

# TRUMPISH CLONE TAKES BRAZIL

**Brazil has 42 million evangelicals in a total population of 210 million** -and over 200 representatives out of the 594 total in both branches of Parliament. Don't mess with their *jihad*. They know how to exercise massive appeal among the beggars starving at the neoliberal *banquet*. The *Lula Left* simply has been unable to oppose massive economic interests, tied to mineral wealth, agro-business and most of all the Brazilian Bible Belt, facing death squads against Native Brazilians, landless peasants and African-American communities. Call it the apotheosis of tropical neo-pentecostal, Christian-Zionism. Says Forbes: "*Bolsonaro's claim to fame is his bombastic approach to the main social issues of the day—particularly family values and matters of crime and punishment.*"

The brand new President of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, remains the Brazilian Trump to the extent that his communication skills - *talking tough, simplistically, and in language understandable to a seven-year old* - recall the style of the American President. An incendiary character with a long history of racist and sexist outbursts, Bolsonaro told a female federal deputy that she was not worthy of being raped by him, said that he would be unable to love a gay son and that his children would never have a black partner, as they had been very well-educated. During the 2016 impeachment of Workers' Party President Dilma Rousseff, who was tortured by the dictatorship during the military rule of Brazil from 1965 to 1986, **he dedicated his impeachment vote to the colonel who tortured her.**

Bolsonaro's shameless Trumpism was apparent in his last-minute message before Election Day: "*Make Brazil Great Again.*" Bolsonaro's tools are the obvious ones - unmitigated praise of the Motherland; the Armed Forces; and the flag. But Bolsonaro is not interested in defending Brazilian industry, jobs and culture. On the contrary. A graphic example is what happened in a Brazilian restaurant in Deerfield Beach, Florida, a year ago: Bolsonaro saluted the American flag and chanted "USA! USA!"



The new president-elect has promised to unleash a wave of violence on the working class, minorities and the left. He told his supporters to shoot every Workers' Party supporter at one whistle stop in September. At another presidential rally, he proclaimed (*Guardian*, 10/22/18): "These red outlaws will be banished from our homeland. It will be a cleanup the likes of which has never been seen in Brazilian history.... Either they go overseas, or they go to jail." He portrays himself as the Righteous Defender against a corrupt elite (even though he's part of the elite); and his hatred of all things politically correct, feminism, homosexuality, multiculturalism - are all unpardonable offenses to his "family values." And he excels in demonizing so-called Cultural Marxism. In the Brazilian case, the enemy is not liberalism but the Workers' Party, derided by Bolsonaro as "a bunch of communists." He said Brazil was on the edge of a corrupt, communist "abyss" and could either choose a path of "prosperity, freedom, family" or "the path of Venezuela". The successful prosecution of Lula enshrined the myth that the Workers' Party and the whole Left is corrupt (but not the Right). Bolsonaro overextended the myth: every minority and social class is a target - in his mind they are "communists" and "terrorists."

Economically, he proposes a course of shock therapy, appointing a University of Chicago-trained economist, Paulo Guedes, to oversee a fire sale of state assets and an opening up of the country's vast natural resources for foreign exploitation. Faced with the choice of center-left reformers who may tax business slightly more, and outright fascist candidates, the financial press once again made its decision clear, proving that democracy and the health of the stock market often do not mix. The media appear uninterested in the human cost of Bolsonaro's near-genocidal statements, nor the cost to the population if pensions are gutted and state assets are sold off, nor the cost to the Amazon, a crucial carbon reserve that must be maintained and strengthened if humanity has any chance of mitigating the catastrophe of climate change. These are mere externalities. When it comes to opportunities for profits, all else is forgotten. After all, fascism is for big business.

Bolsonaro's owes much to the coalition behind his election - a sophisticated operation unleashed on Brazil known as the *Hybrid War*. This *Hybrid War* united the court, the parliament and business in order to successfully engineer a coup during an anti-corruption investigation that led to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff. Ex-President Luiz Inacio Lula de Silva was thrown in jail on corruption charges with no hard evidence or smoking gun. Forbidden by the court to seek election from jail, every poll shows that poll Lula would have easily won the election. The Workers Party however doomed him and itself to destruction thanks to two acts of Hubris: sponsoring the World Cup in 2014 where it footed 90% of the \$15 billion bill and the Olympics in 2016.

The Judge who put Lula in jail and is now Bolsonaro's Minister of Justice, made his name during Operation Car Wash, the massive money laundering and corruption

probe which unearthed the shady deals between politicians, Brazil's state-owned oil company, and some of the country's most prominent construction companies, all profiting from the 2014 World Cup. Brazilians saw nearly all their country's political class implicated in what became one of the biggest corruption scandals in history. As a result, politicians were sentenced to a combined 1,900-plus years of jail time. A while later, reports surfaced confirming that certain stadiums that had been built for the 2014 World Cup were also linked to the same construction companies investigated in the corruption probe, which explained their inflated budgets. It didn't help that Brazil, always a favorite in soccer, suffered an embarrassing 7-1 defeat to Germany at the 2014 World Cup semi-finals. The loss was more than symbolic for Brazilians. Their low wages, ballooning bills, precarious public transportation, and violence made them feel that they were losing on more than just the sports front. Unemployment reached 12 percent of the population. Brazil went from having its largest gross domestic product growth (7.5 percent) in 20 years, to reaching a consecutive annual decline of 3.6 percent between 2010 and 2016.

