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Brazil

PSOL, a necessary party under construction

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The Seventh National Congress of the PSOL has just ended. The PSOL has reflected the efforts of an important part - we can even say a majority of the activists who have emerged over the last 15 years - to build a political party. A party that has reflected the powers and limits of this vanguard and of the class struggle in the country. In any case, it has grown year by year.

At this congress there were almost 50,000 participants. Its result is contradictory. On the one hand, the party is growing. On the other hand, it is still far from being an instrument of intense politicization. Debates are weak, if they exist at all. About 5,000 people participated in the virtual debates. The party manages to be a parliamentary expression of progressive social demands and supports social movements, but it has not, as a rule, been an operator of workers' and popular struggles.

The Congress had a fundamental merit: the unity of the party in defending the mobilization for the overthrow of Bolsonaro. The unity of action with all those who want impeachment is a common point of the whole party. This is expressed in the willingness to turn all forces to the call for the national day of struggles on 2 October. This unity must be emphasized. It was also expressed in a unanimous position in the electoral field, that, in the case of a second round, the PSOL, in advance, makes it clear that it will support any candidacy that faces Bolsonaro, which concretely means stating support for Lula's candidacy.

But this is also where the main controversy of the Congress took place: 44 per cent of the delegates argued that the party should have its own candidacy to present in the first round. The name of Glauber Braga was proposed. This need was defended by the fact that Lula and the PT have already made it clear that they intend to make an alliance with sectors of the bourgeoisie to govern Brazil. The PSOL was founded to build an anti-capitalist and socialist project, not to participate in a government with the capitalists. Nevertheless, the pressures to adapt were clearly present in the Congress.

In general, the bourgeois political regime in crisis continues to look for leaders from other social classes and forged in opposition parties to defend its continuation. Its mechanisms of power open up more spaces and guarantee the visibility of new leaderships, as long as they agree to be integrated into a logic of defence of the political regime. The PSOL has experienced these pressures directly, as we saw in the case of Randolfe Rodrigues and Marcelo Freixo (the former left the party to join Marina Silva's party and Freixo left to join the Brazilian Socialist Party, a party in the style of European social democracy). From militants of the PSOL, whose central founding programmatic thesis defends the expropriation of the big capitalists and the revolutionary mobilization of the mass movement, they have become politicians whose programme is the defence of liberal democracy. This has occurred in the last 5 years, Freixo quite recently. However, the pressures of the political regime are exerted more strongly on the PSOL indirectly through the PT. And at this congress, once again, that pressure was evident.

This pressure was seen in the decision of a 56% majority not to launch its own candidacy. This sector proposed a conference in April to decide whether the party should launch its own candidate or support Lula in the first round. The predominant tendency in this part of the leadership has been to support Lula, even if the PT leader defends a bourgeois liberal programme and builds a ticket with direct representation of the big capitalists.

The main pressure from the political regime on the PSOL is that a section of the party leadership wants to be in this campaign from the first round precisely in order to negotiate, under better conditions, participation in an eventual new government. Our position has been to denounce this policy as opportunism. Forty-four percent of the delegates have

already perceived the opportunism behind this policy of waiting and then joining. In a party like the PSOL, a well-organized 44 per cent is a strong current. This strength will be organized in a national leadership for the defence of class independence and building a PSOL whose axis is defeating Bolsonaro, but which also stands with its own banners and independent organization. The organization of this 44 per cent in a bloc, whose firmness was seen in the Congress, may even mean that the position of support for Lula's campaign could be in the minority. After all, among the 56 per cent who opted for postponement, there are many sectors who do not accept the defence of and participation in a list that defends a bourgeois programme in the presidential elections, nor, logically, do they accept participating in a bourgeois government. For this reason, the PSOL Congress was inconclusive, and the class struggle will continue to influence strongly the course of the party.

Another fundamental point of unity in the PSOL was support for the campaign for the freedom of Claudemir and José Rainha. They are both leaders of the National Front of Struggles FNL, a landless movement which is the second most important force behind the MST. For our tendency, MES, Movimento de Esquerda Socialista, (supported by more than 20 per cent of the delegates and participating in the left opposition), this campaign is fundamental. We have a strategic alliance with the National Front of Struggle (FNL), which brings together historic social fighters who continue to organise the poor and landless sectors of our people. And the persecution of these leaders is not new today. Zé Rainha was persecuted by the Cardoso government in 1997, when the PT launched the campaign "Zé Rainha is innocent, the crime is not carrying out agrarian reform". Years later, unfortunately, the persecution continued under the Lula and Dilma governments. The so-called radical deputies, starting with Luciana Genro, led the campaign with the same slogan as the PT from its opposition period. Now, in Bolsonaro's government, the weight of the landowners has increased even more and Claudemir and Zé Rainha are threatened with imprisonment. These two leaders, historic fighters for the right to bread, land, housing and freedom, are leaders of the people and of the struggle for agrarian reform. That is why the decision of the Congress was so important. In defence of these causes, from October, in the wake of the demonstration on 2 October, we will have the march of the National Front of Struggle, which will leave Sorocaba for the capital of São Paulo.

The election of the party leadership reflected the Congress.

The list defended by Boulos and other militants received 228 votes. The list defended by Sâmia Bonfim and the comrades who formed the left opposition bloc received 173 votes. There was one abstention. The party treasurer was nominated by the list that came second, with precisely 43 per cent support. The steadfastness of the treasurer, Mariana Riscali, who has been in this job since the last Congress, is a guarantee that the PSOL apparatus is transparent, built in a unitary way, not bureaucratic, let alone unbalanced in the service of opportunistic politics.

President Juliano Medeiros was also re-elected. His re-election is also a recognition that the party leadership will remain a place of contradictions that do not allow for a stable leadership with a single line. Juliano is not a public leader, acting centrally behind the scenes and trying to organise not the whole party or the whole leadership, but his own tendency, Primavera, which won just over 25% of the Congress. Elected on a balance of power, it is also to his credit, as to the credit of all the main party leaders so far, that the party remains united, despite strong and strategic divergences.

Our optimism in this respect is also a vote of confidence in the PSOL itself. After all, it is currently one of the few parties in Brazil whose leadership is determined by its militants. So, however many limits and problems there may be in this construction, it is a party whose democratic nature is being maintained, come hell or high water.

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