves a small window open so that, as we will see later, the two-current bloc that formed the majority at the congress remains cohesive. The reality is that this policy of supporting Lula in the first round is already underway. Although there are sectors that take over

the conference to say that there is an ongoing discussion, the resolution ends up being a definition. Lula is already a candidate, that is the unobjectionable objective reality, and the PSOL supports him, as the president of the PSOL said in his full-page statements in the two most important newspapers (Folha de São Paulo and O Globo). In them he declared in no uncertain terms that the PSOL had voted for Lula's candidacy in the first round. (<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2021/09/psol-reforca-tendencia-de-apoiar-lula-e-diz-esperar-generosidade-de-partidos-por-boulos-em-sp.shtml>)

Participate in a Lula government? The door is already open

If voting for Marxists is an important tactical problem, but finally possible because it does not harm principles, participation in a class conciliation government is not the same thing. Here we are faced with a problem of principle; the break with class independence. Confusing the tactic of voting for a lesser evil with that of joining a government with the bourgeoisie is a leap of faith. Running a government with bourgeois sectors is what led to the degeneration of Marxism since the same thing happened with French social democracy, later extended to all social democratic parties. Something similar happened with the degeneration of the III with Stalin: it was the policy of governments with the bourgeoisie in much of the countries of Europe called the Popular Front.

And at the congress, just as the firm intention to vote for Lula was made explicit, the door was left open to join his government. In fact, the majority bloc that had already voted for Lula refused to vote for a resolution not to participate in a future Lula government, which will undoubtedly have the participation of the bourgeoisie, just as it did in the previous government.

The 56% that defended and approved support for Lula in the first round presented a generic motion saying: "Reaffirm the

position of not participating and not orienting participation in governments of rightwing parties or that promote attacks on workers and reproduce the liberal/conservative agenda and/or authoritarian aspects. A minority, in this case 43% (one delegate stopped voting with the minority), makes things clear. "Do not participate in a Lula government." The resolution passed by the bloc is an abstract generality, which allows participation in a Lula government to be concretized. It can be said that the Lula government will not be right-wing, and this will be the case. It is clear that Lula will not be openly a right-wing government, he will be a government that uses that terminology inherited from the French revolution of the center, but from a social point of view he will be a government with the bourgeoisie and for the bourgeoisie, be it extreme right-wing or not. We have already said that Lula and his first government was "social liberal" and there is nothing to say that there has been a mutation in this character. The conclusion is obvious. The door is ajar to participate as is the desire of the majority of the bloc that had the majority in Congress.

### **A majority of a two-tendencies bloc**

But why did the majority vote for this abstract generality? It was a definition that allowed the entire bloc to remain united in all votes. In fact, the majority bloc is composed of two different groupings. On one side is the Popular PSOL bloc, where the tendencies Primavera Socialista, of Ivan Valente and the reelected president Juliano Medeiros, and Revolução Solidária, of Guillermo Boulos, leader of the MTST (Homeless Workers Movement), are.

Primavera is a current that, although it has its origins in Marxism, has advocated a "popular democratic" program, not an anti-capitalist one. Until the "mensalão of 2007", (a monthly payment scheme that the PT government gave to center and right of center deputies in order to have their votes in the House of Representatives) the Força Socialista (as the current

Primavera tendency called itself), was part of the PT government with high positions in the Ministry of Education. Now they run the office of the mayor of Belem, where they have not built any policy different from that of the governor, who is from Michael Temer's MDB party.

For its part, the Revolução Solidária has a program of popular community solidarity action; "solidarity or death, solidarity must profoundly reorient society..." For a social movement that calls for mobilization like the MTST as for the homeless or Piqueteros this may be enough, but for a political tendency within the PSOL this is more lackluster than the PT's own program in its origins. (In the sum total Primavera had 26% of the delegates and Boulos approximately 18%.)

The other groupings that are part of the majority bloc are in the PSOL Semente camp, composed of two tendencies that are part of the Fourth International (Insurgencia and Subverta) and the Resistencia, which is a split from the PSTU and is the organization with the most delegates of the three, which together have about 15% (the rest of the votes are much smaller groupings). In other words, the PSOL Semente is the scale tipper in all the votes, but in no vote did they act independently in the Congress, nor do they act independently in the Executive Committee.

Our bloc "For an independent PSOL" has as its most numerous force the MES, (Socialist Left Movement, an organization of the IV International, which had 21% of the delegates), Fortalecer o PSOL (8%), APS (Socialist Popular Action, 5%), Comuna (also a member of the IV International, also close to 5%) and other tendencies that together represented 44% in the political vote and 43% in the leadership.

### **A living party**

Important elements emerge from this description of the Congress. The first is that it is a living party, where there

is no consolidated, structured and homogeneous majority that easily dominates the party structures. The 44% meant that fellow MES member Mariana Riscali continues to hold the position of party treasurer, the second most important position in the PSOL leadership.

A second conclusion is that there is a force that does not maintain a socialist strategy, but rather the expansion of democratic spaces and participation in institutionality (Primavera and Revolução Solidaria) that has less than half of the party.

And on the other hand, the analysis shows that the organizations that call themselves Trotskyist are divided. The four organizations of the Fourth International in Brazil, very important within the world organization, have acted with distinct positions in the face of the crucial problem of the government. Subverta and Insurgencia together with the Resistencia, and continue to claim revolutionary Marxism. We sincerely believe that this policy of the PSOL Semente has been a compromise with the sector that has already decided to integrate the future government (Primavera e Revolução Solidaria), to overcome internal tensions, to stay within the majority bloc, and to continue in the inertia of continuing to be part of the steering apparatus that runs the PSOL.

We say that we are facing a living party because we believe that the last word has not been said on the crucial problem of integration in a future government. And because we have the great, almost certain, expectation that the PSOL Semente camp will not yield to pressure to govern. That what happened with Democracia Socialista, the organization of the Fourth International in Brazil, which in 2003 took ministerial positions in the first Lula government, will not be repeated. At that time, there were programmatic reservations so that a sector rejected this policy together with the leaderships of the IV and joined the construction of the PSOL. We hope that the banner of political independence will be preserved, and

that therefore new processes and new times can be lived by the PSOL to affirm itself in its essence and to sustain itself as an anti-capitalist party that is also a reference for the construction of independent alternatives and to develop those that exist.

From the last paragraphs, it seems that this is a text dedicated only to members of the Fourth International. This is not our intention. The vanguard has to know the role that these organizations have played and continue to play in Brazil, but the PSOL is not reduced to them; it is a broad anti-capitalist movement and we bet that it will be so. So we need it and so it is necessary to build in all the countries we can.