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Brazil: Leftist Candidate Da Silva Concedes Defeat

by John Neagle

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On Dec. 19, Luis Inacio (Lula) da Silva conceded defeat to Fernando Collor de Mello in the Dec. 17 presidential election runoff. Da Silva said, "Collor de Mello won the election, but he won't do anything he promised during the campaign...He will govern in favor of big business, the armed forces and the International Monetary Fund." Da Silva said his Workers Party (PT) and other progressive parties that supported him will form a "shadow government to prevent Collor de Mello from committing abuses." With 93.9% of the vote counted, official returns showed Collor de Mello with 32,884,545 votes, or 43.7%, and da Silva with 29,975,927 votes, or 38.9%. Officials said the remaining ballots were blank or improperly filled out and considered null. Later, electoral officials announced the following results, based on a count of 81,559,915 votes, or 99.36% of the total: Collor de Mello, 34,872,379 (42.76%); da Silva, 30,984,612 (37.99%); blank and null votes, 15,700,283 (19.25%). Eighty percent of Brazil's electorate of 82 million had never before voted for president. Leaders of Collor de Mello's National Reconstruction Party met with outgoing President Jose Sarney's economic ministers and began negotiating alliances with political leaders. The rightist party has less than 3% of seats in Congress. Collor de Mello was also attempting to open channels of communication with the liberal wing of the Roman Catholic Church, unions and leftist parties that supported da Silva. PT president Luiz Gushiken expressed disinterest in working with Collor de Mello's party. He said, "Mr. Collor de Mello has a program and supporters that conflict with our program and with the way of handling politics in Brazil. There's no sense in us joining a Collor government." Sarney said he would step down from office early if Congress votes to abbreviate his five-year mandate. The president-elect is scheduled to succeed Sarney for a five-year term March 15, 1990, but pressure is mounting for Sarney to resign early. (Basic data from Notimex, AFP, 12/19/89)

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