

The Long March of Brazil's Labor Party

Monday 22 May 2006, by [LÖWY Michael](#) (Date first published: 3 March 2003).

Contents

- [Brazil: A Country Marked \(...\)](#)
- [The Labor Party's Long March](#)
- [Electoral Victory and the New](#)

Brazil: A Country Marked by Social Apartheid

According to megaspeculator George Soros in a press statement some months before the October 2002 presidential election in Brazil, financial markets make today's presidential elections and, therefore, a leftist candidate would be unable to win in Brazil. An erroneous prediction. It was the Brazilian people who voted and their choice was not in line with the New York Stock Exchange. The elected candidate was not the one who Soros preferred, and neither did many other speculators, bankers, investors, financial agents and directors of multinational corporations. It was neither the favorite candidate of the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, the IMF nor the U.S. Federal Reserve. Nor was it the preferred candidate of the Brazilian oligarchy: large property owners, right-wing capitalists, neo-liberal economists and reactionary politicians. The candidate who did win was a worker, unionist, and former political prisoner: Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, the candidate of the Labor party. It is the first time in the history of Brazil and the Americas that a worker was elected president of the Republic. This spectacular electoral victory-more than sixty-one percent of the vote was garnered by da Silva-might very well open a new chapter in Brazil's history.

Brazil is an immense country by means of its sheer population (170 million inhabitants), land (it makes up the majority of Latin America), and natural resources. However, it is a country where the majority of the population lives in the worst poverty. In fact, in a recent international classification by the United Nations, Brazil came up as the most inegalitarian country on the planet; a country where the gap between the privileged minority and the impoverished majority is one of the greatest in the world. According to some observers, Brazil is a kind of "Swiss-India"; the wealthy live as those in Switzerland, the poor as those in India.

This inequality is particularly evident in the countryside where a minority of great rural property-owners monopolize most of the land while the majority of the peasants have only tiny plots, or no land at all. With the development of capitalism in the countryside and the replacement of alimentary cultures, or grain crops, with the extensive grazing of cattle-destined for export to McDonald's stores-the peasants have been expelled from the land by *pistoleiros*, henchmen of the land owners.

With the worsening of living conditions in the rural hinterlands-most notably in northeast Brazil-thousands of peasants fled to the cities and great metropolitan centers such as Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo. Some found work in industry or in services, but unemployment rates were greatly elevated and the majority remain excluded and crowded, and the *favelas*, the miserable shantytowns that surround the cities where there is no electricity, running water, or sewage system and where one could only survive by performing marginal activities-street trade, prostitution, or even simple

criminal acts like drug trafficking.

There also exists a real *social apartheid* throughout the country which is seen in big cities through the physical separation of mansions and the wealthy quarters, surrounded by walls and electric barbed wire and guarded by private armed guards who carefully patrol all entrances and exits. It is social discrimination which also has an implicit racial dimension where the great majority of the poor are black or half-caste.

After twenty years of military dictatorship which ended in 1985, Brazil has seen a return to democracy and civil government. This undeniable political progress has not been followed by effective social change. Every government, to the right or center, which has been in power since 1985 could only apply the neo-liberal politics of structural adjustment advocated by the IMF: the privatization of public services, the reduction of spending on public health and education, and, above all, the payment of extreme debt which has reached astronomical numbers and absorbs the entire surplus gained from exports. This is notably the case with the center-right government, in power for eight years, lead by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a former leftist intellectual who converted to neo-liberalism and who has become one of the best pupils of the IMF in Latin America. Thanks to Cardoso, the last existing publicly owned enterprises, such as the Electric Company, have been privatized and sold to foreign corporations many of which have not wanted to make the most basic and necessary investments. Brazil has been plagued over the years by *apagões*, sudden ruptures in electricity that plunge cities or even entire regions into darkness.

However, democratization has allowed progress throughout the whole country with the emergence of a new labor movement, both peasant and popular, which fights for the poor and their rights against the neo-liberal policies of the government. Part of this movement of the new class-based and independent unionism which surged at the end of the 1970s and organized the Central Labor Union with its six million members-in addition to the Rural Landless Workers Movement which mobilized thousands of peasants for agrarian reform-was the Labor party.

