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Brazilian Left

Hundreds leave Workers Party to join P-SOL

- News from around the world -

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There has been a significant walkout of Left activists from the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), to join the Party of Socialism and Freedom (P-SOL). Reports said that:-

1. Last Saturday (24 September) saw a public meeting in Fortaleza, capital of Ceara state, with PSOL senator Heloisa Helena present, at which João Alfredo, (a PT member of the Lower House of Congress for Ceara state who supports Democracia Socialista (DS), a current close to the Fourth International), along with some 2/3 of the local membership of DS, publicly announced they were leaving the PT to join the PSOL.

Ceara has been the strongest base of Democracia Socialista after Rio Grande do Sul. Local reports say this could mean 150-200 DS supporters joining the P-SOL.

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/new_parliamentariansiv1.jpg]

Existing PSOL national and state parliamentarians at press conference with those newly recruited from the PT. Heloisa Helena in white (front). João Alfredo at back centre (with beard and glasses).

Fortaleza Mayor, Luizianne Lins, and the other prominent DS members in Ceara are, for the time being, remaining in the PT. João Alfredo and the others have said they will continue to support her administration from the PSOL.

2. Last Sunday, Monday and Tuesday (26-28 September) saw the public announcement of similar moves in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Campinas, etc. In São Paulo, DS member of the Lower House of Congress, Orlando Fantazzini, announced his move to PSOL, along with several hundred PT members, including a number of DS members. In Rio, Chico Alencar (not a member of DS but a long-time collaborator in Congress) did the same.

3. At the same time, Ivan Valente and Maninha, the two members of parliament for the APS (formerly known as Socialist Force and the third biggest left current in the PT, after DS and Left Articulation) announced they were going over to the PSOL. It appears that the whole of APS is doing the same. They had been supporting Plinio Arruda Sampaio, a historic PT figure, close to the MST in the past, in the PT's internal leadership elections (he was regarded by many as the most 'left' candidate). Plinio also announced he was joining PSOL.

4. A number of other individuals and smaller currents in the PT, in various parts of the country, announced they were joining PSOL. These include MUS, a current that left Luciana Genro's MES because they thought there was still more to fight for in the PT, and important left leaders of the CUT trade union central, like Jorginho.

5. All this greatly adds to the numerical, social and parliamentary weight of PSOL, but it also makes the new party much more plural ideologically, and much less easy for some in the PT to portray (always unfairly) as a sectarian operation.

The walkouts come just as the PT left, in the figure of Raul Pont of DS (former mayor of Porto Alegre), has possibility of winning the the presidency of the PT. That is not the most likely outcome of the second round on October 9th, but in the first round the majority candidate, Ricardo Berzoini, close to Lula and all those involved in the corruption allegations, won 42% whilst the three main left candidates, Raul Pont (DS), Valter Pomar (Left Articulation) and Plinio Arruda Sampaio (independent) won 14.7%, 14.6% and 13.4% respectively.

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/international_seminar.jpg]

Some members of the PSOL executive at the party's recent international forum: (left to right) João Machado,

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Martiniano Cavalcante, Silvia Santos, Roberto Robaina e André Ferrari.

So it's just possible Raul Pont could win in the second round. Some of those who just left the PT said they would encourage those still inside to vote for Raul in the second round.

But many would agree with Bernadete Menezes of MUS when she said she thought it was unlikely that Raul would win, and in any case, with supporters of the Lula majority still in control of the PT national and almost all of the state leadership bodies, if he did win Raul would be "like the Queen of England" - ie a figurehead and powerless.

Overall these movements are of course a direct result of the corruption scandals (illegal campaign finances and the buying of votes in Congress) that have so badly undermined the PT and the increasingly Lula himself over the last few months.

However there have been two more immediate catalysts: those initial results of the PT's internal leadership elections, which exclude any wholesale "re-taking" of the PT by the left; and the deadline (Friday 30 September) for registering with political parties in order to stand in the next elections in October 2006.

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