The military has loomed large in Bolsonaro's campaign. Brazil elected the highest number of military and police candidates this century, totalling 74 representatives - four times higher than the 18 elected in 2014. Bolsonaro's vice-president Hamilton Mourão, a retired army general, said shortly after the first round of voting that the military could carry out a "self-coup" in cases of "anarchy", although he has since tried to "clarify" this comment. The election is a windfall for the weapons industry. The biggest gun manufacturer in Brazil - Taurus Forge - has benefited from a jump of over 160% in its stock value.

Bolsonaro, a mediocre member of Congress for 27 years, indiscriminately demonizes blacks, the LGBT community, the Left as a whole, the environmentalist's "scam" and, most of all, the poor. He's avowedly pro-torture. He markets himself as a Messiah - a fatalistic avatar coming to "save" Brazil from all those "sins" above. The Goddess of the Market, predictably, embraces him. "Investors" - those semi-divine entities - deem him good for "the market", with his last-minute offensive in the polls mirroring a rally in the Brazilian currency and the Sao Paulo stock exchange.

Jason Stanley, professor of philosophy at Yale and author of *How Fascism Works*, stresses the need of Fascism to emphasize a wonderful past when "we" ruled and "our" cultural traditions dominated. "**And then it militarizes the feeling of nostalgia.**" All the anxiety and loss that people feel in their lives, say from the loss of their healthcare, the loss of their pensions, the loss of their stability, then gets rerouted into a sense that the real enemy is liberalism, which led to the loss of this mythic past." The strategy of course is drenched in fake news - once again mirroring U.S. history: "*The whole concept of empire is based on fake news,*" says Stanley. "*All of colonization is based on fake news.*"

Bolsonaro has mastered these diversionist tactics. Goebbels comes to mind where he emphasized the necessity of portraying the *center-left* as Marxists and socialists because, as Stanley notes, "the middle class sees in Marxism not so much the subverter of national will, but mainly the thief of its property." That's at the center of Bolsonaro's strategy of demonizing the Workers Party - and the Left in general. What has taken power are the massive economic interests, tied to mineral wealth, agro-business and most of all the Brazilian Bible Belt. It is complete with death squads against Native Peoples.

The ascent of Right populism is a direct consequence of the emergence of a profound crisis of political representation all over the West; the complete identification of democracy with unrestrained capitalism, the politics of white supremacy; and the overwhelming power of social media, which allows - in Umberto Eco's peerless definition - the ascent of "**the idiot of the village to the condition of Oracle.**"

The Left in the West is like a deer caught in the headlights when it comes to fighting this kind of Right populism. Sharp minds from Slavoj Zizek to Chantal Mouffe are trying to conceptualize an alternative - without being able to coin the definitive neologism. Left populism? Popularism? Ideally, the effective counterpunch is an autonomous, popular movement. For now, such a movement rests in the realm of Utopia.

**Much obliged to Pepe Escobar,**  
a veteran Brazilian journalist, is the correspondent-at-large for Hong Kong-based Asia Times. His latest book is 2030.  
[consortiumnews.com](http://consortiumnews.com)  
Additional comments from **Alan MacLeod**  
[fair.org](http://fair.org)

Redwood Playhouse Presents:  
**RECYCLED YOUTH 2018**  
**'AN IMPERFECT JOURNEY'**  
Sponsored by  
Feet First Dancers  
**THURSDAY NOVEMBER 29TH**  
**FRIDAY NOVEMBER 30TH**  
**SATURDAY DECEMBER 1ST**  
**SUNDAY MATINEE: DECEMBER 2ND**  
Doors open at 6:30 - Show at 7:00  
Sunday Matinee Doors 1:30 - Show at 2:00  
At the Redwood Playhouse, 286 Sprowel Creek Road, Garberville  
Support our program: [www.gofundme.com/recycled-youth-2018](http://www.gofundme.com/recycled-youth-2018)

War Resisters League [www.warresisters.org](http://www.warresisters.org)

**WAR**

**YOUR MONEY? YOUR LIFE? OR NEITHER?**

"We all take part in it - if you pay your taxes, you're taking part in this war. We all have a responsibility, as they determined after Nuremberg, whether you're the lowest soldier or the highest ranking general, or just a regular civilian, we all have responsibility . . . to resist and refuse enabling and condoning this criminal behavior."

— Lt. Ehren Watada, speech at Veterans for Peace 2006 National Convention

**Your Life**      **Your Money**      **Your Choice**