

Thesis: Two Roads in the Student Movement¹

People's Revolutionary Student Movement (Brazil)

January 1, 2005

Governmentalist UNE,² Enemy of Students

For the first time, those who for more than 20 years have been active within the people's movement proposing the electoral road for the transformation of society have put their plans into practice. Now, with Luis Inácio in government, the PT³ and PCdoB,⁴ who have controlled the people's movement for so long, have gone beyond asking the people for calmness and patience. They are shamelessly defending repression and the attack on people's rights, as they are doing with the counter-reform in universities. The position of the bourgeois student movement, UNE, has never been more open. A year and a half after opportunism took power, UNE and UBES⁵ have shown how they are agents of the Ministry of Education in schools and universities. From the outset, they spearheaded the government's campaign "for university reform now!" through the so-called "UNE Caravan through Brazil." For months, UNE took the MEC⁶ to the universities to defend the World Bank's counter-reform. In most of the universities, UNE was expelled and was unable to speak, so repulsed were the students. At UFMG,⁷ for example, they even fled, running (literally), expelled by the more than 200 students who, in a demonstration on the day of the so-called caravan, shouted loud and clear: PCdoB out of UFMG!

The opportunists are being unmasked, and all the student struggles are taking place outside and against UNE/UBES. University students boycott university fees, demonstrate against and resist the university counter-reform. Secondary school students take to the streets and radicalize the fight for the Free Fare,⁸ as in Fortaleza, Florianópolis, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte. UNE and UBES are increasingly identified as enemies of the students. The PT and PCdoB are beginning to be expelled from schools and universities with the loss of sev-

¹<https://meprbrasil.com.br/2005/01/01/tese-dois-caminhos-no-movimento-estudantil/>

²RedLibrary: National Union of Students

³RedLibrary: Workers' Party

⁴RedLibrary: Communist Party of Brazil

⁵RedLibrary: Brazilian Union of Secondary Students

⁶RedLibrary: Ministry of Education

⁷RedLibrary: Federal University of Minas Gerais

⁸RedLibrary: Referring to the struggle for free fares for public transit.

eral unions, DCEs⁹ and DAs.¹⁰ Breaking with the UNE/UBES is even more on the agenda for all students and organizations that want to develop the real struggle within schools and universities, an independent and combative struggle.

As soon as Lula won the election, the president of UNE declared that the student movement would no longer be a resistance movement, but a “proposition” to the “popular and democratic” government. To try to convince the students, they repeat a thousand times that they are the continuators of the 1968 student movement, of Honestino Guimarães, Helenira Rezende and so many other revolutionaries who, within the student movement, set an example of rebellion and revolutionary spirit. With this speech they want to make everyone believe that the young revolutionaries of the 1960s and 1970s fought and died so that today the Brazilian people could vote and elect Luis Inácio,¹¹ and that UNE is the maximum representation of the students.

However, claiming that UNE fought in the past and is therefore a legitimate representative of students today does not hide the fact that in practice it is a government entity. We need to look at history to see how the Brazilian student movement has developed and how UNE has become this official, governmentalist entity.

History of the Student Movement

Just as in the workers’ and people’s movement, there are two roads of development in the student movement: the revolutionary and the reformist. A product of opportunist and electioneering leaderships, the reformist road also predominated in the student movement. The peak of the Student Movement’s revolutionary road was at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, when a whole generation of youth rose up in the daring fight against the military regime. Despite its mistakes and shortcomings, this was the period of the greatest combativeness and massiveness of the Brazilian Student Movement. This was precisely because it was at this time that the student movement broke with electoral illusions and set out to merge with the people in the struggle to seize power. The culmination of the reformist road is now with the arrival of opportunism in control of the central apparatus of the reactionary state. They have put into practice a project that they have been building up for years with betrayals, deception and sowing a lot of electoral illusions among the masses. These roads have always clashed and for short periods the revolutionary one has predominated. Since the early 1980s, the reformist road has predominated under the hegemony of the PCdoB. But, as comrade Lenin would say, the victory of opportunism is always temporary, sooner or

⁹RedLibrary: Central Directory of Students

¹⁰RedLibrary: Academic Directory

¹¹RedLibrary: Better known as “Lula,” who was the president of Brazil from 2003 to 2011 and 2023-present as of 2024.

later, with the inevitable crises of the capitalist system, the masses will rise up against their old leaderships and return to the road of combative struggle, and this is the moment that is now opening up!

