
Lula with The Forgotten

By: Arnaldo Musa
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Almost at noon, last Wednesday October 12, the announcer yelled: "The Man arrived!" And euphoric celebrations sparked at the Complexo do Alemão due to the presence of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who started a visit to one of the poorest and most violent favelas located in Rio de Janeiro, where most of the shacks of Brazil are found.

AFP reports that since the election campaign began last August, Lula undergoes a frenzy agenda where he is forced to take several planes daily to visit every corner of the country. But there, where the expectation was high, the overwhelming sympathy turned into awesome rounds of applause. He announced that the agenda to address hunger would be again implemented, especially when Brazil eradicated this issue back in 2014, but now, during Jair Bolsonaro's tenure, the numbers doubled.

After the fights to touch the hand of the favorite candidate to become next president of Brazil, Lula promised that, if he wins, poor people will eat again three times a day and everyone may have access to university studies. He also said that there will be a Ministry for native people and other for racial equality. He even spoke of ending the soybean plantation in the Amazon and the price of a barrel of oil, and about the endemic violence that plagues the favelas. He stated that *"it will not be the police the one solving the problems of the community,"* but the State, by doing what it has to do: investing in education, health, leisure, and culture for its inhabitants.

In an interview for AP, María Rosa Balman, a pharmacist who lives in another favela, Morro de São Carlos, highlighted that during Lula's terms her family improved. She was the first to study at the university. She financed her own apartment with state aid and her daughter is now a

lawyer, thanks to the quotas for black students. *"Now we have to eliminate the growing violence, because what Bolsonaro proposes does not solve anything. His solution is to enter shooting, killing poor people. That is not a solution, the crime continues,"* she criticized.

Bolsonaro's campaign is based on the firm hand against crime and the facilities for ordinary citizens to buy a fire arm. He attributes the drop in the number of homicides to this. Brazil recorded in 2021 the lowest number of violent deaths since 2007, with 41,000 fatalities, according to the Brazilian Public Security Forum. Specialists attribute it to multiple factors, but Bolsonaro is already using that data in his favor. Despite the improvement, Brazil is among the most dangerous nations in the world: it ranks eighth in a ranking of 102 countries.

Lula usually links it to the lack of opportunities, a cause-effect relationship. In the years of his Workers' Party in power, inequality and poverty hit historic lows.

FAVELAS AND HUNGER

The number of favelas in Brazil increased from 6,329 to 13,151, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

With a higher unemployment rate and a drop in income, homes with an irregular urban pattern and without basic sanitation totaled 5.1 million three years ago, the most recent figure.

This figure is another expression of the increase in poverty in the country, where 33 million spend 24 hours or more without eating on some days; 24.5 million have worsened their diet, are not sure how they will eat, and another 74 million fear going through it.

In September, the percentage of items that have become more expensive was 64%, which leads many to replace what they consume with ultra-processed products.

LULA MUST WIN

Except for extreme situations created by the reaction, with an advantage over Bolsonaro of 6.19 million votes and 5.2 points in the first round, Lula starts as the clear favorite for victory in the second round to be held on October 30th.

Lula and Bolsonaro embody a battle between the progressive forces and the Brazilian extreme right that is the result of extreme polarization, pushed to radicalization by the Bolsonaro's followers.

Undoubtedly, the polls were the big losers in the first round, as they were not correct in their analysis of the hidden support that the far-right president retains, although they did adjust the forecast better with Lula.

The trend of voting by regions, in addition, revealed the deep fragmentation that Brazil is experiencing. Apart from the presidential election, in these elections state governors, deputies and a third of the Senate and Regional Legislative Assemblies were also being elected. There, the Bolsonaro's followers also obtained good results.

Lula has a chance to return to the presidency of Brazil after being removed from the presidential race in 2018 and unjustly spending 580 days in prison. Finally, in November 2019, the invented convictions for corruption were annulled by the Justice and Lula returned strengthened to the political arena.

But the very high vote in favor of Bolsonaro is of particular concern. His commitment to defamation, misleading propaganda and disinformation works on many levels and represents a threat. So much so that the two center-left and center-right parties and candidates, who garnered 8.5 million votes, have been motivated to support Lula in the second round.

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