

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

Bankers give victory to Communists

Policies of wage cuts and no infrastructure investment could hand Brazil over to anti-U.S. fanatics.

In Brazil's Nov. 15 municipal elections, millions went to the polls, and turned the ballot box into a means of protest against International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity policies, which the José Sarney government has imposed.

The PMDB and PFL parties that make up the so-called "Democratic Alliance," which gives political support to the current government, were roundly defeated in the country's major state capitals. The new big winner was the anarcho-syndicalist Marxist Workers' Party (PT) and, on the other hand, the PDT, run by social democrat Leonel Brizola.

The electoral dispute was a perfect reflection of the institutional collapse that the current administration is going through. This really began in April 1987, when the bankers forced the resignation of Finance Minister Dilson Funaro who had declared a moratorium on interest payments on the foreign debt and intended to begin an industrial modernization program desired by the entire country.

But the government opted instead to embrace IMF austerity policies—wage cuts and no investment in infrastructure—and now, in the elections, the communists marked up a victory and advanced in their political and cultural designs.

The PT won the elections in the city of São Paulo, the largest industrial city in Ibero-America, and in other cities in the same state and in Porto Alegre, capital of one of the big food-producing states; and it came out second in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The PT, founded only in 1979, surged as

the force which catalyzed the voters' ire and disillusionment.

In 1982, the party ran for the first time in São Paulo municipal elections, winning 1.4 million votes. As we go to press, without all the votes yet counted, it had 8 million votes. It won 37 mayoralties in total in the Nov. 15 elections.

If Brazilians voted for the PT or the PDT, they did so because of the lack of credibility of the traditional parties. But the PT has a well-defined political design and it is not going to squander the political space which was opened to it thanks to the IMF.

As was shown in the city of São Paulo, the PT will use its party structure and its disciplined cadre to advance toward its goals.

Luiza Erudina, mayor-elect in São Paulo, the PT's main base of action, comes from the most radical faction of the party, called the "Shiites." This is a collection of tiny Trotskyist, terrorist, communist, and socialist sects. Erudina's political life began in the impoverished Northeast of Brazil under the tutelage of the grouping infiltrated into the Catholic Church which we today know as Marxist Theology of Liberation. In her first statements to the press, Erudina said she was a "Catholic socialist."

Later on a television program in November, she accepted the possibility of resort to armed struggle "as a condition for society's structural transformation; the PT will not be the ones to prevent this from taking place. . . . If that were the decision of the majority of the workers [collective will], we would not have any way of

impeding it from happening."

The Liberation Theologists who arose out of the so-called Christian-Marxist Dialogue played a decisive role in founding the PT and in its later activities. In this conception, the PT is the continuation of the Nicaraguan experiment with the Sandinistas.

One of the principal mentors and advisers of the PT is the famous ex-terrorist disciple of Carlos Maringhella, Brother Betto, who was recently in Moscow with Leonardo Boff to pay homage to *perestroika* and President Gorbachov and to the morbid culture of 19th-century writer Fyodor Dostoevsky. Before Dostoevsky's tomb, Boff professed, "I even offered a silent prayer for him who in a bewildered moment of my life also made me leave the house of the dead." Dostoevsky's satanic ideas led to both fascism and Bolshevism in the 20th century.

Brother Betto is a friend of Fidel Castro, and through his urgings the PT has turned itself into the principal promoter of Castro's plan for restructuring Ibero-America's burdensome foreign debt.

A good part of the civilian and military elite, barely recovering from the PT's electoral victories, have stated in diverse ways that these are the fruits of political pluralism, or that the PT will have so many problems to solve that it will soon undergo an "inevitable erosion."

These are purely pragmatic delusions. If Brazil's economic policies are not drastically changed, the velocity of institutional collapse and the resulting destruction of the democratic parties will take place more rapidly than the supposed erosion of the PT. In that kind of situation, a second Nicaragua, but with Brazil's size, could emerge in Ibero-America in the short term.