

Brazilian Economy is Winning for Marta in São Paulo

Contributed by Guy Burton
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We've not heard much from Erundina (PSB) in the media recently. Probably because she's seen her poll figures in the campaign for mayor of São Paulo slump from 7% during August to around 3%. As the last of the 'big four', she's rapidly becoming irrelevant to the first round of voting.

by Guy Burton

But her support base will be of interest to the two front runners who make the second round (on current projections the PT's Marta Suplicy and José Serra of the PSDB).

Unfortunately for Serra, Erundina is changing her campaign strategy. Instead of fighting on two fronts, she's stopping her attacks on Marta and focusing on Serra. The reasoning behind the change – visible on TV and radio since Monday – is explained by the political commentator, James Lewis:

"There's an umbilical relationship between Serra and Erundina: if one goes up, the other comes down."

I do wonder to what extent the decision to shift attention away from Marta is being driven from within the electoral coalition.

Along with her street visits, it was noted in the *Folha* that Marta had been seeing meeting two members of the PMDB – a city councilor and a congressman – who are members of Erundina's alliance.

Could there be discussions going on about which way to jump after the first round?

And while Erundina has been putting Serra in her sights, someone seems to have failed to get the message to the PSDB.

They appear to be busy trying to win her over for the second round along with Paulo Maluf's (PP) voters. As one of the campaign organizers, Walter Feldman, says:

"We're looking for Erundina's support and we want the support of Maluf's voters. The party won't ask for any formal support from Maluf. But the polls show that the majority of malufistas would vote for Serra in the second round."

Fight! Fight!

On Thursday there was a squabble between the Marta and Serra camps. Not really much to comment on, since both were throwing their toys out of their prams, with the usual denunciations and threats of the country going to pot if the other side wins.

But I'll limit myself to reporting that Marta called

Serra a "male chauvinist", which is relevant given Marta's high profile and visible role as a leading feminist. You would think that someone like her wouldn't use terms like that lightly.

Serra's

responded with a quip: "Rubbish doesn't have either sex; it can be said by a man or a woman."

On the gravy train

Aha, finally an attack between the PT and PSDB which actually appears to have some substance (limited though as it is) behind it. This *Folha* piece records Eduardo Suplicy (Sao Paulo senator and Marta's former husband) as saying that the PSDB state government has been aiding and supporting cities run by their party colleagues over others.

This follows a *Folha* article which suggested that the part of the state budget spent on cities in 2002 and 2003 shows that tucano

cities received 293.6 million reais (36%) of the 796.3 million reais in voluntary transfers for public works and infrastructure development; PT cities received 104.1 million reais (or 13%).

The figures alone seem stark. But it would perhaps be of more value if we knew how much had been spent per capita in PT and PSDB cities. Anyone?

Negative? What do you mean?!

A consultant to the Estado Group which owns the Estado de S. Paulo newspaper, Fátima Pacheco Jordão, gave an interview which suggests that Marta's vote-PSDB-and-watch-them-eat-your-babies strategy may backfire. According to Fátima Jordão, the problem is that Marta is trying to bring the added dimension of the PT-PSDB conflict at the state and national levels while most people see the São Paulo poll as little more than a local contest: "Marta is playing chess while the voter is playing checkers."

The consultant believes that the PT seems almost solely concerned with the São Paulo election, but that even though Marta's strategy may have a negative effect, the PT won't be beaten in October. The reason for this, she says, is because of the economic recovery in the country: "If they start to have a positive and real effect on people's lives (like the ability to buy things)... they will help a lot."

But Fatima Jordao thinks that while the economy can help the PT, the PSDB have a great ally in the state governor, Geraldo Alckmin: "...the tucano campaign has been selling the idea of a government in partnership, of projects done in partnership. And he only entered [the campaign] at the moment when Marta started to use his name when talking about partnership."

Can't pay, won't pay
Maluf used Thursday to claim that Sao Paulo city's debt is "unpayable" and that he would renegotiate it with the authorities if elected. The candidate used his own unmatched way with words to criticise not Marta, but the former federal government, of which Serra was a member:
"The fault doesn't lie with Marta. It's the result of a perverse economic policy which benefited the banks. The tucanos introduced a policy of pornographic rates since 1995 which broke City Hall and is breaking Brazil."

Pornographic? That's an interesting choice of word there which conjures up visions of half-naked fiscal policies, bound and gagged exchange rates and a monetary supply dressed up in a gimp suit...

For much more about the coming São Paulo election visit Guy Burton and Andrew Steven's blog at <http://www.saopaulo2004.blogspot.com>