

## BRAZILIAN GREEN PARTY DELEGATION TO EUROPE, 1989

Four members of the Brazilian Green Party traveled to Europe in May-June of 1989 to meet with Green Party representatives, and others. The members of the delegation were Domingos Fernandes and Jose Gaspar Ferraz, both members of the National Executive Council of the Brazilian Green Party, also Joao da Silva, a farmer and leader of an environmentalist group in Sao Paulo, and Maria Thereza Alves, representative of the Green Party in the USA and Mexico. The delegation traveled to France, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany and Portugal.

FRANCE: The Green Party here is electorally strong as it is in Belgium and Germany. We met with the head of the Co-Secretariat of the Greens. Among the issues discussed was a coordinated campaign through their office to put pressure on certain situations in South America. Since we were the first Green Party from South America to speak with them they also asked for our co-operation in an information network on ecological movements and Green Parties in the southern hemisphere. They also expressed the need for us to work together internationally on specific issues such as the Amazon Region. We organized a group which may call itself "Save the Amazon" made up of French ecologists to work closely with Brazilian environmental groups in order to act with more efficiency on environmental issues. We met with the President of the Nouvelle Gauche Party, Pierre Juquin, who is also actively working with the Rainbow Coalition of the European Parliament (Red-Green alliance holding the majority vote). Much documentation was given to us concerning Red-Green alliances in Europe; the disputes within such alliances, the benefits and drawbacks. This was especially useful to us since we had recently formed an alliance with the Workers' Party in Brazil for the Presidential elections of 1989, and thus the analysis of parties which have already gone through this can greatly help us quickly resolve any disputes of the future. The Nouvelle Gauche extended an invitation for the Brazilian Green Party to officially participate in a conference to be held in January on the world debt. This is timely for us to attend since the newly elected President in Brazil will be in office and will perhaps be more receptive to nature-for-debt

swaps; as is not the case with the incumbent. Mr. Juquin and a delegation of the Nouvelle Gauche will be guests of the Brazilian Green Party in the fall of this year to observe the Presidential elections.

**SWITZERLAND:** The Green Parties (sometimes called the Ecology Party) here are independent from each other, but have unified in a loose forming federation. Last elections they registered six-percent nationally. We met with the federal congressman and state senator from Geneva, we discussed the possibilities of concentrated actions from Green Party representatives on violations of the environment by Swiss-owned companies. Of especially useful information was their standpoint on the ECC among the many issues of their disapproval of the ECC is the danger of consolidating a strong military and economic power bloc. They stressed the need for co-operation especially on a bio-regional scale which would include communist-bloc nations, which would be the only manner where it would become a true commonmarket. They also stressed the lack of environmental concern by the ECC and the dangers of specialization of agriculture which goes against the principles of the Green Party such as autosufficiency on a regional scale.

We were impressed to discover that a state senator in Switzerland make one-third of the minimum wage and his only luxury is a free pass on public transportation. In Brazil, a state senator "officially" earns twenty times the minimum wage, has a 24-hour chauffeured car, five employees and many other benefits. Though we support the need for a decent salary for a state representative (especially in Brazil where it is not a part-time job) we do not support a salary or benefits which are so disproportionate with the rest of the population. This has given us a different view of the possibilities of federal expenditure and we will make this issue an active part of our platform for the congressional elections of 1990.

We also met with the administrative director of the World Wildlife Fund headquartered in Geneva, he was enthusiastic with the advancement of the green movement in Brazil. we expressed the

lack of technical information and trained technicians in Brazil. He assured us that the WWF is especially interested in Brazil, but unfortunately for the past years they had not had direct contact with Brazilians environmental groups and therefore not much information. WWF would remedy that in the future.

In Bern, we met with the Secretary-General of the Green Party there. The meeting was short since we were to depart for Frankfurt. We discussed the differences of the Green Parties of Switzerland and Brazil. He expressed surprise at how to tackle a transportation system in one area alone of Sao Paulo City for two-three million people daily. And we were surprised to discover how strong the Conservatives were in Switzerland and how difficult it is for their Green Party to make inroads in a country with hundreds of years of a conservative tradition.