From the Colonial Period to the Early Years of the “Republic”

Since the colonial period, in the struggle for independence from the Portuguese yoke, Brazilian students have actively participated in our country’s class struggle. Youth studying in Europe were instrumental in providing theoretical support for the Conjurations of Minas Gerais (1789) and Bahia (1796), bringing the revolutionary influence of the Enlightenment and rationalism from the North American and French bourgeois revolutions to Brazil. During the empire, students stood out for their participation in the fight against slavery. An expression of this was the young Bahian poet Castro Alves, who studied law in Pernambuco, and at USP,¹² and whose verses became the most beautiful manifestos for the liberation of slaves. The sympathy of the student masses with the struggles of the poor is evident in the demonstrations in support of Canudos (1897), particularly in the manifesto of the university students from Bahia, denouncing the barbarism and genocide perpetrated by the reactionary state.

From the Founding of the PCB¹³ to the 1964 Military Coup

However, the student movement became more politicized and organized after the intervention of the Communist Party of Brazil (founded in 1922) among intellectual youth. In 1936, the Communist Youth Union was founded, an organization that would be decisive in various student mobilizations, such as the anti-fascist and anti-imperialist demonstrations demanding that Brazil take part in World War II against Nazi-fascism; the protests against sending troops to the Yankee invasion of Korea; and the anti-imperialist campaign for the nationalization of oil, “Oil is ours.” The UJC¹⁴ was also decisive in untying UNE from the New State, giving it a more combative character and a proletarian direction. However, the reformism that took hold in the leadership of the PCB, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, led the student movement down the road of electioneering and class conciliation. The PCB’s reformism was expressed in its support for the so-called “people’s governments” of Getúlio and JK¹⁵ and its active participation in João Goulart’s adminis-

¹²RedLibrary: University of São Paulo

¹³RedLibrary: Communist Party of Brazil

¹⁴RedLibrary: Communist Youth Union

¹⁵RedLibrary: Juscelino Kubitschek

tration. This governmentalist and conciliatory stance disarmed the student movement, leading it to paralysis and distancing itself from the masses.

The Struggle of Resistance Against the Fascist Military Regime

The first opposition to the left of the reformist leadership would be that of Popular Action (AP), a group from the Catholic youth that adhered to Marxism and advocated a revolutionary project to seize power. The AP hegemonized the leadership of UNE from 1962 to 1968, oscillating between the revolutionary position of the demonstrations against the Yankee invasion of Vietnam and the government positions of conciliation with President João Goulart. Despite the AP's combative stance, it didn't have enough ideological fiber to counter the reformist road in the student movement. UNE's ties with the Jango government were intense, and the organization even participated in the choice of minister of education. This close relationship, far from making the government more democratic, made UNE even more governmentalist. UNE's governmentalism was evident in the historic " $\frac{1}{3}$ Strike," which was one of the largest and most important student mobilizations for the democratization of universities. Their main demand was for $\frac{1}{3}$ of university councils to be made up of students (today, students represent around $\frac{1}{10}$ of the councils). The movement spread throughout the country and the strike paralyzed practically all federal universities. This demand clashed with U.S. imperialism's guidelines for Brazilian education, which would later become the MEC/USAID agreements, which, among other things, aimed to restrict the autonomy of universities. The Jango government was unyielding in the strike negotiations, and it was then that UNE leadership capitulated, arguing that the movement was stirring up "right-wing coup forces." UNE then ended the biggest student strike in our country's history. This episode proves the existence of illusions with João Goulart's demagogic/populist government and with the bourgeois/landowning state. So much so that on the day of the coup, April 1st, 1964, UNE launched a manifesto calling on the military to defend the "legitimate" government of João Goulart.¹⁶

