

Interview with LULA



Lula, the Workers Party candidate in Brazil's presidential elections, visited South Africa in June to hold discussions with President Nelson Mandela. The former metal worker - who is leading the presidential race in Brazil - found time to speak to LANGA ZITA and KARL VON HOLDT between a diplomatic reception and watching the Brazilian world cup team beat the Russians 2-0.

L **about Bulletin:** What is the significance of your visit to South Africa and your meeting with President Mandela?

Lula: There is a certain similarity between the problems that exist in Brazil and South Africa. Of course we respect the differences that exist also. Racial apartheid and social apartheid has a lot in common with the problems of Brazil, where you have a privileged minority and a huge majority which is excluded from social development. Mandela's election means that the aspirations of those who are excluded are being met for the first time. At the same time there is a certain fear amongst the privileged sectors of society.

It's the same situation in Brazil where we have those that are excluded, the majority, and where we also have the

privileged ones. Mandela's experience in the first few months of his government could be very similar to our experience from January 1995 when we hope to take power as the new Government of Brazil. That is why this dialogue is very important – because on the one hand you cannot frustrate the majority that voted for you, and on the other hand you cannot fill the rich sectors of society with fear, the sectors that have capital.

To combine these two aspects requires enormous political engineering, and I think that Mandela's experience and the experience of the people in South Africa, will contribute greatly to our approach in 1995. This is the main objective of our visit.

But besides that I have always had a great desire to visit Africa. This is a historic moment in South Africa, and I came to learn!

Labour Bulletin: There is a debate in the left in our country about which path of development to follow. Some argue for delinking our economy and others argue that we should be integrated into the world economy. What are your views on this?

Lula: This debate takes place in Brazil also. I believe that it is impossible today for any country on the planet to isolate itself from the internationalised economy. The economic blocs that are being built have not only economic power but the power of technology, and we are all somewhat dependent on this. In our case we are trying to combine our inter-national participation with still developing our own domestic potential. Our starting point is to base ourselves in a strongly-organised social movement. Secondly there should be investments in agriculture in our country. Thirdly we should invest more in small and medium sized companies. This means we should give an opportunity to the community to self-manage in the areas of small trade, small industry and cooperatives. In Brazil we believe this is the road to take us out of the absolute

poverty we are facing. It is important to direct state resources towards small projects, which is a very important way of meeting the urgent need for jobs in Brazil.

Labour Bulletin: Internationalisation of the economy and the domination of the rich countries creates many constraints on meeting the needs of the people. What kind of international policies can new progressive governments such as ours and, hopefully, yours pursue in this arena?

Lula: I believe that the countries of the developing world should come as close together as possible, as quickly as possible. In the case of Brazil we are very interested in developing our relations with Africa in terms of culture and of trade. This is also strategically important from the point of view of relations between the North and the South. Relations with Africa, with China, and with Latin America are priorities for us. We believe the similarities between these countries could guarantee an extraordinary market. For example Brazil could contribute the technology for oil prospecting in deep water, in which we have great experience.

Culturally too we need to recover the historical relations between Brazil and the people of Africa. We could have South African students in Brazil and Brazilian students in South Africa. We should not lose this opportunity that history has given us.

Labour Bulletin: Some of us believe there is a need for the transformation and democratisation of global economic institutions such as GATT, the World Bank and the IMF. New world leaders of the calibre of yourself and Nelson Mandela could play an important role in such a process. What are your views?

Lula: There is an extraordinary need for the democratisation of international institutions, both financial and political. For example countries such as ourselves could influence the way the United Nations responds to the civil war in Angola, or the



December 1989: 400 000 gather in São Paulo during Lula's first presidential campaign

blockade of Cuba. I am convinced that we have to change the way these international institutions work. We cannot allow them to continue operating as if we were still in the cold war. The Berlin wall has fallen, but we also have to overthrow the wall which exists between the decision making powers of the rich countries and the poor countries. This is a political struggle.

For example the Organisation of American States has not taken a position on the overthrow of the democrats of Haiti by the military of that country. The US invades Panama, it invades Granada, it blockades Cuba, and it refuses to take a

position on democracy in Haiti because the international agencies are subordinated to the super powers. We have to end their right to veto. This is the struggle that we are going to have to face together.

Labour Bulletin: To move from the international arena to the national one, if you do win the presidential elections at the end of this year, what relationship do you anticipate between your government and organisations of civil society such as the labour movement?

Lula: My origins are in the labour movement, and I am aware that my



position can only be sustained through the labour movement and the popular movement. I have the clear cut view that civil society, through its organisations, will have to play a decisive part in our government. We cannot win the elections and forget that all these sectors were the reason why I was elected. They have to participate in a very decisive way in all the decisions the government is going to make. That is why I worked so hard for Vincentinho to be elected the president of CUT. I want a labour movement that is militant, demanding and willing to oppose, as well as to be a partner in the structural transformations that our government is going to undertake. We need the churches, Catholic and Evangelical, we need the support of the peasants, and we need the

grassroots movements.

My main concern is to win the elections and not to permit myself to become a slave of the state machinery. Because otherwise who is going to govern? It will be the bureaucracy, the state machinery, not myself. And who has the support of the people? It is myself, not the machinery of the state.

Labour Bulletin: People have criticised the Workers Party on grounds that its road will lead to the same cul de sac as the Chilean path of Allende. What are your views on the possible democratic transition

and transformation towards socialism?

Lula: In the first place we are not in a transition from democracy to socialism. We are in transition from a regime which is authoritarian in the economic sphere, in which a minority dominates, towards a democracy which includes, as citizens, all Brazilians.

It is not possible to repeat in a country like Brazil what happened to Allende in Chile. In the first place the president of Brazil has to be elected with at least 50% of the votes, whereas in Chile Allende took power with 30% of the votes. In the second place Brazil is culturally very different from Chile. In the third place organised civil society has in Brazil today much more importance than civil society had in Chile. So we are going to win the elections, we are going to make the structural reforms that are necessary, and I think the way we have chosen is the best one.

In 1985 I did not think it was possible to reach the presidency through elections, but in 1989 I won 47% of the vote. Now in 1994 it becomes more and more clear that we can win the elections. What is the greatest challenge? I cannot win the elections with leftist speeches, and govern with a rightwing practice. I have to win with a stated policy which I can comply with and follow in practice. This is my commitment. This is why I believe in the participation of civil society, of the labour movement, and the popular movement. ☆

“ If I am President, I will need a labour movement that is militant, willing to oppose, as well as to be a partner...”