In Geneva, we also spent a frustrating day in the World Council of Churches, the General-Secretariat shuffled us to the Program to Combat Racism, which shuffled us to Church and Society, the Human Rights Desk and several other offices. Freda Ragotte of Church and Society was helpful in providing us with information especially a list of scientists around the Americas who are ecologically minded and their specialities. But the general feeling we received from the WCC is that the ecology issue is a luxury Latin Americans should not think of until the problems of democracy, women, unemployment, agrarian reform and racism are resolved. There is a mistaken perspective that only a local peasant organization should be effectively supported when in fact obviously in a country such as Brazil, this type of organization would have to be part of a regional (alliances with Indians and ecologists), national and international network, as Chico Mendes discovered.

We do not have Church connections and are mistrustful that perhaps some recognized Brazilian Church leaders might criticize the Brazilian Green Party for not tackling social issues. We, of the Green Party, have clearly seen that the specific history of Brazil, especially in this century argues against short-term or classically Marxist social analysis. In fact, the Brazilian Green party has analyzed that environmental issues must be seen as part of

larger social issues and that social issues cannot be separated from environmental issues. The Green Parties in Latin America do not have the luxury due to our economic and social distortions to ever deal with ecology in a utopian way. Many times the Green Party in Brazil has been criticized by utopian ecologists. Once it was for not supporting a campaign to close down a polluting alcohol (for cars) refinery plant. Since this refinery was responsible for fifty-percent of the local town's jobs, we proposed to negotiate with the refinery for a filter and chemical processing unit to clean up the pollution in the nearby river, which also provided drinking water for the local town.

In Geneva, we were invited by the Swiss Association of Anthropologists to speak at the Musee d'Ethnographie on the Green Party's perspectives of the Amazon Region. The Green Party is collaborating on a project of a collective of rubber and nut gatherers as an attempt to provide an alternative means of income for local Amazon residents other than slash-and-burn crop farms which are highly destructive to the rainforest and also to the peasant since he must move his fields every five years due to erosion of the rich top soil. One of our goals in Europe was to promote this collective and get them direct contacts with buyers in Europe. This would eliminate the middle man and increase the collective's income. Thus word would reach other peasants and hopefully down the road, many would join the collective. The Musee expressed interest in co-producing a video on the collective which would then serve to generate solidarity with them.

**GERMANY:** The Green Party here is strong, especially after the recent municipal elections. However, it is factionalized to the point where Frankfurt does not deal with Berlin etc. We were also able to see first hand the problems caused by "star" personalities in a political party. The Green Party in Sao Paulo has especially been adamant about combating "star" syndromes which are destructive to the functioning of any party. Our most important meeting here was with the Secretary of the Environment of Frankfurt, who is also a member of the Green Party. A proposal was raised for the rubber and nut gatherers collective to distribute

in co-ops across Germany. We also discussed the possibility of lobbying on the state and federal level for the prohibition of the importation of tropical wood. He said that on a state level, he would lobby for the prohibition of the use of tropical wood by state contractors. We also discussed with other members of the German Green Party their proposals on urban planning. They presented many new ideas to us. Some of these proposals are not feasible in Latin America due to our economical problems, but continued contact with them on this issue can be of immense help to us.

**BELGIUM:** Part of our delegation then traveled to Belgium where they met with the Secretary-General of the Green Party there and their elected congressmen. We proposed the moratorium on the importation of tropical wood. They agreed to lobby for this on a national level. They were also interested in an exchange program with us; whereby one member of each party would live and work with the Green Party in the host country. We expressed the urgency of developing the political potential of the younger members of the Green Party in Brazil. Due to our economic situation, it is very difficult for a young person to devote time to politics while holding down several jobs. This program would allow a Brazilian time to study ecological politics and green movements in Europe.

**PORTUGAL:** The Green Party here has only recently been active on a political scale, they have one congresswoman elected, however there is already the problem of strong factionalism which will probably result in the formation of another party or movement. Here we met with a lobbying member of the Rainbow Coalition who is also working with the German Greens in setting up an alternative technology institute in Portugal to provide training for Portuguese-speaking persons. This institute will open in the end of the year. We were asked to submit a list of interested candidates.

We hope to travel to Europe in January of 1990, to speak at the World Debt Conference, then to Germany, and to Northern Europe; Finland, Denmark, and Holland where we were unable to go on this

trip. We hope time and funds possible in the future would permit us to further our contacts with the ecological movements and Green Parties in Europe whose lobbying efforts are most important for our work in Brazil.

Sao Paulo, July 1989