The military coup produced a significant change in the direction of the student movement. Jango didn't resist the coup and fled to Uruguay, the constitution and the "sovereign" congress were ignored, in short, once again history proved that "democratic" institutions in capitalism exist until they are useful. The illusions of changing the country through elections, the daydreams that Jango was a popular ruler, in other words, all the political justification for the reformist positions collapsed in just one day. This was the beginning of the rise of a new, revolutionary direction within the student movement. The students' position developed rapidly:

¹⁶RedLibrary: Also known as Jango.

first combative economic struggles, then the struggle against the military regime, and then the struggle for power.

The first important struggle took place in 1965 against the MEC/USAID agreements and later against the Suplicy de Lacerda law. The MEC/USAID agreements were signed between the military and the Yankee government in 1965. The treaty radicalized U.S. intervention in Brazilian educational policymaking. In the second half of 1966, even though it was illegal, UNE led a great day of struggle against the agreements, denouncing their vile and sell-out nature. The military, who always presented themselves as nationalists, were denounced for crimes of colonial subservience. The movement was so intense that it forced the regime to back down and revise some points of the agreement. With this defeat, the dictatorship learned that it could not implement its plans for education without first dealing harsher blows to the students' independent organization. In 1967, the Suplicy de Lacerda law (named after the minister of education), which had made UNE illegal in 1964, was applied more radically. The leaderships of the main academic centers were dismissed and early elections were called. The revolutionaries boycotted this plot by the military and later organized parallel elections. In opposition to the dictatorship's directories, the so-called free CAs were created, which were not officially recognized, had their headquarters outside the university, but certainly represented the leadership of the student masses. Even under these difficult conditions, the revolutionaries were able to organize themselves, while the regime's repression and violence increased. However, the rebellion of the people was already beginning to take shape, and preparations were being made for the great battles of 1968.

1968 saw the biggest student rebellion in Brazilian history. It was the year in which high school students became more involved, bringing their boldness and audacity to the protests. On March 28, students who were having lunch at the Calabouço student cafeteria in downtown Rio began a protest against the increase in food prices. The police intervened and invaded the cafeteria, the students reacted with sticks, stones, plates, and cutlery, the police started shooting at the students and Edson Luís, an 18-year-old student from Pará, was fatally wounded. There was then a fierce battle for the body of the murdered student, the masses managed to rescue him and took him to the Legislative Assembly. More than 50,000 people attended the funeral the following day. All over the country, mobilizations broke out in repudiation of the murder. In Goiânia, another student is killed by the police. From then on, students and the regime openly clashed in marches. The masses organize barricades and a large artillery of stones, pots and sticks rises from the top of the buildings. In June, the historic demonstration of the 100,000 took place, whose main slogan was "Down with the dictatorship!" General Costa e Silva received a committee of students, but closed the meeting feeling he had been disrespected. In October, the UNE Congress was held clandestinely in Ibiúna,

São Paulo. The regime discovered the meeting and arrested more than 1,000 students. The main leaders of the Brazilian student movement were in the hands of the army. It was a major blow. In December, Institutional Act Number Five was issued, legalizing arbitrary acts and torture. Along with it came the infamous Decree-Law 477, which allowed the expulsion of student movement activists from universities. Most of the leaders arrested in Ibiúna were expelled from their faculties. The military regime was trying to put an end to the movement it had failed to stop in 1964 and 1967 with the Suplicy de Lacerda law.

