

New Republic Celebrates 20 in Brazil

Contributed by Iolando Lourenço
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March 15 marked the 20th anniversary of the beginning of the country's redemocratization, after 21 years of military rule. Tancredo Neves's election by the since extinct Electoral College to the Presidency of the Republic, the President-elect's fatal illness, and the inauguration of his Vice-President, José Sarney, on March 15, 1985, signalize the start of the process of redemocratization in Brazil and the period known as the New Republic.

Between then and now many things have happened to change the history of Brazil. Tancredo Neves's illness and death moved the nation, but it was Sarney who commanded the redemocratization.

The Federal Senate held a solemn session to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the day when the military effectuated a peaceful transfer of power to civilian authorities.

Politicians who experienced that moment were present at the session, most prominent among them, Senator José Sarney, who assumed the Presidency of the Republic on March 15, 1985.

The history of Brazil has gone through various chapters over these 20 years. Right at the outset of his Administration, the President at the time, José Sarney, convened a National Constituent Assembly, elected in 1986 and empowered the following year.

The members of the Assembly took two years to draft the new Constitution, which sought to eliminate much of what was termed "authoritarian rubble."

In 1989, over 82 million voters cast their ballots and, in the second round of voting, elected Fernando Collor de Mello, who defeated Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, currently President of the country.

On December 29, 1992, President Collor, under accusations of corruption, was impeached. The Presidency was assumed on the same day by Vice-President Itamar Franco.

Despite the outburst of accusations against Collor's Administration, Franco was able to put together a union of forces in the National Congress and didn't permit the interruption of the redemocratization process.

He was able to halt runaway inflation, which was corroding the salaries and purchasing power of the Brazilian population. As a result he elected his successor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who was later re-elected and remained in office for eight years.

In 2002 the people were tired of Cardoso's policies and elected Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to the Presidency. Lula had been struggling since 1989 to gain the chief office.

On January 1, 2003, he assumed this office as the fifth President of Brazil in these 20 years of redemocratization.

Translation: David Silberstein
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