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Brazil

The PT and the 2002 elections

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2002 is an election year in Brazil; on October 6 and 27 the first and second rounds of the presidential election are scheduled to take place. At the same time the federal state governors, senators and federal and state deputies will be elected. For the fourth time in succession, Luis Ignacio da Silva 'Lula', is the candidate of the Workers' Party (PT), supported by the CUT trade union federation. In contrast to his stance in the elections of 1989, 1994 and (to some extent) 1998, his campaign has been characterized by concessions to the demands of the employers, while the PT leadership has formed an alliance with the rightist Liberal Party ([see IV343](#)). We print here the public declaration on the elections adopted by the national coordination of Socialist Democracy, [1] the tendency of Fourth International supporters in the PT, on July 21, 2002.

[https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/18_Lula_in_victory.jpg]

We have followed with concern the direction in which the majority of the party leadership has been taking the election campaign, especially the presidential campaign and those in certain states. The decision to make the main alliance with a party of the right, the Liberal Party, the way in which some of our most cherished programmatic positions are being distorted, and the violation of our internal democracy, are absolutely vital problems for the role the PT aims to play in Brazilian society.

[https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/18_PT_star.jpg]

The underlying problem is how to run a campaign - in a complex situation involving 'blackmail by the markets' - that is both electorally and politically successful, and achieves our party's historic objectives: winning the central government in order to push forward a democratic revolution in Brazil, in line with the kind of society we have always said we want to build.

It needs to be said again: elections should be for us moments of open contest for another kind of society. It is that contest which can allow us to build sufficient political strength not only to elect our candidates, but also to elect them in a way that allows us to implement our programme. If we fail to win support for our proposals during the election campaign, if we fail to make clear who the people's enemies are, if we fail to mobilize people and give a real lead, then we will become hostages to those enemies, and if we should be elected to government, we will find ourselves unable to break out from the powerful web of interests and constraints that shape the neo-liberal policies.

What is at stake in the 2002 elections for President of the Republic, Federal Chamber of Deputies, State governments and legislative assemblies, [2] is the kind of nation we are going to build in the 21st century.

One decisive element in this process - especially in the presidential race - is the evolution of the country's economy. The Federal Government has tried to conceal its own responsibility for the crisis and to block discussion of fundamental alternatives. It has used economic terrorism to favour its own candidate and to force the popular opposition to bend to the interests of the financial markets. The very government that did so much to increase the country's dependence and give the so-called markets such tremendous leverage, now cynically demands that the opposition make a commitment to 'stay on the right path' of economic management.

The combined comments of the President of the US Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, the ex-Vice Director of the IMF, Stanley Fischer, the mega-speculator George Soros, and a host of others, on the 'negative market impact' of Lula's candidacy, show not only that our enemies have no qualms about treating us as enemies; but also that they are fully engaged in trying to ensure that Brazil remains under the dictatorship of capital and the international markets

(especially the North American markets).

On the other hand, the government candidate at these elections tries to combine the language of continuity and change. [3] He speaks both of 'defending economic stability' and of 'policies for growth' and 'income redistribution'. He thus attempts to recognize the deepening doubts about neo-liberalism, and address, in wholly opportunistic fashion, people's growing acceptance of the public policies promoted by the popular organizations, particularly by the parties and local governments of the left.

However the modifications to the neo-liberal litany proposed by the government candidate and the bourgeois parties remain well within the limits of that model. They would produce no significant changes in either the hegemonic bloc of classes or Brazil's dependent insertion into the world market. The anti-national and anti-social foundations of the current policies would remain.

The anti-democratic character of the governing bloc is becoming ever clearer. It is resorting to a variety of illegitimate and illegal operations in this election campaign, including most clearly its blatant use of the Federal Police against the PT.

Apart from Lula and the government candidate, Jose Serra, a third candidate, Ciro Gomes, has some chance in this election. [4] As the main representative of the bourgeois opposition, he too claims to offer a combination of continuity and change. He constantly reminds people of his time as a minister at the time the Real Plan was introduced (the plan which stabilized Brazil's currency and ended hyper-inflation in the early nineties). However, he also claims to be in opposition to the present government, even though he has the support of the main leaders of the PFL [5] and has the sympathy of other former government figures. In fact, he seeks the votes of those who are dissatisfied with the present government, but at the same time fear a change. This allows him to compete for the opposition vote.