Brazil's social and economic situation is dramatic. The only hope is the vitality of social movements and the desire of the population for radical change of which Lula's victory is an expression. At the time of the recent 2001 poll organized at the request of a proprietor's association, fifty-five percent of men interviewed said that Brazil needed a socialist revolution. When they were asked what they understood as "socialism," they responded by citing a few values: friendship, community, distribution, justice, and solidarity. These are the values that the various social movements, as well as the Labor party, have referred to.

The Labor Party's Long March

The founding of the Labor party in 1979 marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Brazil's labor movement: the construction of a mass party, the expression of the political independence of workers from within a democratic, pluralist and militant party and inspired by an anti-capitalist program. The Labor party represents the crowning achievement of a century of efforts by Brazilian workers to attain political self-expression. At the beginning of the century, the anarcho-syndicalists struggled for an independent proletarian orientation, but their ideological orientation rejected the very idea of a political party with a mass base. The Brazilian Communist party has probably been the most important attempt at constructing a true workers' party in Brazil. But, despite the abnegation and spirit of sacrifice of the militants and their plan, the Stalinist logic led it to adopt a politics of subordination to the "national" bourgeoisie. This orientation, combined with an ideological dependence through its relation with the USSR and the absence of any internal

democracy, engendered a series of splits which, from 1962 to the present, divided and weakened it (the majority of their historic directors had abandoned it during this period). With regard to the Brazilian Workers' Party founded by Getulio Vargas in 1945 and led after that by João Goulart and under the new name of the Democratic Workers' Party by Leonel Brizola, it never represented anything more than a populist movement without organic, political or programmatic engagements vis-à-vis the working class. In the end, the small groups of the "armed left" from the 1960s and 1970s never gained any real presence other than within the interior of the proletariat and they met one tragic end after another owing to their practices. The result was an isolation of city and country workers. But with the Labor party there appeared for the first time a mass party which was the expression of workers themselves, a party organically rooted in the working class, the peasantry and the intelligentsia.

The formation of the Labor party during the years 1979-81 was due to a confluence of diverse currents each of which brought its particular sensibility and contribution to the construction of the party. First, there were the "authentic" syndicalists, initiators and directors of the process of building the Labor party, an expression of a new worker syndicalism of the masses, combative and class-based, the symbol of which is the region of the ABC (the industrial suburbs of greater Sao Paulo, where the "new proletariat" is concentrated); second, those from the rural unions and peasant leagues, frequently of Christian inspiration; third, those from grassroots ecclesiastical communities, rural workers and other Christian sectors of socialist tendencies; fourth, those from the old militants from the Communist party or the "armed left," which had quit their organizations; fifth, some groups from the revolutionary left of different tendencies-notably Trotskyists-which had split, with arms and baggage, from the new party; and sixth, some intellectuals: sociologists, economists, teachers, writers, journalists, interested researches in the workers movement and Marxist theory (or, occasionally, of a Christian education). To a certain extent, one could argue that the creation of the Labor party had been *the historic confluence between the (working) class and "their" intellectuals*, two social forces which until now had followed parallel paths, sometimes converging, and frequently diverging.

The formation process of the Labor party presents some specific characteristics quite peculiar to contemporary Brazil. For example, the important role of the communists at its foundation. In another way, it resembles an example taken directly from certain "classic" texts from Marx and Engels: a workers' movement rises up in the great modern industrial centers, a movement that discovers, through the course of its economic struggles, the necessity of a political party of workers, a party which combined the most diverse classes of society, all under the leadership of the working class.

