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Brazil

Letter to members of the PT from FI leaders

- Debate - Building new parties of the left -

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1 - Our party is an inheritor of and a main character in the struggle for democratic freedoms, national sovereignty and social equality of the Brazilian people. It was as such that we organized and helped to articulate major movements and social-political struggles, that we ran for elections and held legislative and political offices. And, for the first time in Brazilian history, we elected the President of the Republic. However, this history and these milestones, are not indelible and their permanence cannot be taken for granted.

2 - The federal government headed by our comrade Lula works under very hard conditions. A lot of time and conflict will be necessary to repair the damage done to the country by a decade of neo-liberal hegemony and two decades of military rule. A lot of firmness in strategy and tactical flexibility will be necessary to survive and overcome the threats posed by American imperialism. A lot of struggle both in the political and ideological arenas will be necessary to change a balance of forces which still favors conservatism and continuity. A lot of political, administrative and technical ability will be necessary to face the difficulties inherent to the government of a country like Brazil.

3 - We are among those who strive to help the Lula administration bring about economic, social, political, and cultural change, defeat the prevailing neo-liberal hegemony and prevent the forces defeated in the 2002 elections, which still hold important spaces in the federal government, from regaining the center of the executive branch. To do so we have to bear in mind the urgency of the moment. It is not only the outcome of the 2006 elections that will be determined in 2005, but also the destinies of Brazil and of the PT, at least for the next few decades.

4 - We want to win the 2006 elections, and this means more than reelecting the President. We want victory to come not out of fear for the return of right-wing forces to power, but out hope and enthusiasm over a government that will have affirmed our national sovereignty, widened the scope of political freedom and taken important steps toward social equality. In order to achieve all this, 2005 has to be different from 2003 and 2004, not only as regards administrative achievement, however fundamental, but especially in the arena of great politics, the battle for projects and vigorous ideological contention.

5 - We were defeated in this area in the 2004 elections. This does not mean that the federal government underwent a straight, clear, and unequivocal judgment, since the process was marked by heterogeneity and the balance of local and regional forces. However, their national character is conspicuous since the 2004 results will have a cumulative effect on the struggle for projects and the outcome of the next election.

6 - In all elections it took part, from 1982 to 2002, our Party has always combined proposals for the near future and medium and long term projects. During the last decade and up to the presidential election this took the form of a confrontation between a democratic and popular program and a neo-liberal one. In the 2004 elections, this confrontation lost its force. As a result, we were forced into a defensive position against the opposition of center and right wing forces which, especially in the second turn, launched a massive political and ideological attack on our Party. It is impossible not to associate this fact with the ongoing postponement - and attending frustration - of real change in the living and working conditions of our people.

7 - The main item in the "accursed heritage" of a 8-year government by the PSDB is the inordinate power of the Treasury Department and Central Bank and the policy they have implemented which has held country, workers, people, small and medium-sized businesses, as well as government, under a tight control that checks the virtuous

growth of the domestic market, precludes a redistribution of wealth and the overcoming of a historical inequality, an actual increase of the minimum salary and pensions, the implementation of projects with strategic importance to the government, and favors the financial sectors. High interest rates - and they have been raised again - the unjustifiable record surpluses in the balance-sheet, the subservience to financial capital and the so-called markets, that is the concern of speculators, hold the nation in a vice. We need another direction, another social and economic model, different from those recommended by the IMF.

8 - We have never been under the delusion that changing the social and economic model, defeating the financial capital and the large landed estates, that now go under the name of agribusiness - the social forces that are still hegemonic in Brazilian economy - would be a quick and easy task. The majority of the working class knows this. But if we compromise and do not offer signs of change, we will be grounding the position of those who say there is no alternative to neo-liberalism.

9 - There are many lessons to be learned from the events of 2003 and 2004, especially those made apparent by the results of municipal elections. These lessons are the decisive importance of party activism, the need to reconstruct our relationship with social movements (and help to rebuild them), the losses consequent upon the surprising alliances made by the government in congress, and the Party's necessary independence from the government. In this respect, the PT has to combine its condition of major supporter of the government with that of "left wing" in the coalition that elected and has been supporting Lula's government. Our Party cannot be a transmission belt of all decisions and choices made by the administration lest there will not be anyone to work for the alteration in the balance of forces restraining the progressive sector of our own government. Lessons are also to be drawn from the strategy adopted by the center-rightist opposition and the great capital during 2003 and 2004. In spite of hints by sectors within the very PT and the government - which went to the point of suggesting an "approximation", "fusion", and "identity" between the PT and the PSDB - there is no denying: in 2004 the PSDB has reaffirmed itself as the organizing political center of the new Brazilian right, with the ability to articulate and provide a shared discourse and tactics for the opposition within the Judiciary branch, state governments, the big business and the media.

