



By the law and democracy of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro is now the president and is forming a government of a fascist character, connected to the military. His triumph last month has come about because of **five factors**. The **first** is the anti-Workers Party sentiment, which became very strong in Brazil because of the way in which it attempted to cover up the corruption cases that effectively existed in the party. These are exceptional but are never the less serious cases, and the party never made a public self-criticism of them, so the opposition knew how to exploit this and created an anti-Workers Party wave.

It is not that people prefer Bolsonaro, people preferred anyone other than the Workers Party. This took place within a conspiracy to imprison Lula, the leader of the Workers Party; and this is a **second factor**. **There is no evidence against Lula**, there is evidence against other leaders of the Workers Party who were sanctioned and some resigned But nothing against Lula. Then, since **Lula had a lot of prestige and was guaranteed to win in these elections**, they put him in jail, and now the judge who did it Sérgio Moro has been rewarded by Bolsonaro and appointed Minister of Justice. **This is proof that it was a conspiracy.**

The **third** factor is the manipulation of digital networks, which now pose a serious problem for democracy. What does "democracy" mean if the manipulations made by a man like Steve Bannon from the United States have already influenced elections in 50 countries of the world? Even in the election of Donald Trump, in the Brexit in the United Kingdom, in the victory of Bolsonaro in Brazil and now the appearance of fascists in the Spanish government of Asturias. It should also be borne in mind that Bolsonaro had 47 million votes and there are 30 million Brazilians who did not vote, whether by abstentions, blank votes or nullified ballots.

Count as number **four**, the cowardice of the Brazilian judicial system. It was responsible for Bolsonaro's election, because it should have punished him for the absurd things he said during the campaign, such as defending torture or offending homosexuals and women. But everything was endured, without any sanction. That facilitated his projection.

A Final factor is the influence of the evangelical churches; **the only ones that do grassroots work with the people**. In the 13 years of Workers Party government we have not done this work, we have not tried to strengthen the political literacy of the simple people, while the evangelical churches did. **The role of these neo-Pentecostal churches is to ensure that the poor endure poverty.** So they are like a flock of

lambs, of sheep that accept the word of the shepherd as if it were the word of God. It is a terrible form of oppression, of voluntary servitude, but it has a lot of strength in Brazil, even political strength. The evangelical churches had their influence in Bolsonaro's election and have a very strong number of parliamentary seats.

I attribute the growth of evangelical religions in Brazil to several factors. **First**, the two conservative pontificates of the Catholic Church, that of John Paul II and that of Benedict XVI, did not value our work in the popular bases with the basic ecclesial communities. On the contrary, there was much suspicion, much opposition and a change of bishops and priests who supported this work, so many faithful from the base ecclesial communities immigrated to the evangelical churches. In addition, they did not feel comfortable at Catholic Masses, which are generally very good for the middle and upper strata, for example when a faithful owner of a company goes to Mass and she or he will hardly find any employee there, or the doorman of their building, or the driver of their car. Those people go to the evangelical church. **The Catholic Church has not been able to give support or value poor people.**

In the Catholic Church the fact that **everything is centered on the figure of the priest** has made our work very difficult. The Catholic priests do not live in the *favelas*, but the evangelical pastors do, so this approach wins over the people. A **second** factor has to do with an internal mystique that "*a brother votes for a brother.*" That is, an evangelical, when he goes to vote, has to vote for another evangelical. That is why Bolsonaro, who is of Catholic tradition, was baptized in the Assembly of God, a denomination of Pentecostal character. It was with some intelligence that Bolsonaro converted to the evangelical faith in order to receive their votes.

The social movements meanwhile will continue with their struggles despite Bolsonaro's threat to criminalize them. Surely there will be more repression, imprisonment of their leaders and much agitation in Brazil, because Bolsonaro will want to go beyond the constitutional limits. The Constitution guarantees, for example, the right to protest or to form popular organizations, but for him all that is going to be framed in Brazil's anti-terrorism law, which unfortunately is a law of a government of the Workers Party. The social movements are going to be **characterized as terrorist movements**; at least he put it that way in his speech. We have to wait to see if that happens. In a month we will be able to evaluate where this government is going.

Rebuilding the Workers Party requires a thorough self-criticism. It has to be able to say "we have advanced in many things, the achievements are more important than the failures, but we have been wrong on this, this and this point". It also has to **sanction its militants** who brewed up the scandal of corruption. If that doesn't happen, no one is going to believe in this self-criticism. We have to find a way to unite against this coming fascist offensive. That's why we have to work hard, because **we can't think about the disagreements** we have with each other.

Lula however continues to be very respected. People remember that Lula's two terms were very good, so much so that he left the government with **87% approval**. People make a distinction between Lula and

the Workers Party. The Party is already old, it has screwed up and it has its problems, but Lula is something else. People know how to distinguish him, and that makes him still very much loved by the people. **Lula's claim to leadership is likely to survive** the Bolsonaro government because my expectation is that the Bolsonaro government is going to be a disaster and many people who voted for it are going to be sorry. That's going to reinforce Lula's leadership.