The demonstrations of 1968 represented a major development of the struggles of 1966 against the MEC/USAID agreement. What was now being demanded was “Down with the dictatorship, people in power!” The students took to the streets for this purpose and shook up the regime. Throughout the struggles, the masses gained a lot of experience in confrontations with the police and clearly the students had the upper hand. But it was an illusion to want to overthrow the dictatorship with street demonstrations, and this expectation led the movement into major errors: the disconnection of the students from the peasant and worker masses (who supported the struggle, but did not yet participate) and the belief in a quick, one-stroke victory. The idea that they were close to seizing power detached the movement from the masses of students. Another mistake in this conception was the movement’s lack of attention to self-defense issues, underestimating the regime’s fascistization. The student movement had “defied the emperor” and had to be prepared for the blowback. The fall of the Ibiúna congress shows that the movement had not prepared sufficiently for the toughest moments of the struggle.

There is no doubt that the main aspect of the struggles of 1968 is positive. The politicization and combativeness of the students reached the highest level, this produced a very rich generation of revolutionaries, of brave and fearless youth who were willing to take up arms to make revolution in our country. Thousands of students took up the armed struggle and put up heroic resistance against the criminals. But here, too, we find the illusions of the possibility of overthrowing the dictatorship quickly. This concept meant that all it took was for a small group to start the revolution and the masses would follow. This detached the revolutionaries from the people and was the main mistake of the armed struggle in this period. The most advanced experience was that of the Araguaia guerrilla, in which dozens of militants from the student movement took part. This was the first attempt to start a People’s War in Brazil. The PCdoB’s strategy foresaw that it would be a protracted struggle and that in order to be victorious it was essential to connect with the masses. However, this experience did not escape the influences of the ideas and conceptions in vogue, it was concentrated in a region where there was no political experience of the masses, there was little political work among the people of the region and it was believed that successive sieges by the enemy could be overcome.

From the People's Struggle to Overthrow the Fascist Military Regime to the Amnesty Law

By 1976, practically all the organizations that had led the armed struggle had been dismantled. The military regime had managed to annihilate the leadership of the process. Pedro Pomar and Maurício Grabois of the PCdoB, Manoel Lisboa and Emmanoel Bezerra of the PCR,¹⁷ Carlos Marighela and Joaquim Câmara of the ALN,¹⁸ Carlos Lamarca of the MR8¹⁹ and Mário Alves of the PCBR²⁰ and many other leaders were assassinated. This temporary defeat of the revolutionary road in our country had a direct impact on the student movement. With the extermination of the main revolutionary leaders, what was left of their organizations abandoned the road of revolution. Instead of taking stock of their mistakes and continuing on the revolutionary road, the main organizations chose to lay down their arms. The amnesty law represented the capitulation agreement of the repentant guerrillas, who accepted being placed in the same condition as the state's torturers and gendarmes and were preparing to integrate into the system, rejoining the so-called "national political life," i.e. taking part in elections again. The abandonment of the revolutionary road culminated in the "Direct Elections Now" campaign in 1984. It was a return to the reformist illusions of changing people's lives through elections.

At the end of the 1970s, the oppressed masses showed their willingness to fight. Workers' strikes broke out in São Bernardo and Belo Horizonte, barricades were erected and countless factories came to a standstill. In the Mannesman strike in Belo Horizonte, in addition to wage demands, the workers demanded the release of political prisoners. The mass movement was at its peak, but there was a lack of leadership to give these huge mobilizations a revolutionary perspective. The student movement was also experiencing this boom, and a massive movement to rebuild grassroots and national organizations began. In 1979, the congress to rebuild UNE was held in Salvador. This congress was the result of intense grassroots work and the overthrow of the old leaderships of the academic centers and directories linked to the regime. In Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, a demonstration by 5,000 students overthrew the old board of UFJF's²¹ DCE and was country-wide. This important process was marked by the hatred of the dictatorship that emanated from the students. The core of the demands was the demand for democratic freedoms, which was correct because it expressed the feelings of the entire masses. However, the struggle for democratic freedoms is not an end goal, but a means to better

¹⁷RedLibrary: Revolutionary Communist Party

¹⁸RedLibrary: National Liberation Action

¹⁹RedLibrary: October 8th Revolutionary Movement

²⁰RedLibrary: Revolutionary Brazilian Communist Party

²¹RedLibrary: Federal University of Juiz de Fora

develop the people's struggle for the seizure of power. In the 1980 elections, practically all currents of the student movement were involved in the electoral process. This was a big step backwards, since student organizations had been organizing "Vote No!" campaigns since 1967.

