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Brazil

Why we voted against the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff

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On Sunday (April 17), the six PSOL representatives – Ivan Valente, Chico Alencar, Jean Wyllys, Glauber Braga, Luiza Erundina and Edmilson Rodrigues – will vote against the opening up of an impeachment process against president Dilma Rousseff.

The PSOL is and always has been in opposition, from the left, to the PT governments, from Lula, through to the first term and finally President Dilma's second term. The PSOL largely emerged as a split from the PT itself, during the vote against social security reform that the government put forward in 2003. We launched candidates in opposition to the PT in the 2006, 2010 and 2014 elections and did not participate in the coalitions that elected the parliamentary base of this government...

On the majority of occasions, our six representatives have voted against the government because PSOL and its legislators in the House of Representatives consider this government to be politically indefensible. The application of harsh fiscal austerity on the backs of workers, thereby adopting the policies of the right, is unacceptable. The maintenance of this economic project and of a political base founded on alliances with the most traditional parties of them all, excludes any possibility of this government carrying out policies that genuinely favour workers and poor people.

As is already known, the PSOL does not have any positions in the federal government, it will not put forward ministers and has no interest in participating in the horse-trading of parliamentary amendments in exchange for votes against the impeachment. We condemn this practice, the cause of various corrupt practices that we struggle against on a daily basis.

Our vote will be determined by our conviction that, given the way in which the impeachment process has been pursued, it has become an attempt at an institutional coup, one that is not only unjust towards the government, but also to the population of the country. The process had malicious intentions for the outset and little or no legal consistency, and represents a political regression.

â€˜Fiscal pedalling'

Dilma is not being put on trial for corruption or for the errors of her government. She is being put on trial for having practised so-called "fiscal pedalling", that is, additional budgetary funds decrees that deferred payments to public and private banks. The reasoning of the lawyers that filed the suit is to allege that "the fiscal manoeuvres created an illusory environment that favoured the president in her re-election".

The first point is that "fiscal pedalling" cannot be characterised as a crime of responsibility, the first necessary condition for dismissing an elected president. The legal case is further weakened by the fact that the suit is only against Dilma, as if her vice-president, Michel Temer, would not have "benefited" along with the president.

PSOL legislators presented a separate vote arguing this case in the impeachment commission.

Handling of the process

The second point is who is handling the process itself. If there is a sector of Brazilian politics that has no legitimacy to depose a president, especially when no crime of responsibility has been committed, and over which direct charges of corruption weigh, it is a Congress directed by Eduardo Cunha and Renan Calheiros, both from the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB).

Cunha has converted the impeachment process into a campaign of revenge against those who did not want to defend him from the various corruption charges levelled against him. The president of the House of Representatives should, above all else, explain his accounts in Switzerland, the documents from the "Panama Papers" that revealed he is one of the owners of offshore companies used to launder money coming from corruption, and the complaints coming from the seven plea bargains, within the scope of Operation Lava Jato, that cites him as a direct beneficiary of the Petrobras scandal.

Before anything else, PSOL believes Cunha should resign (or be removed by the courts) from the command of the largest legislative house of the country. A process as serious for the country as an impeachment cannot be handled by a politician like this.

Convergence between coup plotters and media

In and of itself, an impeachment is not a coup. It is an instrument enshrined in our Constitution. But the convergence of various dirty agreements that being tied together for the post-impeachment period, together with the elements mentioned above (the lack of legal consistency, the absence of crime, and the vindictive handling of the process by Cunha), make this an attempt at an institutional coup.

The main operators of this process, aside from Cunha, are the tucano (Brazilian Social Democracy Party, PSDB) bigwigs, with Aécio Neves y José Serra leading the charge; Paulinho de la Fuerza (Solidarity - Sao Paulo, SD-SP) and a large group of politicians who hope to avoid the accusations of corruption that are piling up against them; and Michel Temer, the vice-president that hopes to become the great representative of so-called "national unity" in a supposed new and illegitimate government, which will bring with it more fiscal austerity, less workers' rights and, in particular, a grand agreement to silence the scandals. All those cited previously, are being pursued by the courts.

This strong convergence has as its principal ally the big Brazilian media corporations that, together with the financial sectors, abandoned the mask of impartiality to turn themselves into spokespeople of the campaign for impeachment.

The PSOL will not join this group and this process of convergence simply because we are in opposition. Our political party is based on ethics, on program and, always, on democracy.

Our solutions

PSOL is and will continue being a left opposition. Our differences with the present government are programmatic: we do not believe in this model of doing politics. We are against fiscal austerity and taking rights away from workers. We will vote against subcontracting, social welfare reform and various other projects that the government supports.

That is why we say: the way out of the crisis is to the left. As well as fighting against regressive policies, we present

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to Brazil a platform of change in economic policy, prioritising the growth of the productive sector instead of financial speculation, with a drastic reduction in interest rates and large social investment.

We also believe that a new cycle can only be initiated through deep reforms: with the democratisation of the media, so that a plurality of voices are not suppressed; political reform, so that people can once again participate in making decisions for the country; tax reform, to end the existing unjust model of tax collection and tax the grand fortunes; among others.

We will only come up with real solutions through a new way of the forms and methods of doing Brazilian politics, that must be made for and with the people. PSOL will be on that side of the battle.

Translated by Sean Seymour Jones

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