I went to visit **Lula in prison** before the elections and now I'm going to go before Christmas. I keep informed from family and friends who visit him, and I know that he is very well, in good spirits. Indignant, because he is imprisoned, because he could not take part in the elections, because of all the injustices and false accusations they made, but he is **firm from the mental and spiritual point of view**.

Liberation theology is still alive in Brazil after a long period of conservative pontificates who did not value this pastoral line. Now it is valued, especially because Pope Francis is very much identified with the theses of liberation theology. **There is a new breath**, liberation theology is again very important for the Christian faith, for the movements of churches, to understand the relationship between the Bible and the reality we live in. Now we are in a *new moment on the offensive in that sense*. But we have lost a lot of space to the evangelical religions. We lost space at the base, but not from the theoretical point of view, because we kept moving forward and dealing with new topics, such as **ecology, technological innovation, astrophysics, a very advanced feminist theology, also an indigenous theology**.

We of the Left must be self-critical as to why the poorest people no longer support us so much. Where have we gone wrong? Could it be that we lacked accessible political clarity? Could it be that we let the economy depend too much on commodity imports? Could it be that we didn't create enough internal market? Could it be that we have worked too much on the cultural and artistic dimension? These are all questions that we have to assess now.

I think capitalism has a lot of capacity to survive in different ways. I'm from a generation that thought I attended the end of capitalism about ten times, and it didn't happen. On the contrary, it continues to be more and more hegemonic, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall. So I think we have to rethink the way we deal with this system, and **we have to deal with it for the grassroots organization**. We have to create a new model of society within capitalism itself, based on **solidarity economy, struggles for environmental protection, the better lives for all indigenous people**. That is to say, to make popular socialist democratic spaces from the base that undermine more and more this capitalist pyramid that has a brutal inequality.

- **Frei Betto**

A Brazilian friar and Liberation Theologian,
Which he describes as:

"Seeing the world from the eyes & suffering the poor."

from a conversation with the Uruguayan newspaper **La Diaria** ladiaria.com.uy Translator Dominio Cuba for **Resumen-English.org**

GREEN not GAS, BUY not BAIL

When a man points a gun in a shop owner's face and demands all the money in the till, he is an armed robber. When a corporation makes decisions to increase the stock value over protecting customers from the loss of homes and death, they're called good investments. The state comes along on this little crime spree as an accomplice to this crime. The state of California, under Jerry Brown, has decided to be an accomplice to murder and bail out Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) so they could pass on the costs of the lawsuits, from at least the fires in Sonoma and Napa counties in 2017, to the paying customer, you know, the ones they haven't been killed yet. Gee, wonder if they'll be sending bills to the survivors for the unpaid electric bills from the houses that burnt down.

PG&E is one in a long line of corporations that have blood on their hands from 'going at risk,' so they could increase their profits. In September of 2018, lame duck Jerry Brown signed SB901 with obliges the California Public Utility Commission (CPUC) to determine whether a utility can recover its costs/expenses arising from fire that occurred in 2017. It's a very specifically phrased bill, obviously meant to cover the costs accrued by PG&E for the Sonoma and Napa fires that were started by putting profit over safety. PG&E kills, we pay to keep them in business so they live to kill another day...and they certainly gave us our money's worth!

Their latest hit was a downed power line that touched off the Camp Fire, burning down the entire town of Paradise gaining notoriety for being the largest fire in California history. As with so many dystopian, Orwellian memes today, we didn't pave Paradise to put up a parking lot, we reduced it to a smoking pile of ash, leaving people over 100 miles away choking on the ashes of the dead. Paradise, indeed.

This time, unless Jerry gets to work in a hurry, the problem will be left to the new governor, Gavin Newsome, to determine whether we bail them out again. This time,

there's a grumbling afoot. Dozens of angry protesters showed up and shut down the CPUC meeting on November 29, 2018. They demanded no bailout. They demanded CPUC no longer protect PG&E as a captured regulatory agency, free itself from PG&E's shackles and do what they're supposed to do, *-regulate* Public Utilities or get out of the way. Let PG&E go bankrupt, then the state can buy them. Pacific Gas and Electric can be converted to People's Gas and Electric, a truly Public utility.

Sound socialist? Nebraska's power grid is publicly owned and about 60% of all electric companies in the US are publicly owned. The numbers make sense.

At one point during the fires, PG&E's stock dropped and the entire company could've been bought for \$9 billion. If the state let the company fall into bankruptcy, they can buy it. The state pays on bonds at current rate of 4.2% for 30 years and would cost about \$378 million/year. If you changed nothing about the company, it turned a net profit of \$442 million in *the first quarter of 2018* and that was way down due to the fires in December of 2017. If we cut out the salary and bonuses of the CEO, there's an additional \$5 million and another \$12 million in executive bonuses, and we got some money to bury wires, starting with the highest risk areas and eventually burying all of them.

Now let's take a look at that 'G' in the name. What if we turn the grid away from 'Gas' and move toward 'Green'? We could start building infrastructure for all new localized, mini solar and wind farms used regionally throughout the state. How about providing grants to homes to change from gas heat to electric?

A decade from now we could have a fully modern power grid run sustainably with zero greenhouse gas emissions. PG&E would become People's Green Electric!

- **Lisa Argento Martell**