A party like ours, which is committed to 'radicalising democracy', needs to build a dynamic discussion of our programme amongst the population. Only then will there be the mobilization and social legitimacy needed for us to break with the logic of the market, win the election and begin implementing our governmental programme.

Global break with existing model

The change the majority of the Brazilian people want will only be possible through a broad mass movement, which carries us into government and gives us the support to take on the social, political and economic transformations we will try to push through. We therefore need to make absolutely clear the polarization between two opposing projects: on the one hand, that of the conservative and liberal forces, identified with the currently prevailing model - this includes both the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and the bourgeois opposition, which wants reforms but no break with this model; on the other hand, that of millions of workers, youth, unemployed and social activists, men and women, who want a break with the prevailing model. A victorious project will not be built out of ambiguities. It demands clear choices and clear proposals.

Our political reference point at this time should be the resolutions of the PT's XII National Conference in December 2001, especially the document 'Conception and Guidelines for the PT's Governmental Programme for Brazil', which dealt with the development of an effective alternative to neo-liberalism in the electoral field. During the debates around the party's internal elections, there were big differences over the programme. But the adoption of this document at the XII Conference, with various amendments included, represented a convergence of positions within the party.

These Guidelines went back to the political-programmatic line the party had developed from its very founding and, more particularly, from the V National Conference in 1987, when we decided to stand Lula for President for the first time. It was that conference which formulated the strategy of the 'popular and democratic alternative'. Now, albeit in a less radical fashion than in the 1987 text, these 'Guidelines' put forward the 'democratic and popular character' of our government programme and state that, "there can be no doubt that a democratic and popular government will have to carry out a real and all-embracing rupture with the existing model, laying the basis for an alternative development model". There was, therefore, a very clear rejection of the demoralizing and truly disastrous failure of what could be called the 'De la Rúa alternative'. [6]

Avoiding any illusions about the progressive character of the Brazilian ruling classes, our party states in the document adopted that the implementation of our government programme "will only be possible if we assemble a new coalition of forces, one which breaks with the succession of conservative pacts which have dominated the country for decades".

The crisis of neo-liberalism and the rise of struggles in Latin America

In this way the PT's XII Conference reflected how far popular struggles and the questioning of the neo-liberal project have advanced both in Brazil and internationally. In fact, the international outlook for the class struggle has begun to change positively. The growing economic instability, the succession of crises, undermines the legitimacy of the neo-liberal project and feeds a resistance which, since the Seattle demonstrations at the end of 1999, has taken on an international character.

[https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/19_Brazil_demo.jpg]

The social and political crisis is deeper in Latin America. It is aggravated by the global recession which has a big effect in the region, and the increase in the foreign debt. Throughout the region, the introduction of neo-liberal policies led to the growth of poverty and unemployment, and made our countries more vulnerable to the pressures of international capital. But US imperialism wants more. It wants to impose a new colonial pact through the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). What's more, we shouldn't forget that the proposed FTAA comes along with a growing US military presence in the region, with restrictions on democratic freedoms, and with a reshaping of the role of regional bodies like the Organization of American States (OAS).

On the other hand, Latin America is perhaps the region which, for the moment, has gone furthest towards overcoming the dispersal and fragmentation of struggles which the neo-liberal offensive imposed. We are living through a time of new mobilizations and reorganization of the social movements. The 'argentinazo' (as they call last December's revolt in Argentina), the defeat of the US-sponsored military coup in Venezuela, the growth of social struggles and the institutional presence of the left in Brazil, the increasing mobilizations in Uruguay and the struggles spreading in Paraguay and Bolivia once again confirm a new period in the class struggle.

This process connects with the growth of the movement resisting capitalist globalisation and expresses the emergence of a renewed internationalism. The Porto Alegre World Social Forum is one expression of this.

In this context, the resolutions of the XII Conference set out an orientation which both necessary and entirely possible.

The need for coherent alliances

A socialist party should always seek social and political alliances, including electoral alliances, on the basis of programmatic agreements. In fact, the feasibility of a government able to carry through profound social transformations requires coherence between programme and alliances, in the framework of a broad popular mobilization and a wholesale democratisation of society. Electoral alliances with centre, centre-right or rightwing parties, not only do not guarantee such coherence or favour our ability to mobilize - they make both impossible.