UNE Has Become a Symbol of Paralysis, Bureaucracy, and Pandering

The engagement in the electoral process, still under the military regime, expresses the complete abandonment of the revolutionary road in the student movement. All the struggles in this period were part of the opportunist strategy of electoral accumulation. In the 1980s, the main forces in the student movement were the MR8, PCdoB, and PT. Since 1984, the *Pecedobê*²² has managed to secure hegemony on the UNE board, which will lead to a growing apparatus and bureaucracy in the organization. The congresses got worse and worse year after year, ceasing to be a serious space for political discussion and becoming a big alienated party; the dispute between the currents ceased to be about political positions and became more and more about positions in the organization. The 1986 UNE Congress marked the radicalization of the entity's apparatus, which went down a road of opportunism and pandering. At this Congress, the *Pecedobê* is defeated on the issue of the election of the new board of directors, which is no longer congressional but direct. The elections take place and the *Pecedobê* blatantly cheats, the theft is discovered and denounced. The MR8 proposes building a new UNE, but the PT signs an agreement with the *Pecedobê* and validates the rigged elections in exchange for positions. This was the beginning of the alliance (PT and PCdoB) in the student movement, which is still in force today in the control of UNE and UBES.

The 1990s: From the "Painted Faces"²³ Movement to "FHC²⁴ Out!"

The so-called "Collor Out" marked the opportunist style of the student movement and was the basis for all the actions of UNE and UBES during the 1990s. This was a media-driven movement that was of interest to various sectors of the ruling classes and imperialism. The theft perpetrated by Fernando Collor put the implementation of the imperialist policies of privatizing state companies and restructuring the reactionary state at risk. Removing him became a key problem for the big bourgeoisie. No wonder Rede Globo,²⁵ which had invested so much in Collor's election

²²RedLibrary: Referring to the Communist Party of Brazil, PCdoB.

²³RedLibrary: the "painted faces" movement was a student-led movement in Brazil to depose Fernando Collor, the president of Brazil from 1990 to 1992.

²⁴RedLibrary: Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the president of Brazil from 1995 to 2003.

²⁵RedLibrary: Bourgeois media channel in Brazil.

as president, changed its position and showed solidarity with the “painted faces” movement. In addition, “Collor Out” was used to “demonstrate” that we really live in a democracy, because “those who elect can remove.” This illusion spread by opportunism seeks to reinforce in the people the backward consciousness of believing in elections as a means of change.

The “Collor Out” movement shaped the old student movement in both content and form. During the eight years of the FHC administration, the opportunists tried to re-edit this movement. As a result, the 1990s were a decade of huge defeats for the students. The concrete struggles against the privatization of universities and the end of technical education were replaced by the squalid and peaceful “FHC Out.” In no country in Latin America has the World Bank’s educational reform been carried out as thoroughly as in Brazil. In no country in Latin America has there been so little resistance to these reforms. While in Venezuela, Uruguay, Chile, and Ecuador students occupied schools and universities, went on strike and clashed with the police against the reform of technical and university education, here in Brazil the UNE was building up to the strategy of electing Lula president. They bet everything on an electoral exit, on a change of manager to solve the problems of education and the people.