The diversity of the various sources which gave birth to the Labor party have translated themselves into the very foundations of the party, in its leadership. Among some of them one finds, for example: Luis Inacio da Silva, "Lula," a settler descended from the miserable rural regions of Brazil's northeast, a labor organizer and president of the metal-workers union of São Bernardo, imprisoned by the military dictatorship in 1979. Olivio Dutra, president of the Labor Union of Banks, first Labor party mayor of Porto Alegre, later governor of South Rio Grande. Apolonio de Carvalho, an old communist leader, fighter in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War and in the French Resistance (he had led the liberation of many cities by mid-1944). Mario Pedrosa, founder of the left (Trotskyist) opposition from its beginning and on through thirty years, animator of the United Anti-Fascist Front from 1934, a founder of the Fourth International (1938) and later a socialist militant inspired by the ideas of Rosa Luxemburg. Jose Dirceu, leader of the student movement in 1968, imprisoned by the military, freed in 1969 in exchange for the American ambassador kidnapped by Brazilian guerillas. Exiled to Cuba, he returned in secret to Brazil to try once again to start up the armed struggle.

This diversity also appears, in the *pluralist* character of the Labor party, that admits in its heart a variety of currents and tendencies, where some are strongly structured, with their own press, etc. These tendencies are far from being set, and over the twenty-two year span of the Labor party's existence, many regroupings have taken place. This brought a great vitality to the internal life of the party, the opposite of the grey monolithic quality of those bureaucratic parties reminiscent of Stalin. All together, this diversity has not been a factor of division or source of weakness of the party- despite a minimal amount of splits-but rather a source of enrichment and reciprocal learning.

One of the specific aspects of the Labor party is its narrow link with the most radical sectors of the "Christian people." It is said that Brazil is the Latin American country where Liberation Theology has had the deepest penetration and where the movements of the base ecclesiastical communities have been most developed, gathering millions of Christians (above all among the poorest) in the cities and the countryside.

But now, a significant portion of the most active and engaged militants from the CEBs (country workers of the land and in the urban areas) and peasants are found completely naturally in the ranks of the Labor party. One of the principle organizers of these communities, the Dominican Friar Betto (imprisoned for five years under the military dictatorship) has played an important role in numerous radical Christians joining the party.

In reality, without the existence of this culture of Christian contestation, sermonizing (even lecturing) self-organization at the base of the emancipation of the poor, it is not likely that the party would be able to form itself, and above all, to rapidly win any mass influence. That being said, the Labor party is no longer a confessional party-it does not submit to the views of the Church, and it does not espouse any Catholic social doctrine: in a word, it bears no resemblance to the Christian democracies of Latin America.

How was the Labor party born? Since 1978, the year of large labor strikes on the outskirts of São Paulo, many "authentic" radical leaders began to put into motion the idea of an autonomous Labor party; probably as a response to the reflection on the experience of the strike itself, of its confrontation with the military-police apparatus of the state, and for some, one of the premier liabilities of social struggle in the recent history of the country (since 1964). For example, in December 1978, when one of the Meetings for Democracy protected by the liberal opposition and the left in Rio de Janeiro, da Silva, sustained by other radical leaders who were present, rejected the predominant theory of the Meeting: to gather around the resistance a "large democratic front" to face the military regime. Significantly, it refers to the experience of 1964 as an argument against the workers' movement's traditional politics of subordination: "If we, the workers, are not vigilant by relating the unity of the oppositional forces, we will suffer defeat like that in 1964, when the bourgeoisie broke with the workers, turned their backs and left them behind." Without denying the necessity of the solidarity of all those against the military regime, Lula insisted on the importance of an independent workers' politics: "The working class follows the irreversible path for the conquest of its objectives. It will create sooner or later a political party . . . It is necessary that the working class not be only an instrument. It is fundamental that it participate directly in manifesting the force that it represents. And, the participation, in the political field, implies that class constitutes its own party." [i]

In October 1979, at the first National Meeting of the Labor party in São Bernardo do Campo, there was a stronghold of workers from the Lula faction and it is concretely the moment of the founding of the new party. A brief political declaration was approved at this conference which clearly affirmed the aim of the Labor party: "The Labor party aims that all economic and political power be exercised directly by the workers. It is the only way to put an end to exploitation and to oppression." At the same time, the document calls upon "all the democratic forces to constitute itself as a large front of

the masses against the dictatorial regime.” The Labor party also proposed to fight for the formation of a central union of workers, in emphasizing that “its construction passes, necessarily, by the reversal of the actual union structure submitted to the state.”

