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Brazil

Nine months of Lula's government

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After nine months in office, the government of Luis Inacio da Silva 'Lula' has confirmed its contradictory and, in many aspects, even surprising character.

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The biggest surprises are an economic policy that displays great continuity with that of the previous government, which the PT had opposed, and the assembly of a base of parliamentary and political support that incorporates almost all the existing right wing forces in the country. [1] In fact, on the right, only the parties that formed the axis of the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC), the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) and the Liberal Front Party (PFL) continue in formal opposition; nonetheless, they have been partners of the government in some of its more important initiatives, such as pensions reform.

This does not denote incoherence on the part of the PSDB and the PFL. since the pensions reform proposal presented by the Lula government followed the general lines of their own proposal, which had they been unable to fully implement, largely because of opposition from the PT. On this question, the government faced opposition from sectors of the social movements and, at the parliamentary level, mainly the left of the PT and some of the other left parties.

On the other hand, the Lula government has maintained coherence with the historical programme of the PT in the areas of international relations, agrarian reform and other sectors. There have been important changes in these areas from the policies of the previous government, but they face difficulties, given the more general economic and political choices made by the government so far.

An initial balance sheet of the government

The great contradictions which exist make it difficult to draw a considered balance sheet of this process. In any case, it is important to try. Because of the weight that they have in the definition of the government's overall policy possibilities, it is best to start the assessment from the general political options and the economic policy which has been adopted. The central core of the government opted to avoid a global confrontation with the dominant classes, whether national or international. More than this, they seek the maintenance of a degree of broad agreement with them. The political axis of the government has been to broaden alliances with the historical political adversaries of the PT, while preaching patience to the people in general and the social movements in particular.

This had led to a distancing from what the text approved at the national meeting of the PT in December 2001 defined as the 'democratic axis' of the programme - to rely on social mobilization to make possible measures that would face resistance from the ruling classes, and to go in the direction of implementing mechanisms of participatory democracy. In fact, even though there are initiatives from the government and the social movements that can represent initial steps in this direction, as well as processes of consultation and debate in some areas that keep open channels of dialogue with society, this is not this what predominates. In fact, the government has not submitted its central choices - especially its economic policy - to any type of debate with the social movements and with society.

Neoliberal economic orientation

Macroeconomic policy has been characterized by continuity, and there are no consistent signs of the search for a transition to another policy. The government has concentrated on fiscal austerity (mainly through increasing the 'primary fiscal surplus', [2]) fighting inflation by means of conservative policies (of higher interest rates) and seeking to keep the confidence of the financial markets. This orientation helped stop the depreciation of Brazil's currency, the real - which has experienced a significant revalorization - and has led to a sharp fall in inflation.

The risk of an immediate currency crisis has been averted. However, this is not essentially due to 'confidence' in the Brazilian economy, as the government has proclaimed; it was due to a large extent to the inflow of speculative capital, favoured both by the general international trend of the last few months and by high Brazilian interest rates.

These results are then very precarious - in fact, the external dependence of the Brazilian economy has not been reduced at all. On the other hand, it is important to point out the serious negative consequences of these policies - a serious recession (at best, the result by the end of 2003 will be economic stagnation), increased unemployment (reaching an all time high in August) and a fall in real income for workers and for society as a whole (all these facts are certified by different public statistics). Moreover, the combination of an increased primary fiscal surplus with high interest rates implies a significant transfer of wealth to the holders of financial assets, in other words the wealthier sectors of society. The income of the overall population has fallen and, to make matters worse, it is becoming still more concentrated. Finally, fiscal austerity imposes great restrictions on all government policies.

The negative consequences of this macroeconomic policy will be hard to overcome. The maintenance of the increased primary fiscal surplus is foreseen for the entire term of president Lula, and compromises the capacity for public investment. The fall in the income of society inhibits private investment. Thus, even with a reduction of interest rates (which, given the fall in inflation, is part of the logic of the monetarist policies followed and would not indicate, by itself, a change in economic policy), economic recovery will tend to be limited - and will always be threatened by the permanence of external vulnerability.