Broadening our alliance policy to include the PL and other parties outside the popular and democratic camp, flies in the face of this requirement. It fails to take account of our history, and is not even justified by any serious balance sheet of our electoral successes and failures. On the contrary, everything we have learnt up until now reinforces the idea that a socialist and democratic party must separate itself politically from the right and ethically from corruption, and that the changes which we are fighting for require the concerted efforts of a united democratic camp, mobilized behind a project which expresses the hopes and will to struggle of the majority of the population.

Orestes Quercia and the sectors of the PMBD which support him [\[7\]](#) can be characterized as centre or centre-right forces. (The PT in Sao Paulo tried to achieve a local alliance with Quercia - they failed, but this allowed Quercia's people to support Lula nationally.) The PL, however, is definitely a party of the right. In various states it is part of the governing coalition. Its support for Paulo Maluf and Antonio Carlos Magalhaes [\[8\]](#) are eloquent enough. In the state of Alagoas, this party is controlled by the biggest local sugar baron, Carlos Lira. Its representatives have been involved in a series of corruption scandals and have links to Collor de Melo. [\[9\]](#) Two of them were named in the Parliamentary Inquiry into Drug Trafficking.

The texts of the XIIIth Conference resolutions, although they approved the extension of alliances towards the centre, maintained the criterion that these should be based on the programme, and certainly did not mention the possibility of including right-wing forces like the PL.

The government candidate presents himself as 'more of the same without being exactly the same', and tries to give himself credibility by suggesting that we are no longer a real alternative - suggesting that there is no real difference in programme and method between himself and Lula and the PT. The main bourgeois opposition candidate does the same.

In this situation it is more important than ever to preserve the distinct character of our project, and on that basis to present ourselves as committed representatives of the hopes and struggles of millions of Brazilian men and women.

We are therefore completely opposed to the alliance with Orestes Quercia and with the PL, both nationally and in the states, including in the state of Paraiba. In the latter state, our comrade Avenzoar Arruda, a leader of DS, supported the electoral alliance with the PL and the candidacy for Vice-Governor of a member of that party. This position, however, was not supported by the tendency. On the contrary, this alliance with the PL flies in the face of everything we have ever fought for in the PT.

The perspective of socialism

The failure of neo-liberalism, especially in Latin America, shows that capitalism is not a solution. The kind of development we want - economically viable, ecologically sustainable and socially just - cannot be built within its limits.

We believe the possibility of reaching government needs to be linked to broader processes of change, and to the building of socialism. This is supported not only by the historic positions of the PT, but by some of the party's experiences in local government, which amongst other measures have begun to incorporate organized sectors of the population into decision-making.

It is also supported by the development of the international situation, as was explicitly recognized in the Guidelines text adopted at the XIth Conference in Recife:

"There have been popular revolts in various countries, especially in Latin America, with the case of Argentina being the most recent and radical demonstration of the consequences of a policy imposed by the IMF. The growing instability of the world economy, with the succession of crises, has undermined the legitimacy of the neo-liberal project. This change in the world situation makes it possible to combine the defence of sovereignty with the struggle for a radically different world order to that currently being developed. To the globalisation of capital and markets, we should oppose the solidarity and internationalism of peoples. In this situation the defence of democratic socialism finds more favourable conditions and the possibilities of support for a left-wing programme on an international scale are growing." [10]

A victory for the PT in the elections will be hailed by the left across the entire world. In contrast to the recent electoral victories for the right, notably in Europe, a left government in Brazil would open new possibilities for the struggle for socialism. The strengthening of national sovereignty, the non-signature of the FTAA agreement, a project for economic development breaking with dependency, a vigorous movement of popular participation, public and democratic decision-taking on all questions, would be initiatives which would sketch the contours of another model.

Critique of the majority position on the leadership

There are three fundamental aspects around which the position of the PT leadership majority should be criticized: the expression of the programmatic content of the campaign, the definition of alliances and the internal functioning of the party.

[https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/20_Brazil_demo_2.jpg]

In the first place, before the pressure of the 'markets', our candidate and other representatives of the campaign have adopted contradictory positions. On the one hand they correctly denounce the responsibility of the Cardoso government for the crisis (for its policies which increase the dependency of the Brazilian economy and for its repeated insinuations that the candidates of the opposition are irresponsible) and they have reaffirmed the party's commitment to change. On the other hand, however, they have yielded to pressure and made many statements designed to calm the 'markets', placing on a secondary level the programmatic resolutions adopted by the XII National Conference. Worse still, they have said that a PT government would maintain a reasonable degree of continuity with current economic policy. Lula's 'Letter to the Brazilian people' synthesises these contradictory orientations; reaffirming the commitment to carry through fundamental transformations while simultaneously guaranteeing that those aspects of the current economic policy which financial capital holds dearest will be maintained. Finally, the worst aspect is that whereas the reference to necessary change is general, the guarantees to the markets are very precise.

