

Brazilian Left: The Importance of MAIS for the PSOL

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On Friday, August 4, the group MAIS announced its entry into PSOL. For months now, this news was expected, but it is not without its fundamental importance. It was unanimously welcomed in the PSOL.

We can say that it allows a qualitative leap forward in the difficult process of reorganizing the Brazilian socialist left. This judgement may seem strange. After all, neither the PSOL nor MAIS are all that big. That is true, but it is the size of the Brazilian socialist left itself that is not very big, if we consider - as is reasonable - that this is made up of organizations that strive to advance the struggle for socialism in Brazil (which excludes the PT and its allies, who have put themselves in a different camp, that of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie and subordination to the existing order). So we are talking about a relative, qualitative change.

The PSOL has well over 100,000 members. However, most of these members are more formal than real. Reasonably optimistic estimates indicate that the PSOL Congress to be held in early December is likely to involve just under 30,000 members in its local plenaries. Going to such a plenary is a very limited sort of participation, and for many of these members it will be their only participation in any party activity since the last congress two years ago. What is more, most of these are the same members who are active "outside the party", in the social movements or even in the electoral campaigns. So the entry of many hundreds of MAIS militants into the PSOL will thus represent a significant growth in party membership.

Its importance, however, is not restricted to this quantitative aspect. It is worth mentioning an aspect that we can call symbolic. Throughout 2003 it was evident that the Lula government had accepted the impositions of the "market" and abandoned any perspective of significant social transformation, and that the majority of the PT would bow to this. That is why it was necessary to start discussing the need to build a new party. Members of both the PT and PSTU took part in this debate, as well as others who were members of neither. But only a small part of the PSTU membership took part in the founding of the PSOL. At the time, it was not possible to unify in the new party the sectors on the left of the PT that were willing to do this and the whole of the PSTU - mainly due to different conceptions of the party. The majority of the PSTU did not agree with building a party that had different organized currents within it. Thus, the entry now of the MAIS - an organization that represents a substantial part of the tradition that formed the PSTU - corrects, albeit in part, this original weakness in the formation of the PSOL.

Another decisive aspect is that the MAIS members, due to their political education and tradition, will represent a very important enrichment of the capacity for programmatic debate and formulation of the PSOL. Another is that most of the members of MAIS are implanted in unions and social movements and, in this respect, they can help the PSOL overcome some of its most important weaknesses. In its trajectory since 2004, the PSOL has been able to develop as a significant electoral point of reference in terms of the socialist left (unfortunately, still very much a minority one

everywhere except in the state of Rio de Janeiro). But it has achieved much less presence in the social movements (with the exception of youth movements), in part because of the fragmentation of positions within the party. To be a party rooted in social struggles and to contribute to organizing them, remains one of the main challenges of the PSOL. The members of the MAIS will help a lot to face this.

There are issues where, without a doubt, the MAIS militants have much to learn from other members of the PSOL or, more precisely, from some of them; perhaps the most decisive is the importance of incorporating an ecosocialist perspective into the revolutionary conception of socialism. On this point, the MAIS's formulations are still limited - but this is also true of the PSOL itself, albeit to a lesser extent.

What we have is a situation in which MAIS is entering a party that faces immense challenges, which it can play a major part in helping to confront. It is in this sense that their joining represents a qualitative leap.

No less important is the fact that the MAIS has said it is joining the PSOL to contribute to and build syntheses and convergences, to "act shoulder to shoulder with all in the PSOL so that, in each battle of the class struggle, we can elaborate together the best policy for the liberation of workers and blacks, women and men, LGBTs, youth, indigenous people, landless people, homeless people and quilombolas." This perspective, which is pluralist rather than self-proclamatory (within a framework of class independence from the bourgeoisie), is one of the keys to advance in the process of reorganising the socialist left. In the same way, it is very important that MAIS has been giving importance to the unity of the left beyond the PSOL, combining the struggle for the broadest possible united front in defence of the rights of workers and the people against the attacks of the neoliberal right, in other words, the unified resistance of the exploited and oppressed, with the search to build of a united political alternative of the socialist left, with parties such as the PCB and the PSTU, with organizations and parties that have no electoral registration, and with combative social movements.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the MAIS is joining the PSOL at a key moment in the history of the Brazilian people and our party. Of the Brazilian people, because we are suffering a harsh attack on historical rights that were won with much sacrifice; we are struggling to withstand a brutal backlash and to build an alternative, and more unity is paramount. Of the PSOL, because among the setbacks that threaten us is a supposed "political reform" that would make the existence of a party like the PSOL more difficult, for example with the imposition of a "threshold clause." Faced with this threat, the PSOL needs to strengthen itself - and strengthen itself, precisely, by reinforcing the project of a socialist party, that is, with the entry of new fighters like the members of the MAIS.

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P.S.

* <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5135>