As a result basically of the economic policy adopted, especially the search to gain the 'confidence' of the markets, pensions reform has resulted in a particularly negative experience. The government plan encountered opposition from civil servants and the CUT, that is, social forces that had been decisive to Lula's victory. Inside the PT, and in particular its active social base, it led to great discontent. This led to partial alterations in the plan, that reduced its damage, but they were insufficient to change its character. [3]

A new foreign policy

The most positive aspect of the government's orientation so far has been its foreign policy. Beyond opposing the US attack on Iraq and steps in the direction of establishing an independent foreign policy, there has been an attempt to construct South American unity, and also a front of the so-called 'developing' countries, opposed to the interests of the imperialist centres, as was seen at the World Trade Organization (WTO) conference at Cancun. Brazil is also opposing the US position on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Although the negotiations on this are continuing, the government has sought to reduce their scope, saying that it could eventually accept an 'FTAA-lite', from which subjects would be excluded that surpass the limits of trade (like regulation of government purchases and investments), and has demanded important concessions from the US. However, given the vulnerability of the country to external pressure and the existence of divisions inside the government, it is not clear what the outcome of the process will be. Thus, the proposal for a referendum made by the Continental Campaign Against the FTAA, with the objective of rejecting the FTAA in its entirety, retains a burning relevance.

In opposition to the policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is necessary to point out that there are aspects of

international relations that are conducted by the Ministry of Finance (like relations with the IMF). There, a conservative position prevails. This recently led to a paradoxical situation - when the Argentine president negotiated an agreement confronting (in part) the pressures of the IMF, they enjoyed the support of other Latin American heads of State, and even the USA, but not Lula. The press has divulged that Kirchner is dissatisfied with the extreme subservience of the Brazilian government at this level, which seems very likely. Lula has rejected criticism that he has accepted excessive interference from the IMF with the doubtful argument that the more controversial options - like the primary fiscal surplus of 4.25% of GDP - were decided on by the Brazilian government independently of pressure.

In fact, it seems that a significant number of the more dubious decisions in economic policy have not been a result of IMF pressure. For example, there is currently a discussion on whether a new agreement with this institution is useful, and many sectors of the government have said that this would depend on having greater flexibility in the negotiation of conditions. They want to modify the method of calculating the primary fiscal surplus, to allow for greater public investment and more social expenditure (for example paying for the lands redistributed in the framework of land reform with Agrarian Debt bonds. With the method currently used, this would be counted as an internal debt and would reduce the primary fiscal surplus). In this debate, finance minister Palocci has opposed any significant flexibilization, even if this would be accepted by the IMF. The inner group that decides Brazilian economic policy is, therefore, showing itself more orthodox and conservative than the IMF.

Land reform

The conservatism of economic policy has been a significant obstacle to agrarian reform. On this question, the Ministry of Agrarian Development [4] has, since the early days of the government, established a constructive relationship with the rural social movements and has sought a broad dialogue with society.

A new conception of agrarian reform is being developed, as well as of family and cooperative agriculture, integrated with a project of change of the economy and society. Immediately this involves aid to the settlements of landless peasants carried out under the FHC government, so as to ensure citizenship rights and overcome productive disorganization. Financing of the harvest for small producers, as well as the construction of alternatives that make the settlements economically viable are the first concrete results of this process. Moreover, the government has committed itself to urgently settle about 60,000 families who are squatting. Finally, the Ministry has shown the determination to face down the criminal armed resistance of the large estate owners, who are organizing militias. It favours immediate and firm action to punish those responsible and prevent them constituting a latifundium state in the Brazilian countryside.

All these policies, however, come up against the budgetary restrictions imposed by the economic policy that has been chosen. For example, without the funds to pay the latifundistas [5] the commitment to settle 60,000 families could not be fulfilled. [6] This example, like others, has shown once more the contradiction between social change and the maintenance of basic aspects of the economic model inherited from FHC.

Retreat on GMOs

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Another controversial question opposes the conception that prevails in the economic area to other sectors of the government - the question of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The more conservative sectors of the government, prominently the Ministry of Agriculture, linked to the big agricultural producers, have defended the use of

these organisms (in opposition to the policies previously defended by the PT as a whole). The Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Rural Development, the environmentalist movement, the social movements in the countryside (especially the MST), the progressive sectors of the Catholic and Evangelical churches, the CUT trade union federation and the broad majority of the PT are all opposed. The government has finally issued a Provisional Measure allowing the culture of generically modified soya up to 2004 (repeating a procedure already adopted in the early days of the government, when the marketing of the harvest of illegally planted genetically modified soya was authorized). This measure has helped discredit the government in the eyes of the progressive social movements. It is possible that the vote on this question in Congress will lead to a significant confrontation between the position of the government and that of sectors of the PT.

