Trump, Bolsonaro and the danger of fascism

Patrick Martin
20 March 2019

The three-day visit to Washington by the president of Brazil brought together two of the most right-wing figures in the world: Jair Bolsonaro, a former military officer and fervent admirer of the blood-soaked military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985, and Donald Trump, who has become the pole of attraction for authoritarians and fascists the world over, including the gunman who slaughtered 50 Muslims at two New Zealand mosques last week.

During their joint press conference at the White House Tuesday afternoon, Trump repeated his declaration, delivered to an audience of right-wing Cuban and Venezuelan exiles in Florida, that "The twilight hour of socialism has arrived in our hemisphere." He emphasized, as he did in his State of the Union speech, that this also involved putting an end to the threat of socialism within the United States itself.

Both Trump and Bolsonaro have made the extirpation of socialism—the political core of fascist movements—the central goal of their governments. At their joint press conference, they railed against socialism only days after the massacre in New Zealand, carried out by Brenton Tarrant. Tarrant posted a manifesto hailing Trump as a "symbol of renewed white identity" and declaring his desire to put his boot on the neck of every "Marxist."

The mutual embrace of Trump and Bolsonaro at the White House is symbolic of the elevation of far-right parties and cultivation of fascistic forces by capitalist governments and established bourgeois parties all over the world. It underscores the fact that the growth of fascism in Europe, Asia, Latin America and the US is the result not of a groundswell of mass support from below, but rather the sponsorship and encouragement of so-called "democratic" governments that are, in fact, controlled top to bottom by corporate oligarchs.

The global promotion of extreme right politics was embodied by the presence of right-wing ideologue Steve Bannon, a former Goldman Sachs vice president and Navy officer, as a guest of honor at a dinner with Jair Bolsonaro Monday night. Bannon has close ties with Bolsonaro's son, Eduardo, who is a member of the Brazilian Parliament and a Latin American representative of the political consortium set up by Bannon, known as the Movement, whose aim is to promote extreme right-wing political parties throughout the world. "Some of the Bolsonaro team on the right see themselves as disciples of the Bannon movement and representatives of Bannon for Brazil and Latin America," one former Trump administration official told McClatchy.

At the press conference, both Jair Bolsonaro and Trump pledged their support to a fascistic litany of "god, family and nation," as Trump put it. Bolsonaro declared, "Brazil and the United States stand side-by-side in their efforts to share liberties and respect to traditional and family lifestyles, respect to God, our creator, against the gender ideology of the politically correct attitudes, and fake news."

Both presidents threatened the use of military force against Venezuela, demonizing President Nicolas Maduro as a socialist dictator. (He heads a capitalist regime, but one whose foreign policy tilts toward China and Russia rather than US imperialism).

Trump reiterated the mantra that "all options are on the table" against Venezuela. Bolsonaro was asked if he would permit US soldiers to use Brazilian soil as a base for military operations against Venezuela. Rather than dismissing that prospect as a violation of both Brazilian and Venezuelan sovereignty, he declined to answer, citing the need for maintaining operational secrecy and the element of surprise.

One of the bilateral agreements that Trump and Bolsonaro signed would allow the United States to use Brazil's Alcantara Aerospace Launch Base for its satellites. Brazil also announced an end to visa

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requirements for US visitors. Both actions provide avenues for the integration of Brazil into Pentagon operations, particularly drone-missile warfare and the deployment of special operations forces.

Before visiting the White House, Bolsonaro made an unannounced visit to the headquarters of the Central Intelligence Agency in Langley, Virginia, an extraordinary move for the president of a country that was subjected to 21 years of unrestrained torture and murder by a military dictatorship installed in a CIA-backed coup.

The dire implications for the working class of the global rise of the far right are indicated by Bolsonaro's glorification of the Brazilian military dictatorship. Trump hailed the "shared values" between his government and that of a former military officer who praises a regime that jailed, tortured and murdered tens of thousands of workers and students. Twenty years ago, Bolsonaro told an interviewer that the Brazilian Congress should be shut down and that the country could be changed only by a civil war that completed "the job that the military regime didn't do, killing 30,000 people."

The capitalist ruling classes are turning once again to dictatorship and fascism in response to the intensification of the world economic crisis, the disintegration of the postwar international order and growth of trade war and geostrategic conflicts, and, above all, the resurgence of the class struggle on a world scale. Petrified by the prospect of mass working-class opposition and the growth of anti-capitalist and socialist sentiment, they are reviving all of the ideological and political filth of the 20th century, including racism, anti-Semitism and the politics of "blood and soil." They are actively recruiting fascists and racists and integrating them into the military/police agencies of the state, to be unleashed against an insurgent working class.

These developments show that the alternatives are not socialism or reformism, but socialism or barbarism—that is, the descent into fascism and world war.

It would be politically criminal to underestimate the danger to the working class represented by the growth of far-right and fascist movements and the elevation of far-right parties and politicians into government—as is already the case in Germany, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Austria, Brazil and other countries. To defeat this danger, it is above all necessary to learn the lessons of history.

The entire history of the 20th century demonstrates that fascism and war cannot be prevented by appeals to the ruling class or "popular front"-style politics, which subordinates the working class to supposed "progressive" sections of the bourgeoisie. The only way to stop fascism and prevent imperialist war is to mobilize the working class on an international scale for the overthrow of capitalism.

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