In April and May 1980, a mass strike of 250,000 metal workers took place in Sao Bernardo; following police and military intervention-the arrest of Lula and his principle leaders-the movement was stopped; but it had revealed, through its exceptional length of time (forty-two days) and through its ability at mass organization (daily meetings of tens of thousands of workers), the surprising force of the new union whose leaders were taken partly from the formation of the Labor party.

Between May and June of that same year, a new National Conference of the Labor party was organized with delegates from twenty-two provinces of Brazil representing approximately 30,000 members of the party. A manifesto and a program were approved which defined the Labor party as “the real political expression of all those exploited by the capitalist system,” and as a mass party, large, open and democratic. Its aim was to dismantle the repressive machinery of the existing regime and to create “an alternative power for the workers and the oppressed . . . which advances down a path toward a society without both exploiters and exploited.” However, at this time, the Labor party was still far from having elaborated a “doctrine”: many questions and programmatic definitions were deliberately left open to permit a larger debate and a progressive “ripening” of the mass of militants.

A bit after its founding, the Labor party experienced spectacular growth: at the end of 1982, it already had 245,000 members throughout the country. But the result of the legislative elections of 1982 were quite deceiving: they garnered three point five percent of the votes and only eight Federal Deputies. The press declared that it was the end of the Labor party. On the other hand, with the founding of the Central Union of Laborers in 1983, the first central mass union in the history of modern Brazil, the Labor party found a powerful ally in the workers movement.

In 1984, the Labor party actively participated in the campaign for direct presidential elections which mobilized millions of citizens in an unprecedented mass movement and also practically put an end to the military regime. Loyal to the democratic demands of the population, it refused to confirm the “indirect” election of a new president (Tancredo Neves, of the moderate opposition party) by the House-an illegitimate solution negotiated by the liberal opposition with the military.

With the elections of November 1986, the Labor party doubled its electoral score passing six point five percent and extending its influence well beyond Sao Paulo, its traditional stronghold. But the first great leap was the municipal elections of 1988 which saw the Labor party win mayorships in most cities, some regional capitals such as Porto Alegre and Sao Paulo, the biggest industrial town in Brazil and in Latin America. In the end, when direct presidential elections took place in 1989, Lula came in ahead of his “leftist” rivals-the populist Brizola and the social democrat Covas-and regained in the second term elections opposite the conservative candidate Collor de Melo (broadcast by “Globo TV,” the most powerful media machine in the country). Although he was not elected, Lula gathered an impressive percentage (forty-seven percent) of the vote.

During its seventh National Convention in 1990, the Labor party approved a document which gathered together and systematized, after a long internal debate, its conception of socialism:

The socialism that we want to construct can only be realized by establishing a truly democratic economy. It must therefore be organized around the social property of the means of production-which should not be confused with the property of the state-which will take the forms chosen democratically by society.

This democratic economy must go beyond the perverse logic of the capitalist marketplace as well as the autocratic command economy of the numerous economies that call themselves “socialist”; the state’s priorities and objectives come under the control of society and not the supposed “strategic interests” of the state.

If the left was, as it was in Brazil and other places, historically divided between an anti-capitalist yet authoritarian strain and a democratic, reformist one, one of the novelties of the Labor party was precisely its transcendence of this false set of alternatives:

Our commitment to democracy makes us militant anti-capitalists-this choice has profoundly marked our struggle for democracy. The discovery (empirical, before becoming theory, for many of us) of the structural perversity has constituted, for most of the militants in the Labor party, a very powerful stimulant for the organization of a political party. We have represented-and we always represent-an indignant response to the useless suffering of millions of individuals which flows from the logic of capitalist barbarism. Our concrete historical experience-the dark side of the “Brazilian Miracle” and of numerous other national situations and international tragedies-we have been taught that it is a material force, unjust by its very nature, which marginalizes millions of people and opposes the equal redistribution of social wealth-the activity of any democratic reality. [ii]

This type of formulation, charged with an ethical radicalism, is characteristic of the political culture of the original Labor party, produced by a fusion of Marxist theory and sensible Christianity. This radicalism worried the élites, the press and the media, which would have liked to have accepted the Labor party on the condition that it become a party “like the others,” a “normal” party, not unlike a social democratic party.