This initial period of government reveals a conflictual dynamic, both inside the government and in the relationship of the government to the social forces responsible for its election. The contradictions have become ever more clear. If the Lula government can in some cases be the partner of progressive movements, as happened in the conference of the WTO in Cancun, it can also be clearly opposed to these movements, as in the case of pensions reform and the dispute over GMOs. On other questions, such as agrarian reform, the government has had difficulties in fulfilling its commitments due to budgetary restrictions and conservative conceptions of economic policy and the rural social movements have thus made their demands more forcibly.

Thus, at the centre of this conflict is the economic policy that maintains external vulnerability and imposes policies of adjustment governed by neoliberal logic. So far, it is this policy that has set the general tone of the government.

The social movements in a complex picture

In this situation, the social movements have been obliged to seriously modify their behaviour. The electoral defeat of neoliberalism, with the election of Lula, represented a victory for the trade union and popular movement, and renewed its possibilities of organization and mobilization. On the other hand, they continue and have deepened adverse social and economic conditions for the movement, above all unemployment. The political conditions have changed, but the fact that the Lula government is defending, and putting into practice, significant orientations that clash with the aspirations of the social movements, make the picture more complex. A phase of expectation in the government is being transformed into another phase, that involves criticism of various policies and processes of unification and mobilization with the objective of pressurizing the government and opposing its choices.

The recent establishment of the Coordination of Social Movements (by the CUT, the MST, the World March of Women, the UNE students' union and other bodies) is an important step in this direction. It was created on the basis of an understanding that a broad and unified popular mobilization alone can guarantee the conquests of the toiling classes. Most of the participant movements had already worked together in the campaign against the FTAA - this meant they already had a critical vision of the economic policy of the Lula government. A campaign for jobs was defined as the main initial joint action, since this struggle has greater potential for mobilization at this moment and makes greater unity possible. It has a broad platform, including agrarian reform, national sovereignty and recovery of the social role of the state.

There is, therefore, an important politicization of the social movements underway, having as its axis a redefinition of their role in relation to the government. To help develop this process in the direction of affirming the social movements as basic subjects in the conflict of orientation of society and government is one of the main tasks of the Brazilian left today. In fact, the unfavourable correlation of forces inside the government can only be modified by a strong social mobilization, defending an alternative set of policies.

A platform for change

The construction of a broader platform presenting society with a programmatic alternative has therefore a central importance at this moment. Some elements of this platform could be:

- Understanding that popular participation in political decision-making is a decisive element for the affirmation of a left government (participatory democracy is one of the axes of the Guidelines of the Program for Government, approved at the 12th National Meeting of the PT, which took place in late 2001 in Recife).
- An alternative economic policy. Since the beginning of the year many economists linked to the PT or the left have criticized the economic orientation of the government and defended an alternative strategy. This strategy also corresponds to ideas presented in the text of the Guidelines approved at the meeting of 2001 and in the Program of Government of 2002; it also corresponds, partially, to the Strategical Orientation of the Pluriannual Plan proposed in June 2003 by the Ministry of the Planning, which conflicts with the policies of the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank (however, the Pluriannual Plan does not have the same real weight as the concrete measures of economic policy adopted by the Finance Ministry and the Bank). The central ideas of this alternative are:
 - Understanding that the biggest problem of the Brazilian economy is its external vulnerability, the most acute face of economic dependency; this is the problem that must be faced in the first place, and that cannot be done through searching to 'gain credibility' through bigger fiscal adjustments, which means strengthening dependence on the interests and moods of the financial markets. It is necessary, on the contrary, to establish controls on the movement of capital, among other measures. Moreover, the question of the foreign debt has returned to the centre of discussion. There was a statement made on September 1, 2003 by Celso Furtado, a well known Brazilian economist, in favour of the declaration of a moratorium to renegotiate the debt. There is the example given by Argentina in its renegotiation; and we have seen the publication of a study by the IMF itself (!) in mid-September, wherein the latter recognizes that "countries that declare moratorium, like Argentina, have great possibilities of reducing the weight of their debt in relation to GDP and returning to growth in a relatively short period". [\[7\]](#)
 - to return to economic growth, through the reduction of interest rates and abandonment of the concept privileging 'primary surplus'. This will make possible the reduction of unemployment (that will also require other specific policies) and increased incomes for workers. Therefore, it is the key to the reduction of poverty and social inequalities. It must be combined with a bigger emphasis on development through the expansion of the domestic market, a traditional proposal of the PT (which appears in the Strategic Orientation of the PPA 2004- 2007). In other words: it is necessary to emphasize the search for a national project of development, as the PT always did.
 - a national project of development is not counterposed to the deepening of relations with the countries of Latin America and others in a similar condition to Brazil. This aspect of the foreign policy of the Lula government is important, and must be strengthened. On the other hand, any project of development is counterposed to the FTAA.
- Defence of agrarian reform and a new agricultural model as conditions for a democratic and popular project of development.

