

## Brazil: Is Lula Abandoning São Paulo's Mayor?

Contributed by Guy Burton  
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The main reason for people not voting for José Serra (PSDB) was his performance as Health Minister between 1998 and 2002 and his current proposals. Meanwhile, people's main grievance against Marta Suplicy (PT) is the creation and raising of taxes during her time as mayor.

But on the positive side two-thirds of the public associate health with Serra and Marta with education.

The PT seems to be putting more distance between itself and Marta's campaign. Yesterday President Lula heard recommendations that he should not record any TV spots supporting her.

Some advisers also recommended that she should not be given a ministerial appointment in the event of her losing the second round.

Even if that is what the PT is doing, they won't change their presentation. The leader of the government in the Senate, Aloizio Mercadante, insisted that Lula would enter the campaign to give Marta his full support – which leaves us still in the dark.

Readers will know that the Greens put their support behind Serra this week. But it's not as clear as that.

Gilberto Gil, the musician and Culture Minister, made a statement in Beijing yesterday saying that he was 'enthusiastically supporting Marta'.

He was forced into saying it, after having praised Brazil's AIDS policy, which was developed under Serra.

Last night was TV debate time between Marta and Serra. Marta attacked Serra for his choice of vice-mayoral candidate (a former planning secretary in the little missed Celso Pitta administration from 1997 to 2000), the former PSDB government and Serra's involvement in the city blackout three years ago following a botched privatisation.

For Serra's part, criticisms were made of the 'paralysis' in the metropolitan train service and the lack of street lighting. He also grumbled that Marta hadn't answered the questions he put to her afterwards, claiming that her marketing manager, Duda Mendonça, had told her not to.

For his part, Mendonça said after the debate that he thought the atmosphere tense. But that was understandable, given the nature of the contest and the profile of the candidates before assuring everyone that Marta would win. As for the figures, the Folha reports that over half a million households watched the debate.

And finally the news that everyone's been waiting for – and which after this week the PT must have been dreading. Failed candidate Paulo Maluf (PP) has offered his personal support to Marta.

It just doesn't make sense does it? Your top man, brimming with charisma and favourable poll ratings cuts and runs, and you find your support comes from a man with more bank accounts, money laundering and tax evasion investigations than you can shake a stick at.

No wonder Marta's slogan is 'a woman of courage'. She needs it, what with Lula's reticence and Maluf's 'helpful' intervention.

For more information and analysis of the São Paulo and other local Brazilian results, visit the election blog being run by Guy Burton and Andrew Stevens at [www.saopaulo2004.blogspot.com](http://www.saopaulo2004.blogspot.com).