Dear Friends,

Greetings from the desk of the Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research.

In Brazil recently, I gave an interview to Brasil de Fato, which was born in 2003 as the weekly magazine of the World Social Forum. It is now one of the most important windows into Brazil’s political world. The newsletter this week carries the text of most of the interview.

Brasil de Fato: The first question is about the image of Jair Bolsonaro’s government around the world. You travel a lot; you are a journalist. We would like to know how the international press views the Bolsonaro administration. What aspects of his government have been the most talked about around the world?

Vijay Prashad: Well, I think the first thing to seriously look at is that people like Bolsonaro are seen as slightly comical. There is a sort of government: Boris Johnson, Donald Trump, Bolsonaro. He is part of this sort of rogue’s gallery of central characters.

But there is something that has alarmed people. Not only the liberals, but even others. There are two major carbon sinks in the world. One is on the island of Papua, both West Papua and Papua New Guinea. And the other is the Amazon. And I think it’s really quite chilling for people that Mr. Bolsonaro has decided to open the Amazon to the logging industry and so on. And I know that even in a newspaper like The New York Times, there was quite a strong story about Bolsonaro’s Amazon policy.

It is one thing to say that Bolsonaro is comical and has got terrible social positions. But when you start to destroy the Amazon, that has implications for the whole planet. And that’s usually something that consumes, doesn’t it? And not even million people – are quite alarmed.
Democratic processes are essentially being destroyed in the service of having a very limited form of elite government against the people. That’s the basic issue.

I was at the Curitiba [Free Lula] vigil a few weeks ago, and they asked me to give a talk. I gave a

But what is getting clearer and clearer and clearer is this concept of

Unions are experimenting with new processes. That’s why we are interested in looking to see, what are unions doing and where are they doing it.

The point of unionising or building trade unions is not to build a union. The point of this whole struggle is to build ... peasantry that is able to challenge the bourgeoisie politically. That is the point. Just having a union is not enough.