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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 one of the most important outlets in Brazil political world. The newsletter this week carries the text of that 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 world-renowned intellectual. What are your views about the international press coverage of Bolsonaro's phenomenon. 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 government that is seen as a government of comical characters. Boris Johnson, Donald Trump, Bolsonaro. He is part of this sort of rogues' gallery of comical 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. He has basically allowed logging and food lobbies to create policy. 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 is a major carbon sink. And I think that is what is happening in Brazil, especially in the Amazon region. It is a matter of serious concern because it is a matter of existential concern.
That there is a hybrid war at work in the planet. People need to understand that this hybrid war is a battle against democracy.

Dossier no. 17. Venezuela and Hybrid Wars in Latin America.

The way I understand the growth of these neo-authoritarians, these neofascists, is that they are not conventional 20th-century fascists. There is something quite different. They actually don't need to destroy the institutions of democracy. They don't need a coup d'état. They don't need a 20th-century fascist coup. They are just hitting the institutions piecemeal, they are hitting them out. You still have elections, you still have parliaments, you still have all this stuff. They don't need a revolution. They need a war. They need a perpetual state of emergency. They need to dominate the media. They need to control the judiciary, the courts, the police, the security forces. They need to have a permanent state of national security. They need to have a permanent emergency law. That's the way they operate. That's the way they rule.

The assault on Lula's right to run for the presidency was an attack on democracy. And that's how we have to understand it, and that's how we have to explain to people that it's happening all around the world.

Since the neoliberal period, neoliberal policy has had two effects. One is, it has really weakened the power of workers, and their capacity to organise themselves has decreased. Their capacity to organise themselves has decreased. I think this is very important. The question isn't – do you like Lula? Do you not like Lula? This is a ridiculous discussion. The real question is that if you support Lula, then you support democracy. And if you don't support Lula, then you support the attack on democracy. That's the real question.

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Warmly, Vijay.
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