Elected in 1989 on a populist platform of “chasing out the corrupt officials,” Collor de Melo was going to practice a typical neo-liberal brand of political economy, systematically brandishing public enterprises in privatization without end. But very quickly the pretended champion of anti-corruption found himself seriously compromised in an enormous scandal of embezzling public money for private concerns. Through a Labor party initiative, joined later by other political forces, an immense popular mobilization developed throughout the entire country. The pressure of popular opinion-and in particular of the youth, who were omnipresent in the streets-finally obliged the majority of those in Parliament to vote for the impeachment of Collor de Melo (he would be replaced by Vice-President Itamar Franco).

During the following two elections, those of 1994 and 1998, the winner-thanks to strangulating inflation-would be Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former Marxist sociologist and theoretician of dependency theory, who converted to IMF principles and doctrines, the candidate of a coalition between the Brazilian Social Democratic Party and the Party of the Liberal Front, a party of bankers and members of the rural oligarchies formed out of the “moderate” wing of the old military dictatorship. Cardoso would lead for eight years with typical neo-liberal policies favorable to financial capital which considerably aggravated social problems throughout the country and deepened its dependence on markets.

Despite these defects, the Labor party gained many important mayoralties in the country and state governments in the Federation. It also put into practice, in the localities which they managed, democratic forms at the base such as the celebrated “participatory budget.” Here one begins to see a certain institutionalization of the party and, departing from the mid-1990s, an increasingly powerful tendency in the majoritarian current of the direction of the Labor party toward pragmatism and political and programmatic “deradicalization”-not without powerful resistance from diverse tendencies on the left (between forty percent and forty-five percent of the vote during party conferences), the most important of which, the Democratic Socialists (tied to the Fourth

International), gathered in 2000 nearly seventeen percent of the votes for its candidate for the party leadership, Raul Pont, the ex-mayor of Porto Alegre.

The two defeats facing Cardoso had convinced Lula to change his strategy and present a more moderate face during the elections. In 2002 he imposed on the Labor party broad political alliances with bourgeois forces, in taking as his partner and candidate for vice president José Alencar, leader of the Liberal party.

Electoral Victory and the New Government

Lula's victory is not only the victory of one man, of an individual, of a charismatic leader. It is also the victory of a mass party, of both the militants and sympathizers that poured into the streets, submerging the streets and the public places of major provincial capitals within Brazil with hundreds of thousands of people dancing, singing and waving red flags with the five-pointed star of the Labor party. But it is even more than the victory of a party, it is the historic return of the exploited and oppressed after twenty years of military dictatorship and another seventeen years of the neo-liberal "New Republic." Or again, if one counts back even further, after 400 years of oligarchic rule under the designers of Brazilian capitalism and colonial dependency.

From this joy of the populace came hope, the immense popular hope that comes from radical change, from a new departure, from a break with the political past. Hope that another Brazil may be possible, where the working classes, the landless, the homeless, women, blacks, the indigent, the unemployed, and the poor, can at last be heard. The hope that, for the first time, a government will not be the instrument of the privileged, of exploiters, of the propertied, of the corrupt, or the millionaires. A government that will put more importance on combating hunger, enacting agrarian reforms and the rebuilding of public services rather than answering the demands of international financial institutions. The hope of finally seeing realized an alternative social project than neoliberalism and another economic model, seeing job growth and the equal distribution of income and wealth.

It should be said that none of this will be easy. The obstacles are immense, the adversaries innumerable; the difficulties, the threats, the contradictions, all are evident. To begin with, a group of institutions have escaped the control of the Labor party. Although Lula and the Labor party have won the presidential election with crushing majorities, they do not possess the majority in either the House nor in the Senate. Most of the regional governors are hostile to the new project. The elected vice president himself has little in common with the working class (and that is a euphemism). Parenthetically, if by accident or illness Lula were to lose power, the country would be left with a politician from the right, a "liberal," as president, elected with the voice of the left and the workers.

