
Brazil: How Desperate Is São Paulo's Mayor?

Contributed by Guy Burton
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Marta Suplicy (PT) has been defending the tone of her campaign, including the attacks she's made against José Serra's (PSDB) running mate, Gilberto Kassab.

She's been suggesting that if Serra gets in it will be akin to a return to the mayoralty of the previous mayor, the unlamented Celso Pitta (1997-2000).

But she's also saying that it's not all aggression, but a presentation of the positive effects of her work for the city as well.

Marta later said that if Serra was elected, he would have problems getting funds from the federal government. That must have been embarrassing to party managers.

Soon after, the minister for political co-ordination, Aldo Rebelo, had to make a statement, saying that the government wouldn't discriminate against mayors of any persuasion or party.

No Comment

The PT is also pulling rank and trying to discount any possibility of them actually losing São Paulo.

José Dirceu, President Lula's chief of staff, said yesterday that "it still isn't decided" and that only an "idiot" would talk of defeat. That is, of course, if he or she decides to speak about it publicly.

Of course that wouldn't stop the former PT senator, Heloisa Helena. The politician, who was chucked out of the party earlier this year for repeatedly voting against the government, said she wasn't surprised by the alliance made with the PP.

If she had the vote in São Paulo she would vote for neither Serra nor Marta and instead leave the ballot paper blank.

Guilty

The electoral authorities banned a piece of PT publicity which should have gone out on Saturday.

In it the party draws a comparison between the São Paulo state governor, Geraldo Alckmin, and the former president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, claiming that both ran down São Paulo through privatisations.

They also fined an elected tucano (from the PSDB) councillor, for posting irregular campaign material on a street light. Juscelino José Ataliba Antônio Gadelha was fined US\$ 1780 (5,320 reais). .

On the Box

Monday night's TV spots involved Serra promising to increase the number of Metro lines while Marta had the leader of the government in the Senate, Aloizio Mercadante, singing her praises.

Both campaigns are also discussing how best to manage two debates next week. They want to try and avoid having

them one night after the other, on two different channels.

Rede Record and TV Globo will each be broadcasting a debate, but you do have to feel sorry for the poor people of Sao Paulo.

All this wall-to-wall coverage is doing my head in – and I'm several thousand miles away.

Isolated?

The PSDB's allies in Congress, the PFL, are sending a delegation of senior politicians down to help Serra in his campaign. It will be spearheaded by the recently re-elected mayor of Rio, Cesar Maia, who won overwhelmingly in the first round.

You have to wonder when the government's ministers are going to finally get around to giving Marta a hand as well. Readers of this column will know that last week it seemed they were going everywhere but to São Paulo.

Still, at least she's giving it a go by herself. Yesterday, she announced that she would freeze the cost of a bus fare, keeping it at 1.70 reais (50 cents) next year. That is, if she's re-elected of course.

Citizens, do your duty!

Line of the Day

But the best line surely came when she went to some churches in the east of the city yesterday. Marta said that she 'can't do miracles.' Well, yes, obviously. But I'm interested to know whoever suggested that she could?

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.