10 - The defeat of the PSDB, the old and the new right, the great capital and its Brazilian and foreign allies, will require a change in the course followed by our Party and our government.

It will require the reinstatement of the PT as a leftist reference for Brazilian society and as a main character in the struggle for socialism and for the democratic and popular program that gave us the victory in the 2002 elections. It will require changes in the economic policy which now prevents growth and, more especially, the deep social changes the country needs. By the way, more relevant than the growth or otherwise of the GNP is the diminishing part played by labor in the national income. It will require a distinctive change in the relationship between the Executive power and its supporters in the national congress which, up to now, has been conducted with the usual back-scratching of Brazilian institutional politics. It will require redeeming the Party's ethical assets, in the form of a resolute refusal of all practices detrimental to public funds and public morality. It will require the reestablishment of a dialogue between the government and the social movements and the fulfillment of their most deeply felt and fair demands. Finally, it will require political aggressiveness. And political aggressiveness is possible only when we can motivate, involve and move the millions of Brazilians who have always seen the PT as the actual supporter of popular struggle and still want to see the party as an instrument of social change.

11 - These are the great commitments that must direct the Party in the formation of new governments, where we win the elections, and the opposition action, where we are defeated, in our relations with social movements and party bases, in the World Social Forum and the celebrations of the 25 years of existence of the PT, in our relationship with the government and in the process of electing new party directors.

A change in general direction, both in the Party and the government, will be the best way to defeat the right-wing opposition led by the PSDB, which will have only one purpose for the next two years: the articulation of a political and electoral bloc supported by financial power and the large media and strong enough to defeat us in the next presidential elections.

12 - The World Social Forum and the PT's 25th anniversary are fit occasions for discussing with the Brazilian and international left the changes of course the Party and the Government need. The PT has no interest in precluding discussion, especially over the economic model we have and the one we wish. Open and sincere discussion of all disagreements is essential, for it is the only way to the strength and unity we need to defeat the rightist opposition. Furthermore, it is the only way of producing a basic program comprising the commitment to change that made Brazilians vote for Lula in 2002. This basic program should include widening the scope of democracy, popular participation, agrarian reform, recovering the minimum salary, reducing interest-rates, and increasing public investment. 2005 - a year without elections - will also be the right time for the Party to form new activists. The latest electoral campaign brought us a great number of sympathizers, supporters and new activists, who support us rather for the actual achievements of our administrators and congressmen than for the party's program. On the other hand, we cannot remain indifferent to an outstanding phenomenon in the latest contest: a decrease in the PT's activist drive and a growth of social indifference.

13 - Finally, direct elections to choose new party directors will be held in the second term of 2005. In this direct election process we will defend a living party for society, connected with the workers' yearnings, not a party for the state, a passive instrument to the ruling power, hidden behind administrative machines and their self-perpetuating logic. We will also reaffirm our historical and programmatic commitment with overcoming our international dependence, with the distribution of income and wealth, the enhancement of political awareness among our people and the rejection of the manipulating and corrupted party practices we have always avoided. We will defend the party's independence from governments, including the federal government, which has our solidarity. The move to a new economic, political and social model will not begin without a new attitude and new practices in the Party. And without this change, we will not achieve the purpose that made us run for and win the presidency. These are some of the ideas discussed in the seminar held on December 6, 2004, and that will form the basis for consolidating the unity of the national trends and regional groups that took part in the debate or share the same ideas - unity in social struggle, in government and parliamentary action, and in the choice of candidates to the presidency of the national, state, and municipal committees. With this in mind, the participants in this Seminar will hold a new meeting in January 2005, during the World Social Forum, now with the aim of discussing our alternative economic policy. We will also organize a demonstration questioning directions to Brazil and the Workers' Party. Seminars and demonstrations of the same sort will take place in all Brazilian states and towns.

- ▶ Articulação de Esquerda, tendência interna do PT
- ▶ Democracia Socialista, tendência interna do PT
- ▶ Alternativa Socialista
- ▶ Construção: Socialismo e Democracia
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- ▶ Movimento Socialista Cabano
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- ▶ Sonia Rejane da Silva - Resende/RJ
- ▶ Zélia Franklin (CE)