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## In Brazil, Left Gives a Show on How to Lose Power

Contributed by Andrew Stevens  
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With minds concentrated firmly on the race for the Oval office this weekend (though we might rightly think of ourselves as a Latin-fused version of Wonkette.com), it's slim pickings in the English language coverage of the São Paulo race.

Perhaps the month-long gap between voting rounds confused people (lest I sound like an imperialist, why not just have a proper proportional system and be done with it?). Anyhow:

"When Michigan State-educated sexologist Marta Suplicy was elected mayor of South America's largest city, the talk was that her next stop would be Brazil's presidency."

Cough, splutter. Though they are bang-on regarding why Marta will probably lose tomorrow:

"Yet Suplicy, 59, a former TV commentator on sexual behavior, also has grown a reputation for arrogance and aloofness. Moreover, she's done exactly what Brazilian wives aren't supposed to do: shed her popular Brazilian lawmaker spouse for a handsome new Franco-Argentine husband."

But elsewhere, it's merely a case of the mid-term blues for the PT. And the worst part?

"But a projected loss in the party's liberal stronghold of Porto Alegre, where it's ruled almost uninterrupted in the 16 years since military rule ended in Brazil, is the most stinging.

Da Silva's Workers' Party grew out of urban opposition in São Paulo to Brazil's long military dictatorship.

But its first real victories were in Porto Alegre, the capital of the southernmost state of Rio Grande de Sul.

In recent years, the city has become synonymous with the annual World Social Forum, hosting a gathering of left-leaning political groups and global nongovernment organizations.

Porto Alegre swam against the tide of conservative federal governments in Brazil that preceded da Silva's election.

Then, heartened by his campaign pledge to create 2.5 million jobs a year, improve social services and narrow the gap between rich and poor, Porto Alegre backed him stoutly in 2002.

Now, a dismayed coalition of opposition groups has grabbed the lead in the mayoral race, not to mention the Workers' Party's basic campaign promise of 2002: change."

OK, the PT might cope with the loss of Porto Alegre and São Paulo if it holds the reigns to the presidency, even though in a federalised country like Brazil its political fortunes seem fragmented and to be receding.

But to the outside world, particularly the anti-globalisation buffs, it merely demonstrates the Left's perennial ability to lose power in a spectacular fashion.

Enough of my analysis, what about the sentiment on the ground?

"Olivio Dutra, former Workers' Party mayor of Porto Alegre and ex-governor of Rio Grande do Sul state, predicted a comeback victory.

"We have never easily won an election, and isn't that great?" he said."

If you say so. And now for a brave face:

"Marcelo Deda, a former Workers' Party leader in Congress and current mayor of the northeastern city of Aracaju, countered that gains in midsize cities nationwide will offset losses in a few big cities."

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).