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Sharp debates on Lula government

World Social Forum - first report

- News from around the world -

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It is impossible to pinpoint a focus or even 10 foci at a World Social Forum (WSF). After a couple of days of this fifth edition, back in Porto Alegre, however there are a couple of themes that are emerging among the multitude of issues, ideas, campaigns and dreams that make up the WSF.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/wsfportoalegre.jpg>]

The first, which is not on the agenda, is the fight over the politics of the Lula government and the future of the PT and Brazilian socialism. Government ministers have fanned out through the WSF to speak at issue based assemblies and workshops on the environment and human rights among others, where they have been well received. Lula has done a keynote speech before going to Davos.

The left in the PT, the Trades Unions and the parties to left of the PT have organised many frequently clashing events to discuss the way ahead, marched on Lula's keynote meeting to picket and heckle and have billboards and wall slogans all over the town attacking neo-liberalism and Lula.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/lulaetc-2.jpg>]

The PT majority in response are wearing "100% Lula" T-shirts and altering the wall paintings to read "with Lula another world is possible". Given the close connection between the PT and the WSF this debate was probably inevitable but unfortunately has largely been carried out as a Brazilian internal discussion and not made its way out into a wider context of learning lessons for the left internationally.

The WSF's official daily newspaper reflects the issues behind the controversy by having a photo of Lula on the front page saying "I belong here. I am the president, but I am of the social movements" and Walden Bello's article "Lula, the darling of Washington" inside.

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