Very quickly, Lula and his government will be subject to the classic chanting of market financiers: any deviation from neo-liberal orthodoxy will, they will argue, provoke the retreat of volatile capital, the result being the probable fall of the currency, the real, followed by inflation. The government will be subject to enormous pressure from the IMF, the World Bank, the Federal Reserve Bank, the U.S. government itself, of "friendly" governments in Latin America and in Europe, of the dominant classes within Brazil and the media which they control-as well as from their "political allies"-in order to make them accept moderating their aspirations; to forget their "radicalism"; to pass a "reasonable" compromise, to accommodate "reality"; to accept, as all others have, the rules of the established game; of not touching the interests of national and international capital; of respecting agreements, as exorbitant as they may be; of no longer opposing the American Free Trade Zone in exchange for some concessions on tariffs; of religiously paying external debt; of putting off agrarian

reform; of curbing the “illegal” occupation of land. And to top it all off, to give autonomy to the Central Bank. In other words, to abandon their program of government and become a variant, a bit more social, more prone to assistance, a bit less corrupt than those governments that preceded it in the “New Republic.” That is to say, to transform itself into a “liberal-socialist” government like all the others in Latin America and Europe that have existed for the satisfaction of capital and the despair of the electorate.

Lula and his economic advisors (such as Antonio Palocci) have already made many-too many-concessions to markets. They have promised to respect economic agreements-draconian agreements-with the IMF and they have opened themselves up to alliances with center and right parties. But this is not sufficient to satisfy the interests of capital: these representatives require that it is in fact the continuation of the economic policies of the previous governments. Will Lula and his supporters bend to this pressure?

The formation of the government in January 2003 was the first indication of the intentions of the new president. The Labor party acts as a coalition government where certain key posts have been given to representatives of the dominant élites, but the left wing of the Labor party is not absent. The leadership rests in the hands of the moderate wing of the party, represented by Antonio Palocci. Most alarming is the nomination of Henrique Meirelles, a deputy of the PSDB (the party of Cardoso) and former president of Boston Bank with a key post as the director of the Central Bank. This is a gauge of the (neo-liberal) economic orthodoxy given to market financiers. The left of the Labor party has protested, and senator Heloisa Helena, from the “Democratic Socialist” wing, has refused to endorse this nomination. One might also be curious about the designation of the conservative entrepreneur Luis Fernando Furlan as Minister of Industry and of Roberto Rodrigues, president of the Brazilian Association of Agribusiness, as the Minister of Agriculture.

By contrast, we find Olivio Dutra, former governor of South Rio Grande and known figure of the Labor party’s left, as the Minister of Cities, and Miguel Rossette, former vice-governor of South Rio Grande (and a Social Democrat) as the Minister of Agrarian Development, with the task of starting agrarian reform-a nomination saluted with joy by the MST, but denounced as dangerous and counter-productive by the National Association of Rural Producers and but the Rural Democratic Union (RDU), the powerful (and reactionary) political organization of landowners. In the end, the senator Marina Silva, old comrade of the struggles of Chico Mendes in the defense of the Amazon forest and declared adversary of the OGMs, has been designated Minister of the Environment.

The president of the Labor party, José Dirceu (a former guerilla) has been named Chief Minister of the House-that is, Secretary General of the government. In his speech on investiture, this aide of Lula, an able political negotiator, explained that the objective of the new government is to allow the Brazilian people to occupy what he sees as their rightful place: “That it is possible to obtain this through a great social transformation, by a veritable social revolution. I am not afraid of using that word: a veritable social revolution. We must do this for our people. We will be capable of attaining our goals,” he added, saying that “if there is social participation, there will be national mobilization.”

The first positive sign given by the new government-chosen, it should be said, by Lula himself, after consulting his aides-was the decision to put off the purchase of fighter planes to modernize the Brazilian air force. Lula decided that this \$800 million would be devoted to a program combating hunger, an issue he had made a center piece of his campaign: “if, for these four years, each Brazilian will be able to eat three meals a day, I will have considered my mission complete.”

