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Brazil

Left faces choices

- IV Online magazine - 2004 - IV362 - December 2004 -

Publication date: Thursday 9 December 2004

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The Lula government is the product of at least 20 years of accumulation of forces inside the Brazilian left. Today, our government applies an economic policy which perpetuates the hegemony of financial capital, the agro-alimentary industry and the export sector. This contradiction between what president Lula has done and what president Lula does explains the political ambivalence of the bourgeoisie towards the federal Government.

On the one hand it applauds Palloci [\[1\]](#) and on the other it prepares the defeat of Lula. At the end of the day, the current government is not, despite everything, viable from the viewpoint of the bourgeoisie, which is why it is not very likely that Lula can both maintain his current economic policy (which erodes his own social, electoral and ideological base) and win the next elections.

If the right wins, whether electorally or "from the inside" (by bringing about a definitive break by the government with all its commitments towards the movement from which it originated), that would impose on the socialist left a necessary reorganization, which would take decades.

Whatever the motive, a defeat for the Lula government would "objectively" mean a strengthening of the right. That is why it is risky to consider as "left" whoever works to defeat or bring down this government - an attitude which differs from political activity, including public political activity, aimed at defeating the currently hegemonic orientation inside it.

The Party of Socialism and Liberty (PSoL) claims to build a left opposition to the Lula government. Obviously, it does not amount to a "constructive" opposition aimed at bringing pressure from the outside, in the sense of a change of orientation. If that were the case, there would be no basic difference between the position of the PSoL and that of the left of the PT; there would only be more freedom and fewer constraints for those who, from the outside, criticize the course of the government.

The PSoL seeks to build a "destructive" opposition, acting as if it was possible to simultaneously fight the Lula government and the right, thus offering the country a left, socialist and genuinely democratic and popular government.

The reality is that there is not and there does not seek likely to be a wave of struggles which can give birth to a new socialist, democratic and popular pole, sufficiently strong to bypass the left of the PT, the Lula government and the traditional right.

That is why broad sectors of the Brazilian left have opted for a critique of the objectives of the Lula government. It is only in modifying them that we place ourselves in continuity with the political wave which started in the late 1970s. In all the other hypotheses - whether it amounts to the pursuit of the current economic policy or of the return of the traditional right - we will experience a defeat and a much deeper dispersion than what we knew after the 1964 coup.

The emergence of the PSoL is a sign that this dispersion has already begun. Paradoxically, the new party seems to have followed a PT-style model of organization. Which is natural for whoever claims to have an influence here and today in the class struggle going on in the country. It is necessary to have a mass base, a parliamentary presence and participate in the electoral battles.

Yet, unlike the PT - which was initially small but was carried along by a vigorous wave of political struggles - the

PSoL has emerged in a period of weak struggles. Also, unlike the PT, which in its first years gave little importance to the institutional struggle, the PSoL places excessive value on its parliamentarians and has already launched a candidate for the presidency of the Republic, reproducing thus in caricatural fashion the tragic dependence of the PT on Lula's candidacy.

Clearly, the political and social process which has taken more than two decades to alter profoundly the political and social project of the PT, has profoundly marked the PSoL from its foundation. That would also be the case for all the sectors that wish to break now with the experience of the PT and the government, investing energy in the long-term construction of another strategic alternative, at the price of a reduced political intervention in the current period.

The change in the positioning of the PT in recent years has been the "accelerated" version in the 1990s of the dynamic that European social-democracy followed over a century of existence - from revolution to reform, socialism to capitalism, social-democratic to neoliberal capitalism (eventually via the so-called "third way" or the centre-left).

Our problem today is not summed up in the political objectives of the PT and/or the Lula government; the concern is to rebuild, in the Brazilian working class, the democratic popular and socialist impulsion it possessed at the end of the 1970s and through the 1980s.

Today a big part of the Brazilian social movement, starting with the trades unions, is under the hegemony of moderate sectors of the PT and the CUT trade union federation. Another sector is genuinely critical of party political activity and acts as if the "social movements" were capable of resolving the problems of the conquest of power and the construction of socialism.

Is it possible to change the country without resolving the question of power, of the state? Is it possible to resolve the problem of power, without struggles and party political organization? How, in the political conditions we live in, can a left party avoid being co-opted by the bourgeois order, or being reduced to a condition of being an "eternal minority", as is the case with most socialist and revolutionary parties?

We will not answer these questions by transforming impatience into theoretical argument, or by forgetting that our enemy is the right. We need political and social force, to incarnate an alternative strategy and a programme. Such a force will not be the product of a defeat of our government. In fact, a defeat for the Lula government, if it happens, will lead to a sharp reduction in the forces of socialism and liberty on the Brazilian political scene.

That is why, while respecting the choice of those who have preferred to follow another road, that we will continue - inasmuch as it is possible - to struggle to transform the objectives of the government and the PT.

[1] Antonio Palloci, minister of finance in the Lula government, is considered as the key figure behind the neoliberal and pro-IMF orientation.