With Luis Inácio’s victory in the 2002 elections, UNE and UBES are no longer just bureaucratic, petty, and reformist structures, but also official and institutional bodies of the new government, in a policy of open betrayal of the students. For the opportunists, this is a great achievement. They brag about meeting periodically with the Minister of Education and have become proud representatives of the MEC and the reactionary state. Today, the UNE’s agenda is dictated by the government, and they are focusing their forces on the implementation of the “university reform,” which is just another counter-reform of the Lula government defined by the IMF. Just like with the pension reform, the government and the opportunists say that the changes will be good, they wave progressive proposals, but in practice they implement the plans to privatize the university. And UNE and UBES play the vile role of justifying all the government’s actions. Of course, they will make occasional criticisms as demagoguery in order to essentially support all the government’s measures. This decadent task reveals to the broad masses of students what material these opportunists are made of, and there is no longer any doubt about the traitorous ideology of these yes men. What appears to be a great victory for the PT and the *Pecedobê* is actually a great defeat. We are witnessing the bankruptcy of opportunism in the student movement; these old leaderships are no longer a reference point for any student’s struggle. This is the best time to fight back and denounce the betrayal done by the yes men. For years we have said that the opportunists are enemies of the people, for years we have announced that the elections would change nothing in the life of misery of our people, and now we see the full confirmation of our theses.

Breaking with the UNE: The First Condition for the Development of the Struggle and the Student Movement

For those who want to build a combative and independent student movement, the question that arises today is more than ever whether or not to participate in the state organizations, the UNE/UBES. Despite their massive appearance, these organizations do not represent the interests of the people. It is with reference to the history we have described and the bankruptcy of these organizations that we see the peremptory need to break with opportunism in the student movement. The UNE and UBES are the government, they are openly enemies of the students, they cannot walk alongside or together with those who want to develop a real student movement of struggle.

It's easy to see this need, for example, in the fight against university "reform." If the UNE is in an assembly about university "reform," we have to discuss whether or not it's fair to fight against the privatization of the university. This is a waste of time that we could be using to discuss the strategies of our struggle. We must guarantee the independence of the student movement. Students committed to the struggle can't fall for the PCdoB's whining about the unity of the movement. What they really want is the unity of the students with their tormentors, those who trample on the rights of the people, those who privatize the university, those who sell their souls to secure positions and power for the ruling classes in our country. There can be no unity with the UNE, with any government in this state of big bourgeoisie and landowners who serve imperialism.

No one can be under the illusion that there is any dispute within the UNE/UBES. The problem with these organizations lies not simply in their leadership, but in the entire bureaucratized structure that they have become in recent years. They exist to try to contain and control the student movement, to keep students docile and alienated. There is no political debate within these organizations. Their congresses are a game of marked cards, where the resolutions are already decided in advance by these ruling parties. While the leadership of the ruling parties guarantees all the directives and positions within the organization along government lines, they get the students to take part in something like mega-shows or big fairs. Anything goes to ensure control of these organizations: cheating, forgery, fraud. Participating in these structures means legitimizing government action in the student movement and a real setback in the students' struggle. Allying with these organizations means allying with the government and this would necessarily lead to the defeat of the Brazilian student movement.

Unity with the Opportunists Means Alliance Between the Workers and “Their” National Bourgeoisie²⁶

To be inside the UNE, even as “opposition,” is to unite with opportunism, because this “political opposition” is nothing more than the legitimization of opportunism. As much as we say that we don’t agree with the “majority” of the board, i.e. the *Pecedobê*, we point out to the students the reference of the student struggle being a body run by traitors. The *Pecedobê* and PT have always been allied with the ruling classes and imperialism, and to unite with them in the UNE is to be united with the bourgeoisie. Their anti-imperialism means being against the United States and in favor of the European Union, Russia, and China. The forces that preach unity with opportunism and are against the break with the UNE still harbor illusions with sectors of the PT and the *Pecedobê*, and even that the Lula government will make some democratic changes. We must fight these illusions.

There are those who say that it is wrong to leave the UNE because it is under the UNE’s leadership that the broad masses of students are. In the text *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism*, Lenin makes a profound analysis of the relationship between the break with opportunism and the distancing from the masses: “*One of the most common sophistries of Kautskyism is its reference to the ‘masses.’ We do not want, they say, to break away from the masses and mass organizations!*” Holding congresses and marches with thousands of students does not necessarily represent massiveness; masses and crowds are two different things. The UNE represents only a semblance of a movement, what is on the surface. “*Engels draws a distinction between the ‘bourgeois labor party’ of the **old** trade unions—the privileged minority—and the ‘**lowest mass,**’ the real majority, and appeals to the latter, who are not infected by ‘bourgeois respectability.’*” This is what we must distinguish, the old entities from the broad masses of students, who are not led by opportunism. These are the majority and it is to them that revolutionaries must appeal.

