

Candidate's death in plane crash reconfigures Brazil's presidential race

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Brazil's Workers Party (PT) President Dilma Rousseff declared three days of national mourning following Wednesday's death of Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) candidate Eduardo Campos in a plane crash in the port city of Santos. Six members of his campaign staff also lost their lives.

Campos, a three-time governor of the northeastern state of Pernambuco, had been running third in the race for the October 5 presidential election and had cast his candidacy as a kind of "third way" between the ruling PT and the main right-wing opposition party, the PSDB (Brazilian Social Democracy Party). During a political career spanning nearly three decades, Campos served as a minister in the PT government of former union leader Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, while striking bargains with sections of the Brazilian right, including the PSDB, which he brought into his own state government.

The *Financial Times* described Campos as a "business-friendly leftist." During his campaign, he vowed to pursue more free-market policies than the ruling PT, which has proven itself over the past 12 years as a reliable tool of both foreign and domestic capital. He has also pledged to keep in place the PT's minimum social assistance program's for the poorest sections of Brazil's population.

In a statement on Campos' death, Rousseff described him as a "promising young politician." Both she and her PSDB rival, Aécio Neves, suspended their campaigns for the three-day period.

Despite the official mourning in the wake of the candidate's death, the PSB and its allies are engaged in urgent discussions on who will replace him. The obvious choice is his vice-presidential running mate, Marina Silva, also a former minister in the Lula government. She left the PT to become the candidate of the Green Party in 2010, winning 20 percent of the vote

and forcing Rousseff into a second round contest with the PSDB candidate, José Serra.

While sections of the PSB reportedly are pressing for one of their own to fill the presidential place on the ticket, Silva is seen as potentially a more viable candidate than even Campos, and Campos' brother has come forward to declare that she would have been the late candidate's choice.

Silva, who grew up in poverty as the child of a rubber tapper in the western Amazonian state of Acre, made the most of her humble origins in terms of political capital, much as Lula had done before her.

As Lula's environmental minister, she presided over the greatest environmental destruction in the country's history carried out in the interest of agribusiness and its insatiable need for land for soya production and the rapid growth of the sugar-based ethanol industry. Her Green Party candidacy was backed by some of Brazil's biggest capitalist interests, who saw her slogan of "sustainable growth" as entirely compatible with profit interests.

Silva had sought to launch her own party, known as the Sustainability Network, but failed to clear the hurdles imposed by Brazil's electoral laws. She aligned herself with Campos and the PSB only last year.

Among those in the party opposing her candidacy are reportedly opposed factions that support, on the one hand, renewing the PSB's alliance with the ruling PT, and, on the other, uniting with the right-wing PSDB. The PSB leadership met in a Sao Paulo hotel Friday to consider the matter.

These divisions only expose the PSB's role as another rotten bourgeois electoral front for which the word "socialism" is nothing but window dressing.

In its early years, in the 1950s, it backed the Brazilian right. Outlawed under the country's 20-year US-

backed dictatorship, it reemerged following the restoration of civilian rule as a northeastern-based electoral party, which allied itself with the Lula government. The party was taken over in 1990 by Campos' grandfather, Miguel Arraes, a three-time governor of Pernambuco, who had been imprisoned and then forced into exile under the military dictatorship.

Also in discussions are five smaller parties that have joined the PSB on a common "United for Brazil" slate. These include the PPS (Popular Socialist Party), a split-off from the old Stalinist Communist Party, which in the last two presidential elections has backed the rightist PSDB. Most of these parties have indicated their willingness to support Marina, but some have insisted that she explicitly commit herself to the PSB's free market policies and make clear that her environmentalist pretensions will in no way interfere with the interests of agribusiness.

The presidential candidacy of Marina Silva may also exercise a certain gravitational pull on Brazil's pseudo-lefts. She has forged a close alliance with Heloisa Helena, a fellow evangelical Christian, who was the 2006 presidential candidate of the PSOL (Socialism and Freedom Party)—a party formed by elected members of the PT who were expelled for opposing a pension reform under the Lula government.

This bourgeois party, which claims to stand for a return to the PT's founding values, included various figures from the Brazilian Pabloite revisionist movement, including Helena, who resigned from the leadership of the party in 2010 and went on to support Marina Silva's attempt to forge a new party for this year's election.

The PSTU (United Socialist Workers Party), which traces its origins to the tendency founded by the late Argentine revisionist Nahuel Moreno, has repeatedly campaigned for a "united left front" consisting of itself, the PSOL and the Stalinist Communist Party.

Both the PSOL and PSTU issued statements of condolence following Campos' death on Wednesday.



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