

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article241>



Brazil

The elections point to the tasks of the PT

- IV Online magazine - 2005 - IV363 - January 2005 -

Publication date: Wednesday 5 January 2005

**Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights
reserved**

The quantitative and territorial balance sheet of the votes won by each party is important for defining their capacities for confrontation on a national scale, but insufficient to understand "society's state of mind" and the party's tasks in the present political struggle.

The national "count" places the Workers' Party (PT) as the leading party from the point of view of the number of votes won in the first and second rounds of the elections, [1] followed in second position by the PSDB. [2] Fundamental victories were won in big cities like Belo Horizonte, Recife and Fortaleza, Vitoria; in important towns like Contagem (state of Mato Grosso) and Oscasa (state of Sao Paulo). On the other hand our party suffered second-round defeats in the capital, Sao Paulo, Porto Alegre, Belém and Goiânia, places where we were faced with precisely the opponents that we will confront in 2006, nationally and at state level: the PSDB, the "PMDB tucano" [3] and the other political forces polarised by the PSDB. This political polarisation is the first decisive conclusion that we must draw from this electoral process.

Furthermore, the analysis of the distribution of the vote town by town and by electoral "colleges" (states) is another important element. It enables us to see that having come first in the overall vote doesn't always guarantee winning a majority and conquering positions of power in strategic places.

The picture that we can draw today shows a polarisation between the two strongest national parties, which have the biggest capacity for social and political attraction - the PT and the PSDB - a situation that will probably be repeated in the next elections. Beyond this panorama of the distribution of forces and its probable future projection, we have to analyse what we see and what we expect from the developing political confrontation. What was the object of the judgment made by these municipal elections? The federal government? Only local aspects? What were the political projects at stake in this confrontation? In what way were the confrontations different in the first and second rounds?

We consider that the first election that has taken place since the formation of the Lula government had a strong national character, as in fact most of the party's analyses had foreseen. That doesn't mean that we have witnessed a clear and direct judgement on the federal government (something which can clearly be seen from the lack of homogeneity of the process, showing the obvious importance of the relationship of forces at regional and local level). But its national character emerges from the clear and undisguised accumulation of results, in view of the next national confrontation.

To argue that these elections had an exclusively local character means depoliticising the balance sheet and thus disarming the party itself for the coming battles. Although the regional or local character of the confrontation has great importance, the national character of the PT also weighed heavily in the balance. It is important to draw the lessons from that, positive as well as negative.

The positive lessons: the ability to mobilise militants and energies for change in favour of the people, as in Recife, Fortaleza, Porto Alegre in the second round and in other cities; and also the ability shown in several cases to put politics at the centre of things and counter the demagogy of our opponents.

The negative lessons: the ability of our opponents to exploit "the democratic argument" [4] or anti-PTism. In resorting to this argument the neo-liberal opposition, in particular the PSDB, sought to attack the PT's project for change and reduce democracy to the notion of alternating governments. This operation was made possible, in the first place, not by the strength of the argument but by the strength of the means employed to propagate it. But it was also made possible by us scaling down our project for historic change to fit into the limits of economic and political governability,

which is more and more questionable, and which is entering into conflict with the ardent desire for transformation of which we have always been the representatives since the PT was founded.

On the political level the implementation of participatory democracy was what was most lacking. The necessary democratic dialogue with the social movements was limited to a few sectors of the government, and even there within the limits imposed by the choices of economic policy. What comes across most clearly are the inconsistent alliances which often disfigure us in Parliament and in the Executive. Again on the political level, we suffer from unimaginable weaknesses: where is the republican and democratic political reform? It doesn't just concern the representative and party system, but also the institutions of the Republic, real democratisation of power (from the military aspect of things to the economy).

On the economic level, no one can explain the successive adjournments and the frustrations that flow from the expectations of real changes in the living and working conditions of our people. The argument of the accursed legacy of FHC isn't enough. Besides, the worst of legacies is the inordinate power of the Central Bank, putting the country, the workers, the people, small and medium-sized businesses and the government itself on a tight lead. That prevents a healthy growth of the internal market, income distribution and the overcoming of historic inequalities, increases in the minimum wage and pensions, the carrying out of the government's strategic programmes. The rise in interest rates, the unprecedented rise in the budget surplus, the submission to finance capital and to the so-called markets (which are not, of course, receiving speculative interests), are strangling the nation. The time has come to take up the challenge.

Such a situation is leading to the loss of militant and political support, it is rendering fragile the hegemony conquered by the election of Lula. In exchange, it brings support from financial circles. But a party like the PT can't change its social base. Likewise, the capitalists and the Right don't change camp, they condition and limit the elected government in order to later exchange this government for another one whose loyalty to their interests has never been in question.

The rebuilding of links with our social and militant base is fundamental. And that requires clearly carrying out our programme of democratic and popular change in the country. That's essential in order to put at the centre of the confrontation the different projects for Brazil; That means rediscovering the profile of a party whose identity is programmatic, whose character is militant, democratic and socialist and whose conduct is unimpeachable.

The new political conjuncture in the country imposes tasks on the party that can't be put off till tomorrow. Our retreats provoke advances by the Right. Conversely, the carrying out of these tasks in a determined way will unite the party, synthesise the lessons learnt from defeats as well as from victories, enable us to regain the energies which have been dissipated and to advance along the road of democratic and popular transformation of Brazil, placing us in harmony with the peoples of our Latin America and of the world who aspire to democracy, development and equality.

[1] The reference is to the municipal elections: the first round was on October 3 and the second on October 31.

[2] The party of Brazilian Social Democracy of former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (known as FHC), which as its name doesn't suggest, is the principal Brazilian bourgeois party, of neo-liberal orientation.

[3] The Party of the Democratic Movement of Brazil (PMDB) was the first major bourgeois democratic party built under the military dictatorship. Over the last quarter of a century it has suffered several splits and today what is left of it is divided. The "PMDB tucano" is the name given to the faction that opposes the Lula government from the right.

The elections point to the tasks of the PT

[4] The PSDB centred its campaign on the need to build “counter-powers” in order to prevent “monolithism” and “preserve democracy”.