The agrarian question is a contemporary question that has still not been resolved from the point of view of popular interests. The worsening social, economic and environmental problems in the countryside show the necessity of a new agricultural model, that must involve a deep modification in the agrarian structure and the development of programmes of support for production and the marketing of family agriculture and the settlements established through agrarian reform. The Harvest Plan for Family Agriculture presented recently by the federal government represents an important positive measure in the strengthening of a sector that will come to have a still more central role in Brazilian agriculture.

Resolving the agrarian question, integrating it into a project of development supported by the domestic market

involves, therefore, the implementation of a broad agrarian reform on new bases. This should promote the democratization of access to land, power and income, the universalization of basic rights for an important part of the population that lives and works in the Brazilian rural milieu, a more balanced occupation of territory and the preservation of the environment, besides fulfilling a basic role of guaranteeing sovereignty in food and dynamizing the regional economy. The defense of agrarian reform is also a profound challenge to the neoliberal inheritance and the more conservative sectors of Brazilian society. The agrarian counter-reform carried out by FHC sought to criminalize and deprive of legitimacy the movements and disqualify the settlements of the landless by localizing them in isolated areas, while policies of support for production and marketing were not developed.

An active commitment to agrarian reform implies a broad militant solidarity with the MST, the CONTAG and the many movements that fulfil a democratic and civilizing role, to strengthen social pressure to confront the large estate owners and their militias, symbols of backwardness and promoters of violence. Among the tasks necessary to develop this commitment are the construction of a new model of agrarian reform, expropriating land in area with already existing infrastructure, concentrating settlements and transforming them into spaces guaranteeing quality of life and production. This model must also integrate family and cooperative agriculture with structures of marketing and agro-industrial processing capable of constituting a new agricultural model that is economically efficient, socially just and sustainable from the environmental point of view.

A new internationalism

The election of Lula in 2002 was part of a growing rejection of the neoliberal agenda in diverse regions of the world. However, the main measures of economic policy of its first months of government clash, to a large extent, with the expectations and yearnings of the broad world-wide resistance to neoliberal globalization. These have been expressed in the mobilizations against the multilateral organizations, in the World Social Forum, the World March of Women (which has a strong organization in Brazil), the International Network of Social Movements, the Continental Campaign against the FTAA, the Continental Social Alliance, Via Campesina and the Coordination of Trade Union Centres of the Southern Cone. The reinforcement of these international initiatives, bringing to the national plane the world-wide dimension of these challenges, and connecting national struggles with regional and world-wide campaigns, constitutes the embryo of a new internationalism that will be able to stimulate struggles throughout the world and to strengthen the popular initiatives of the Brazilian left. In this form, it can strengthen the more progressive positions taken at the international level by the Lula government.

The perspectives of the PT and the politics of the left

The conquest of the federal government by the PT opened a new stage in the trajectory of the party. Its ability to realize the hopes constructed in struggle and the conquest of the Presidency of the Republic is at stake, as is the ability of the PT to remain faithful to its own programme for the transformation of Brazilian society in the direction of the socialism. The initial period of government throws up a sober question mark over this quest.

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The conception of government that prevails implies a conflictual relationship with the social base of the PT. The alliances made are in contradiction with the programme of government defended in the electoral campaign; we are not witnessing a process of democratization of the public administration, of a popular character. On the other hand, in foreign policy, agrarian reform and other areas measures are being taken that correspond to the historical positions of the PT. A conflictual process is developing in the PT, its deputies and its social base. Support for defence of the

party programme and its democratic and active functioning is growing.

