

Right and Left Running for Cover in São Paulo, Brazil

Contributed by Guy Burton
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The right doesn't know which way to go. While Paulo Maluf (PP) is supporting Marta Suplicy's (PT) candidacy, the São Paulo branch of the party has thrown its weight behind José Serra (PSDB).

Former Maluf voters must be wondering which alliance their party is in exactly.

At least one person knows what to do. Antonio Salim Curiati Junior, Maluf's running mate as candidate for vice-mayor, has offered this resignation to the PP, to "correct the error I committed in accepting the recommendation of the party's national executive to support the PT... which wasn't accepted by my voters, team, friends and intimates."

Crisis in the Left

Monica Dallari's comments about Marta are causing problems within the PT campaign team.

Dallari, the girlfriend of Marta's ex-husband, Eduardo Suplicy, criticised the tone of Marta's campaign as well as the explicit drive to get Maluf onside.

One member of the team complained that Eduardo should never have allowed Dallari to do the interview and that her words may well have prejudiced Marta's campaign.

After the crisis at the end of last week when the PT campaign manager, Duda Mendonca, was arrested for his involvement in a cockfight, petistas are getting jittery: it's just more bad news after bad.

In the circumstances, there's little the candidate can do other than avoid making any response to the accusations.

But one thing she was prepared to talk about was the Supreme Court's decision to revoke the right to abortion in cases where the foetus is brain damaged.

Marta said the Court was "wrong" during an interview with Bandeirantes radio yesterday.

Well, that's interesting and shows her feminist credentials – but I'd be interested to know about her thoughts on Dallari's comments regarding her campaign.

Perhaps as a concession, Marta also revealed during the interview that she doesn't feel comfortable having her image next to Maluf's on the minibuses which are driving around the city in support of her campaign.

If that's supposed to make traditional PT supporters feel more secure, that the left finds it uncomfortable getting into bed with the right – metaphorically of course – she's rather hoping for a lot, don't you think?

After all that effort trying to get Maluf to come in for coffee (we're still speaking in metaphors, OK?) and now she's saying it was all a mistake.

I would say typical, if it wasn't for the fact that I've been suitably ashamed by some of my choices in the past as well.

Marta, you're not alone. But sympathy will only come if you don't do it again. Which judging by some of the PT's bedfellows over the last few years makes me wonder whether it's a party which rather enjoys the 'rough stuff'.

Motoring Along Nicely

Serra meanwhile was yesterday on Eldorado radio to talk about his governing program for the city.

He claimed that his party had the ability to manage the city effectively.

During the time he was on air he said that the reason City Hall hadn't introduced the single transport ticket was because they wanted all the credit for doing so.

According to him, 'The version I have is that City Hall avoided involving the state government in the single transport ticket because they wanted to do it alone and gain the electoral credit.'

In other words, the PT explanation – that the city and state systems needed to be integrated before the ticket could be introduced – was wrong.

Serra then cancelled his interview on the 'Roda Viva' (Live Circle) program on TV Cultura yesterday – after having criticised Marta for deciding not to take part.

Later, during a walkabout in the city, Serra returned to his theme of the week: that the electorate shouldn't take advantage of the holiday this weekend, but stay at home and vote.

He's becoming more like a headmaster every day – and not a popular one at that either.

True or Not?

Early this morning the PT campaign team had to publish a note to the media, acknowledging that they had published a newspaper, São Paulo Verdade (São Paulo Truth), which was doing the rounds of the city centre and being sold out of at least one newsstand there.

The newspaper didn't carry any details regarding its publishers, which is required under electoral law.

This could be a story which might run – and cause the PT yet more bad news.

Soon after the news broke, electoral authorities obtained copies of the newspaper to determine whether any further investigation was necessary.

Not only does São Paulo Verdade not include details of its backers, it is designed to look like another newspaper, Agora, and carries a number of anti-Serra articles.

The electoral authorities acted upon the request of Luis Francisco da Silva Carvalho Filho, a lawyer for the firm which edits Agora, complained that São Paulo Verdade was designed to "confuse the reader."

Numbers

Finally, three weeks after the first round, more than 27 million Brazilians will be returning to the polls this weekend in 44 cities to decide once and for all, who will be their mayors for the next four years.

São Paulo state has the most voters this Sunday: 11.7 million in 12 cities, including 7.8 million in São Paulo alone.

Always assuming that they heed Headmaster Serra's comments and they aren't sneaking off to the beach to enjoy the holiday weekend.

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.