Obviously, any statement by the PT favouring continuity with aspects of the current economic policy plays into the hands of the government candidate. It can - correctly - boast that it is more coherent in pursuing this policy.

Moreover, as one might expect, the efforts to calm the 'markets' have yielded very modest results. Their interpreters (the economists of the banks above all) and the members of the government's economic team have recognised the significant effort made by Lula to draw closer to their positions, while saying that it is necessary that he goes much further down this road. The Minister of the economy has 'suggested' an agreement on the maintenance of the current president of the central Bank. Other spokespersons for the 'markets' have condemned the viability of Lula's efforts and those of his campaign leadership to win their confidence, saying that 'reputation is something that is built over time' and that some years are still needed before Lula is considered as a 'friend of the markets'.

In fact, the only measure on Lula's part that could fully satisfy the 'markets' would be the announcement of his withdrawal as a candidate. Naturally, that would not in any way settle the crisis, which has its deep roots in the aggravation of dependency provoked by the policies of the Cardoso government.

The best way to counter this blackmail is not to give in to it but to contribute to the strengthening of the understanding, already acquired by a great number of people, that their interests are contrary to those of the bankers and speculators, so as to win a majority to the struggle necessary to overcome the obstacles to the construction of a new country.

The second and the third objectionable aspects of the PT leadership majority relate to the policy of alliances and the functioning of the party. In fact, both the content of its policy and the manner in which it is being implemented by the leadership deserve to be vehemently criticized.

An agreement with the PL would carry novel aspects, which would go beyond the fact that it would involve an alliance with a clearly right-wing party (and for that reason alone it would already be totally unacceptable). The orders given by the leadership majority amount to agreeing to all the PL's demands. That means creating the conditions under which the party will have the biggest possible number of deputies elected. In the states where the PL has an interest in allying itself with the PT, the alliance is imposed on our local organizations. Moreover, in some cases, the alliance is only concluded for the proportional part of the ballot. Where the alliance is not in the interests of the PL (in the states of São Paulo, Bahia or Rio de Janeiro, for example), the PL is free to do what it wants (to support Maluf and Magalhães for example). There is no incoherence on the part of the PL in this area, the incoherence is entirely on the part of the PT or, more precisely, the majority of its leadership.

One can only understand the position defended by Lula by hearing him affirm that what he is seeking is not the support of this party, which is moreover only very partially granted, but rather winning airtime and above all the possibility of having a big employer as vice-president. [\[11\]](#)

In the case of the state of Alagoas, the imposition of the alliance with the PL constitutes a violence against the entire history of the construction of the PT in this state and shows contempt for the consciousness of the party activists. It throws away the possibility the left had of winning control of the government in this state, a government finally freed from the yoke of the big industrial bosses and organized crime. That is why there was unanimity in the PT in Alagoas against this agreement. For this reason comrade Héloisa Helena [\[12\]](#) and other comrades have withdrawn their candidacies.

At no moment was this policy of alliance with the PL, with all it implies, fully and clearly debated by the party as a whole. The content of negotiations with the PL has not been clarified. Instead, this agreement was imposed on the party by its leadership.

We fight for a democratic party, where collectively taken decisions are respected - in particular the deliberations of national conferences. A party where candidates are not above the party. This is fundamental for both programmatic

and electoral reasons: our internal democracy gives us the credibility to defend democracy in society.

The very character of the alliance with the PL forces us to ask how it is possible to transform the country by reproducing the practices of the traditional politics. The policies of guarantees to the 'markets' and alliance with the centre and the right have been implemented by the leadership majority on the basis of the argument that they they would improve Lula's electoral chances. Even if that was true, it would not be a sufficient justification: our objective can not be to win elections at any price, if it means the abandonment of our coherence and our programme.