The Guidelines approved at the 12th National Meeting in December 2001, and the Program of Government approved in June 2002 constitute an elaboration which is limited, but very important, for they present the official point of view of the party. The left of the PT must make this elaboration a starting point for the debate on the orientation of the government; in this form, it renews the thread of the trajectory of the PT, and rests on the legitimacy of the positions taken in the party's meetings.

The government does not suffocate the possibilities of the party. The roots of the movement that constructed the PT over these 23 years are deep, and they lie in the working class and the people. The history of the construction of the PT is a history of social, political and cultural struggles in Brazilian society, and also a history of internal disputes. There are strong arguments to reaffirm that this process continues:

1. The trajectory of the PT is that of the social classes and social sectors that the PT seeks to represent and that feel themselves represented by the PT;
2. the fundamental weight of the left inside of the PT;
3. the tradition of pluralism in the PT, its internal democracy and the right of tendency;
4. the programmatic references constructed throughout the trajectory of the party.

Thus, it is not correct, on the basis of the orientation of the government in the first nine months, to conclude that the game is over, as if the options taken expressed in a homogenous manner the entire movement and indicated its entire future; as if there were not contradictions and forces which move in relation to them. The PT has just experienced a time of crisis, and it will continue to develop thus for a period that is not possible to predict today. Fundamental confrontations face us, whether questions of government are those relating to party activity (elections in 2004, renewal of the party leadership and meetings in 2005).

Understanding the depth of the current crisis does not have to lead to the conclusion that it is impossible to surpass it, taking support from the PT and the multiple conflicts that develop in society. It is necessary to critically examine which alternatives are in gestation from this environment. The precipitate exit of small fragments of the PT to join the PSTU [8] could not constitute an alternative - this possibility would not correspond minimally to the historical meaning of the PT since its creation.

At the moment, what is necessary is to bring the forces of the left together to intervene in the same direction, knowing that the process is conflictual and can have more than one outcome. The fight for the PT as a socialist and democratic party is not settled. On the basis of this evaluation, the Socialist Democracy tendency has defended the construction of a broad left current in the PT, with the capacity to formulate programmatic contributions, to intervene in the central conflicts underway, address the whole social movement around the PT and the experience of the government, opposing their strategic choices.

A battle against the transformation of the PT into a transmission belt for governmental decisions is necessary; to fight to re-establish a party process on the basis of the programme of the party (it is this, and the decisions of the party's meetings, that must be the basis for party unity) and on internal democracy. A basic aspect of this fight is opposition to the disciplinary measures that are taken or proposed by the majority of the PT leadership, [9] and in particular the struggle against the threats of expulsion of parliamentarians. [10] The punishment cannot be considered legitimate on the basis of votes for positions long defended by the party, including in the last electoral campaign, that had been modified by the majority of the leadership without a broad and democratic debate.

Moreover, it is important to be clear that the debate on the PT's orientation cannot today be made only through internal quarrels - this should be a debate in the broad political and social movement for which the PT is a reference.

Nine months of Lula's government

The PT, in the broad sense, brings together what is most expressive of the Brazilian left, the result of more than twenty years of democratic and social struggles, having the PT as central reference. It is necessary to participate in the process from inside, with an alternative overall vision to that of the current majority of the leadership, presenting solutions that answer the problems we face.

The arrival in government means that the politics of the party majority are being tested much more quickly, as in the case of the economic policy; the process of debate on orientation has undergone a great acceleration, and has a dynamic of greater interlacing of party issues and social struggles. There is a greater politicization of the movements and more informed social classes (in which a critical vision of the government has grown rapidly).

There is more than one possible outcome to all this. The perspective that best orients a left intervention is that of fighting for a socialist reconstruction of the PT. It is also that which best corresponds to the new political situation - marked by the growth of conflicts and mobilizations, the conjuncture cannot be considered as defensive.

The construction of the PT as a democratic and socialist party was the strategic element that allowed the growth of the left in Brazil. It is necessary to fight to reconstruct this project. If we were to make the contrary choice, the risk of fragmentation of the left would become dominant, and the way would be opened for other regressions in the political and social struggle. The left of the PT can intervene in the processes of debate on orientation in the party with the legitimacy of those who defend the historical and strategic project of the PT - the project of a democratic and socialist party. This perspective allows the construction of a broad left current as a socialist pole of reference.