But it is also too early, as of January 2003, to judge what the politics of the new government will be. Will it be capable of resisting pressures and be able to carry out its program of the redistribution of income; enact real agrarian reform; reorient production toward internal markets; support an

economy of solidarity; fiscal reform; priority of investment in education and health; fight corruption and fiscal flight? To apply these measures requires a strong fight against some powerful enemies and the need to be somewhat disposed to making some concessions. Without pressure “from below” from the popular movement, some worker and peasant organizations, some from the subaltern classes, counterposing the pressure exerted “from above,” from the privileged class, the battle for this change of political and social direction will be lost.

The position of the Landless Rural Workers’ Movement seems to me to be an example:

Our role as a social movement is to continue to organize the poor in the countryside, to make them conscious of their rights and to mobilize them to struggle for change. We will maintain the necessary autonomy in our relation with the state, but we will cooperate as much as possible with the new government so that agrarian reform can be realized, something for which we have dreamed for a long time. [iii]

If this position is also adopted by the Central Union of Workers, by the Homeless Movement, by the Central Popular Movements, by the feminist movement, by the progressive churches-which has taken some very clear positions against the ALCA and against the payment of external debt-and by the militants within the Labor party, one could create a coalition of forces favorable for the realization of change promised by Lula’s program.

Nothing could be more injurious to the popular interests than to “wait” for the government to solve its problems. As the words of a song that greatly inspired the movement of struggle against the dictator in 1968 said, “He who knows the reality of the hour, he does not wait for something to arrive.” The mobilization of social movements and some of the left parties is an indispensable condition to obtaining significant advances in the struggle against neo-liberal logic, the tyranny of markets, the parasitic nature of financial capital, of inequalities, and the exclusion and historical injustices which characterize Brazilian society.

A person cannot predict what the future will be of this government formed by Lula. Optimists are confident in the former combative and militant workers and unionists to pursue their interests whereas pessimists enumerate the concessions made to the IMF and to economic élites. The sober optimists (peptimists), like me, think that the game is hardly over and that many different options are still open. In fact, one could advance some conditional hypotheses. Here are a few which seem to me to be important. An active intervention of social and political actors favorable to “another Brazil” must assure:

- 1) that the project of the ALCA-an attempt by North America to recolonize Latin America by destroying all attempts for economic autonomy-will be conquered and not only “transported” by these tariff concessions from the U.S. on corn and wheat or the juice of Brazilian oranges.
- 2) The IMF cannot impose its regulation on Brazil, as was the case in Argentina during recent years, with the well-known, tragic consequences.
- 3) That it can have fiscal control of the entrance and exiting of foreign capital, part of a national plan of defined definite democratic development. [iv]
- 4) That Brazil tries to associate with other countries from the South to impose “an audit process and renegotiation of external public debt” (Program of the Government of the Labor party for Brazil, approved when the twelfth National Conference, December 2001).
- 5) That the state may effectively democratize, among other things, “the investment in participatory budget practices at the central level.” [v]

6) That the program of privatization may be “suspended and reevaluated with an audit of the operations already realized.” [vi]

7) That a broad fiscal reform program will be put into action with the objective of reducing taxes on wage-labor and, in exchange, “tax the wealthy” and “reduce the gap for fiscal relief.”

8) That an effective rupture has occurred with the neoliberal economic model “founded on the radical de-regulation of the national economy and therefore, on the subordination of its dynamic to the interests of global financial capital.

In other words, only effective social and political mobilization at the base will permit Lula’s government to surpass the limits that the interests of capital are trying impose upon him and to assure the realization of the promise of changing the direction of the Party and the state-approved by the Labor party in the twelfth Conference of December 2001-without losing sight of the historical project which is the accomplishment of the Labor party’s 1990 program: the movement beyond capitalism and the founding of a new, socialist society, democratic and free.

Notes

[i] From the journal, *Em Tempo* no. 42, December 23, 1978.

[ii] “Petiste Socialism,” *Inprecor*, no. 317, October-November, 1990.

[iii] Resolution of the Landless Rural Workers’ Movement from November 8, 2002.

[iv] See the interview with Paul Singer, economist and Labor party activist, in the journal *Em Tempo*, September 2002.

[v] Ibid.

[vi] Ibid.

P.S.

* From “Logos”, Spring 2003. Translated from the French by Michael J. Thompson and Evette Rhoden. <http://www.logosjournal.com/>