

12-14-1989

Brazil: Summary Of Recent Campaign Highlights Preceding Dec. 17 Presidential Runoff Election

John Neagle

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur>

Recommended Citation

Neagle, John. "Brazil: Summary Of Recent Campaign Highlights Preceding Dec. 17 Presidential Runoff Election." (1989).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur/3841>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiSur by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Brazil: Summary Of Recent Campaign Highlights Preceding Dec. 17 Presidential Runoff Election

by John Neagle

Category/Department: General

Published: Thursday, December 14, 1989

Polls this week indicate support is growing nationwide for leftist candidate Luis Inacio (Lula) da Silva. Rightist candidate Fernando Collor de Mello, meanwhile, canceled three days of campaign activities to revamp his TV spots. On Dec. 11, a survey released by the Datafolha polling organization showed Collor de Mello leading by only three points. A poll released Tuesday evening by the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics showed Collor de Mello held a 4% lead over da Silva, or 47% to 43%. Just 10 days ago, polls had Collor de Mello leading by 15 points. The prospect of a leftist victory was credited with causing a 30% jump in dollar prices on the black market Monday. On Dec. 12 in Rio de Janeiro, political scientist Amaury de Souza told the New York Times: "Anyone can win at this point." In Brasilia, Alfred Stepan, author of several books on Brazilian politics, said, "The politicians think Lula's absolutely got it." Stepan is dean of the School of International and Political Affairs at Columbia University. Some analysts say the major turning point in the race was a Dec. 3 televised debate, which polls show da Silva won. Other factors are Lula's success in winning important political endorsements, and his daily television commercials, which include musical endorsements from Brazil's top singers, musicians and soap opera stars. Endorsements include those of Leonel Brizola and Mario Covas, presidential candidates in the first round (Nov. 15) who received votes from Brazilians supportive of social change, and generally progressive causes. According to Alexandre Barros, director of political consulting firm Early Warning, "Lula has a message that is far more popular than Collor de Mello's." Political commentator Ricardo Noblat of the daily newspaper Jornal do Brasil said, "Lula is the clear favorite. Only a huge mistake on his part can save Collor de Mello." The Popular Brazil Front, Lula's electoral coalition, advocates agrarian reform, under which unused and underutilized land would be given to landless peasants; suspension of interest payments on the \$110 billion foreign debt during a congressional evaluation of debt contracts; "breaking" with the International Monetary Fund; doubling the minimum wage and freezing prices; and, unifying the six military ministries into a single defense ministry headed by a civilian. Collor de Mello's campaign has focused on cleaning up corruption in government. The candidate was born into a powerful and wealthy family, and entered politics in 1979 when military leaders appointed him mayor of Maceio, capital of northeastern Alagoas state. He was later elected federal representative and governor of Alagoas. Collor de Mello has the solid backing of most business organizations, conservative political groups, and military officers. He has waged a largely negative campaign, attempting to portray his adversary as a radical who favors "class struggle" and "armed violence." His television advertising has focused on violence reportedly provoked by leftists at Collor campaign rallies. Collor has also noted that voters in cities with mayors from da Silva's party did not vote for him on Nov. 15. Da Silva came in fourth in his home state, Sao Paulo. [The influence of business and other sources of power and privilege in the race is diluted by a law limiting campaign advertising on the national television and radio networks to two free 10 minute segments each day for each candidate. Newspaper advertising is not allowed.] Da Silva has greater credibility than Collor de Mello as an advocate of social change. In Brazil, the vast majority of workers earn less than \$100 per month. A grade school dropout, da

Silva worked as a delivery boy and messenger before obtaining a job as a metalworker. Later, as president of the metalworkers union, Lula was jailed by the military government after leading a huge strike in 1980 against foreign-owned automobile companies. Collor de Mello has demonstrated what some analysts describe as anxious recognition that Lula may be unbeatable. On Tuesday and Wednesday this week, the Collor campaign ran a TV spot featuring Miriam Cordeiro, a former girlfriend of Lula's. She said da Silva had offered her money to get an abortion when she was pregnant with their daughter. In addition to talking about their relationship and the couple's 15-year-old daughter, Cordeiro said da Silva was a racist and "couldn't stand blacks." A majority of Brazil's 150 million people are black or mixed-race. In the spot, Cordeiro said that her testimony was voluntary. Meanwhile, Maria Helena Amaral, a former campaign worker for Collor de Mello, told reporters that Cordeiro was paid about \$23,000 for her participation. "I couldn't remain silent facing a case of corruption," said Amaral, adding she had quit the campaign staff after the interview. The Brazilian press has condemned Collor de Mello's tactics. Da Silva has said his daughter, Lurian, was born after an affair with Cordeiro following the death of his first wife in 1969. Earlier this year, the press "discovered" Lurian, but Brazilians did not apparently react strongly to the disclosure. In his own TV spot on Wednesday, da Silva was shown standing beside Lurian, who was wearing the red-star button of his Workers Party. "Lurian was the product of a gesture of love," he said. "To me, all that matters is what my daughter thinks of me. She knows what kind of a father she has." (Basic data from AP, 12/12/89, 12/13/89; New York Times, 12/13/89)

-- End --