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Brazil's Former President Lula to Stand Trial in Third Corruption Case

Brazil's former president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (shown), will stand trial for another instance of corruption relating to the scandal uncovered by Operation Car Wash, a corruption case that has engulfed Petrobras, the state-owned energy company, since 2014.



This time the prosecution is getting some help from one of those already tried, convicted, and sentenced to prison: former construction company CEO Marcelo Odebrecht. Odebrecht is currently serving a 19-year jail sentence, but allegedly is cutting a deal to shorten his sentence by exposing Lula's role in the bid-rigging pay-to-play deal involving his company. If convicted on all counts, Lula, who turns 71 in two weeks, will not see daylight until he is 106, 35 years from now.

On Monday prosecutors laid out the charges: Lula pressured government officials running the country's development bank, INDES, to grant loans to the Odebrecht Organization, South America's largest engineering and construction company in Latin America, to fund construction projects in Angola, Ghana, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. In return, prosecutors charged, Odebrecht funneled millions of dollars to Lula's nephew Tiaguara Rodrigues dos Santos. Dos Santos is also going to stand trial for his part in the scheme, along with nine others.

This comes on top of two other trials Lula is facing related to Operation Car Wash. One involves a quid-pro-quo deal Lula allegedly arranged with Grupo OAS, another construction company, where he helped arrange favorable contracts with Petrobras. In exchange OAS spruced up one of Lula's homes to the tune of more than a million dollars.

The other trial concerns efforts Lula made to arrange for the disappearance of a key witness against him by having an associate fly him out of the country before he was scheduled to testify.

Naturally, Lula denies everything. But those denials are beginning to wear a little thin. Through his lawyers Lula contends that he had nothing to do with the various scams and schemes, that they are just trumped-up charges brought by his political enemies. Even though he was president at the time, he claims that he knew nothing about the INDES loans. He claims innocence in the disappearance of the witness. And he claims that the property that OAS fixed up for him didn't really belong to him, adding that OAS was renovating the property in the hopes that he would buy it.

Lula is a long way removed from the heady days when the international establishment press was fawning over his special brand of socialism that was allegedly bringing peace and prosperity to his



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country. In 2010, *Time* magazine named him to its list of “The 100 Most Influential People in the World,” while Perry Anderson, in an obsequious 12,000-word celebration of the wonders of “Lula’s Brazil” published by the *London Review of Books* in 2011, wrote words that he no doubt would like to reconsider:

But it is true that, in democratic conditions, to be more popular at the close than at the outset of a prolonged period in office is rare. Rarer still — indeed, virtually unheard of — is for such popularity to reflect, not appeasement or moderation, but a radicalisation in government.

Today, there is only one ruler in the world who can claim this achievement, the former worker who in January stepped down as president of Brazil, enjoying the approval of 80 per cent of its citizens. By any criterion, Luiz Inácio da Silva is the most successful politician of his time.

Like other politicians in other parts of the world, Lula, faced with charges ranging from corruption to witness tampering to conspiracy to fraud to money laundering to obstruction of justice, is at last beginning to have the Teflon coating provided by the international press scoured off of his phony image as the socialist savior of his country.

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