[1] See João Machado, [The two souls of the Lula government](#), IV 348, March 2003.

[2] The budgetary surplus before interest payments on the public debt.

[3] The draft can still be modified on the basis of discussion in the Senate, but no great changes are anticipated.

[4] The Ministry of Agrarian Development, also known as the Ministry of Agrarian Reform is headed by Miguel Rosseto, former vice-governor of the state of Rio Grande del Sul and a supporter of the Socialist Democracy Tendency of the PT. This ministry is independent of the Ministry of Agriculture, which is led by a pro-latifundist. The Brazilian government, which is not responsible to parliament, does not hold cabinet meetings - ministers are directly responsible to the President.

[5] The legislation inherited from preceding governments envisages the possibility of 'expropriating' lands which are 'unproductive', with the landowners being compensated in money or 'agricultural debt bonds'. The latter are less profitable for the latifundists. The agreement with the IMF which stipulates that the primary fiscal surplus should not be lower than 4.25% of the GDP and the method of calculation of this latter, which includes these bonds as a debit from this surplus, reduces the capacity of the Ministry of Rural Development and protects the latifundists.

[6] There was also a problem of management. Following the replacement, in early September 2003, of the president of the INCRA (Instituto Nacional de Colonização et Reforma Agrária - the body of the Ministry directly in charge of agrarian reform) there was an acceleration of the establishment of settlements of the beneficiaries of agrarian reform. The figure of 60,000 families could probably be reached at the beginning of 2004. That does not mean that the process of agrarian reform is easy - it is not certain that the Ministry will dispose of the means to establish anew 60,000 families in the budgetary year 2004 and even this figure is modest in relation to need. Several hundred thousand families are occupying lands and waiting to be settled.

[7] Folha de São Paulo September 12, 2003. A joke on the left has it that Finance Minister Palocci is about to break with the IMF because it is too left wing.

Nine months of Lula's government

[8] The United Socialist Workers Party (PSTU) originated from a split in the PT from the Socialist Convergence tendency (a Trotskyist current identified with 'Morenism') in 1992 - after the first PT Congress at which a settlement of the internal tendencies in the PT was adopted (which Socialist Convergence did not accept), and before the 8th National Meeting (June 1993), at which the left of the PT for the first time obtained more representatives than the moderate current (led by Lula) in the leadership of the party. A little after this split some activists (who were among the fiercest partisans of leaving the PT) left the PSTU and formed the CST (Corrente Socialista dos Trabalhadores) - a small tendency (primarily present in the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Pará) which returned to the PT. In the course of 2002, the CST split, the wing based in Rio Grande do Sul forming the MES (Movimento de Esquerda Socialista) after fusing with a local trade union current. The MES and CST are best known through the positions of the federal deputies Luciana Genro (MES) and João Batista Babá (CST), threatened by the PT majority. The MES and CST have now begun the construction of a movement to form another party (provisionally called the PTS - Socialist Workers Party), while deciding to establish it only after the expected expulsion of Luciana and Babá. Because of an orientation which had led it to isolate itself from the left of the PT, the MES split in 2003. Whether the new party will be formed in common with the PSTU is not yet settled and divergences seem to exist inside the potential components. For now this process concerns at most a few thousand people, while the PT has more than 100,000 members.

[9] The government succeeded in that the majority of the PT's parliamentary group voted in favour of pensions reform in the Chamber, though only through the imposition of a 'block vote' and threats against deputies opposed to the plans. Twenty four PT federal deputies voted for the proposals, but made a public declaration that they did so solely to respect the decision of the party, while three deputies voted against and eight abstained (which under the rules for approval of a constitutional amendment, was the same as a vote against). During the second vote, the procedure was repeated, with the difference that one of those who previously abstained voted against.

[10] Currently there is the threat of expulsion of senator Heloisa Helena (a supporter of the Socialist Democracy Tendency) and three federal PT deputies (who voted against pensions reform). Also eight federal deputies were recently suspended from the PT's parliamentary group for 60 days (the seven who abstained during the two votes and the deputy who abstained on the first vote and voted against during the second). This suspension represented a setback for the majority of the executive, who had announced before the vote that those who voted against or abstained were heading for expulsion from the party. The suspended deputies appealed against this measure to the National Leadership of the PT, which was to meet on October 25-26. At this meeting the proposals for expulsion will also be voted on.