

11-23-1989

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John Neagle

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Recommended Citation

Neagle, John. "Brazil: Official Election Results; Preparation For Runoff Campaign Underway." (1989).
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Brazil: Official Election Results; Preparation For Runoff Campaign Underway

by John Neagle

Category/Department: General

Published: Thursday, November 23, 1989

Brazil's Superior Electoral Court announced official results for the Nov. 15 presidential election on Nov. 21. Fernando Collor de Mello of the National Reconstruction Party received 20,609,009 votes, or 28.52%. Luis Inacio da Silva of the Workers Party obtained 11,622,673, 16.08%; and, Leonel Brizola of the Democratic Labor Party, 11,168,228, 15.45%. More than 17% of the voters cast blank ballots. Twenty-one candidates ran for the presidency. Collor de Mello and da Silva will participate in a runoff Dec. 17. The winner will be sworn in March 15 for a five-year term. On Nov. 23, the Tribunal reported that it had rejected a request from Brizola for a manual count of over 80 million ballots. Brizola filed the petition Nov. 20. Nov. 18: President of the General Workers Confederation (CGT), Antonio Magri, told reporters that the confederation's national executive would meet next week to discuss the possibility of officially supporting Collor de Mello in the runoff. According to general secretary of the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), Roberto Amaral, Pernambuco state governor Miguel Arraes has accepted the role of bringing all leftist and progressive forces together for the runoff to support da Silva. Nov. 19: Collor de Mello said he is considering changing his running mate for the runoff. Vice presidential candidate for the Nov. 15 vote was Sen. Itamar Franco (Minas Gerais state). Collor indicated he was considering Sen. Fernando Henrique Cardoso to take Franco's place. Cardoso, from Sao Paulo state, is a leading member of the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB). Da Silva's party, the PT, campaigned on four major policy commitments: expanding and implementing agrarian reform, suspension of foreign debt payments, income redistribution, and democratization of government bureaucracies. On Nov. 19, members of the PT executive committee told the Folha de Sao Paulo that dropping or modifying the party's major commitments at this time to accommodate the PSDB or any other party would be "political suicide," since millions of voters cast their ballots for da Silva on Nov. 15 precisely because of the PT platform. The PSDB's positions on agrarian reform and foreign debt policy differ significantly from those of the PT. Regarding agrarian reform, the PT advocates expropriation of land in the interest of general social welfare, while the Social Democrats support expropriation only if owners are not exploiting holdings up to or beyond minimums already defined under the law. On the foreign debt, the PT's plan calls for a moratorium on debt service payments, followed by an official "audit" of all loan contracts. After the audit, foreign creditors would be informed as to what debts are to be repaid. The PT allows that in the case of certain debts, "definitive non-payment" could occur. The PSDB promotes a payment suspension toward obtaining a debt principal reduction agreement with foreign creditor banks. In brief, the Social Democrats would employ a temporary moratorium as a means to extract renegotiation on favorable terms. Nov. 20: Brizola said his party's support for da Silva in the runoff will be possible if the PT accepts certain demands, such as substitution of Lula's running mate, Jose Paulo Bisol. (Basic data from O Globo, O Estado de Sao Paulo, 11/18/89; Folha de Sao Paulo, Correio Braziliense, 11/19/89; O Dia, 11/20/89; AP, 11/21/89; AFP, 11/24/89)

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