Calculating whether the combative position will remain with the majority cannot be an impediment to breaking with the UNE. “*Neither we nor anyone else can calculate precisely what portion of the proletariat is following and will follow the social-chauvinists and opportunists. This will be revealed only by the struggle, it will be definitely decided only by the socialist revolution.*” Throughout most of the revolutionary process, the Bolsheviks were a minority in the mass organizations and this didn’t stop them from making revolution. Precisely because they applied the “only Marxist tactic,” they broke with opportunism, because they were sure that they: “**represent only a minority**” and that: “*our duty, if we wish to remain socialists to go down **lower and deeper,** to the real masses; this is the whole meaning and*

²⁶V. I. Lenin, *Socialism and War* “Chapter I: The Principles of Socialism and the War of 1914–1915” (July-Aug. 1915).

the whole purport of the struggle against opportunism. By exposing the fact that the opportunists and social-chauvinists are in reality betraying and selling the interests of the masses, that they are defending the temporary privileges of a minority of the workers, that they are the vehicles of bourgeois ideas and influences, that they are really allies and agents of the bourgeoisie, we teach the masses to appreciate their true political interests, to fight for socialism and for the revolution through all the long and painful vicissitudes of imperialist wars and imperialist armistices.”

“The only Marxist line in the world labor movement is to explain to the masses the inevitability and necessity of breaking with opportunism, to educate them for revolution by waging a relentless struggle against opportunism, to utilise the experience of the war to expose, not conceal, the utter vileness of national-liberal labor politics.”²⁷ We must take these teachings very seriously. No illusions, no alliance with opportunism. On the contrary, we must fight them inseparably from the fight against imperialism and all reaction.

Breaking with the UNE is the first step towards guaranteeing the revolutionary unity of the students, because unity is only possible through struggle and the UNE is more than ever a government entity. It is an illusion to think that we can overthrow the PT/*Pecedobê* leaderships in the student movement from within the UNE without being contaminated by the same disease. If their apparatus was already huge before they became the government, now that they have the state machine in their hands, they won't be able to leave their “profitable little places”. Breaking with the UNE will mean isolation for the ruling forces. They will be alone and will no longer be able to speak for all students. Breaking with the UNE will boost student struggles.

Some comrades still think that breaking with the UNE would mean leaving the *Pecedobê* and PT, an organization with a history of great struggles. Breaking with the UNE doesn't mean denying this past, but rescuing it. A past of struggle and heroism cannot be restricted to an acronym; just as today's *Pecedobê* has no trace of the PCdoB of Araguaia, today's UNE is no longer the combative and massive organization it was in the 1960s and 1970s. If we want to inherit the past struggles of the combative Brazilian students, we should look to their examples. The youth of the 1960s represent those who maintain their ideals, that is, the Brazilian revolution. Today's UNE is the negation of this past. For the students, far from signifying a past of struggle, the UNE represents a bankrupt bureaucratic machine that has now been reduced to a mere office of the Ministry of Education.

It is because of this situation that we call on all students not only to break away, but also to expel this bourgeois and governmental entity from Brazilian schools and universities. We do not accept government and state interference in the stu-

²⁷V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism* (Oct. 1916).

dent movement. Its bankruptcy is beginning, but we must act actively to bring it down, it will not fall on its own.

The defeat of the *Pecedobê* and the PT in various elections for unions, DAs and DCEs shows us that the prospects are great. The UNE and its supporters are increasingly known as enemies of the students. This is the first condition for leading the Brazilian student movement back onto the road of the people's struggle and the revolutionary transformation of our country.