It is very doubtful, however, that this political gamble will have electorally favourable consequences. At the end of the day, the coherence which is part of the heritage of the PT has constituted a big advantage, including on the electoral level. To have a vice-presidential candidate like senator José Alencar (who is not only an employer but also belongs to a right wing party supporting Maluf and Magalhães) will not help Lula's candidacy: that contradicts the entire history of Lula and the PT. Moreover, the fact that Lula seems to defend elements of Cardoso's policy - like the establishment of a budgetary exercise disregarding the servicing of the debt and the measures of inflation - can only benefit Serra. Or perhaps favour a candidate who can identify themselves more naturally with this idea of change without a fundamental break, like Ciro Gomes.

To conclude, our critique of certain fundamental aspects of the orientation of the campaign comes from people who fight for the victory of the PT and, more than that, for a government which can initiate a process of fundamental transformation, universalisation of rights, participation and popular organization and conquest of effective national sovereignty.

A government which constitutes a step towards the construction of socialism, the elimination of all forms of oppression and exploitation.

What is happening now is too serious to be treated as if it were a minor incident, that will be forgotten once the elections are over, whatever the result. What is at stake is the future of the PT as a socialist and democratic party.

[1] At the last internal PT elections in September 2001 the Socialist Democracy current's list gained 14.86% of the votes (30,441) and its candidate for the presidency of the party, Raul Pont, a former mayor of Porto Alegre, came second (behind José Dirceu, who was elected with 55.29% of the votes), with 17.53%. The DS is particularly strong in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, where its activists inspired the experience of the participatory budget in several cities (including the capital, Porto Alegre) and at the level of the state, governed since 1999 by Olívio Dutra (who supported the DS list at the 2001 congress). This declaration was drawn up by the national coordination of DS on July 21, 2002.

[2] Brazil is a federal republic made up of 26 states and a federal district around the capital, Brasília.

[3] The government candidate is José Serra, in his youth a member of Ação Popular (an organization of Catholic origin which became Maoist) and president of the National Union of Students, exiled after the military coup in 1964. He came back to Brazil in 1979 following an amnesty) and joined the MDB (the legal opposition party under the dictatorship), then the PMDB. He was one of the founders of the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (the PSDB, led by F.H. Cardoso). Inside the government of FHC he appeared to be an 'internal critic' of neo-liberalism, supporting instead 'neo-developmentalism' ('developmentalism' with a neo-liberal flavour). His candidate for the vice-presidency is on the 'progressive' wing of the PMDB.

[4] Ciro Gomes is running for the Socialist Popular Party (PPS), which emerged from the old Brazilian Communist Party (pro-Moscow), which has undergone a similar evolution to that of the Left Democrats (DS) in Italy. In 1994 the PPS supported the candidacy of Lula, but subsequently it has adopted an increasingly ambiguous attitude towards the government of F. H. Cardoso. In the 1988 presidential elections Gomes won 10.97% of the votes (behind Lula - 31.71%, and FHC - 53.06%).

The PT and the 2002 elections

[5] The Party of Liberal Forces (PFL), the main right-wing party in Brazil, was founded in 1984 by politicians originating from the military dictatorship (1964-1979), with a background of serious corruption in São Paulo state in particular. Its historic leader in this state, Paulo Maluf, a former governor, has the reputation of being linked to the mafia. The party split from the governing coalition early this year.

[6] From the name of the former Argentine president, whose policies led to financial, economic and social crisis.

[7] The Party of the Movement of Brazilian Democracy (PMDB) has its origins in the MDB, the legal opposition party under the dictatorship. After the end of military rule it was the main parliamentary party, but it suffered an erosion of its forces following corruption scandals involving its most prominent leaders (in particular the ex-governors of Sao Paulo, Orestes Quércia and Luiz Antonio Fleury). It supported Fernando Henrique Cardoso (the outgoing president) at the 1999 election and has participated in his government.

[8] Antônio Carlos Magalhães is a former governor of the state of Minas Gerais, and a notoriously corrupt member of the PMDB.

[9] Fernando Collor is a former Brazilian president. Elected in 1989, he fell from power after the big anti-corruption mobilizations (he had received 6.5 million dollars between 1989 and 1992) in September 1992.

[10] Article 54 of the text 'Conception and guiding lines of the PT's governmental programme for Brazil' adopted at the 12th meeting held in Recife.

[11] Senator José Alencar, head of the PL, is a big textiles magnate.

[12] Héloisa Helena, a senator, is a historic PT leader and a supporter of the Socialist Democracy tendency.