

Jacobin distorts Morales interview to cover for MAS's turn to right in Bolivia

Andrea Lobo
2 November 2020

Jacobin Magazine, a publication aligned with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)—a faction of the Democratic Party in the United States—dishonestly altered the English translations of interviews with leaders of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) in Bolivia to disguise the militarist and right-wing character of the incoming MAS administration.

Along with other pseudo-left forces internationally, *Jacobin* has sought to present the MAS victory in the October 18 presidential elections as a sign of a “progressive” tide that renders unnecessary any independent political mobilization of workers against the threat of authoritarianism—epitomized internationally by Donald Trump—let alone a struggle against capitalism.

On October 7, *Jacobin* published an interview with MAS leader Evo Morales, who was overthrown as Bolivian president last year in a US-backed military coup that installed a fascist regime led by Jeanine Áñez. While the English version was titled “We’re still fighting the multinationals who drove the coup,” the following day the presumably original interview appeared in Spanish under the much more moderate title “We’ll win.”

The English version entirely omits the first three paragraphs of the interview, in which Morales begins by appealing to the military and offering stability for bourgeois rule. He describes a period of “one coup after the other” since the 1970s in contrast to the 14-years of stability under MAS rule, and then presents himself as “the only civilian president who went to the barracks.” He was conscripted, he explains, and later served in the military police before providing security at the Chiefs of Staff and meeting of three presidents, including the fascist dictator, Gen. Hugo Banzer.

The English editors also decided to remove a passage in which Morales explains that, after his election in 2005 and partial nationalization of Bolivian oil, “We told them ‘if the oil corporations want to stay in Bolivia, it will be as partners, not as bosses or owners of our natural resources...’ Private investments, national or international, are defended by the Constitution, because we are constitutionally a plural economy under the norms of the Bolivian state.”

In context of an MAS campaign that focused on “economic reactivation” and opposed any lockdown to halt the spread of

COVID-19, Morales sought to dress up this position as anti-capitalist, telling *Jacobin*, “The productive apparatus was paralyzed by the quarantine, but also the government itself shut it down because it submitted to the policies of capitalism.” This was creatively translated by *Jacobin* in order to conceal Morales’s “left” promotion of opposition to quarantines, which is centered among big business interests. It refers instead to “the pandemic that... paralyzes production through the quarantine—but also a government that paralyzes all public works and submits them to capitalist policies.”

After pointing to his nationalizations, Morales stated in Spanish, “Look at how important it’s to be a nationalist and anti-imperialist.” This was translated as “imagine the importance of this change.” While used as mere rhetoric by Morales, *Jacobin* has opposed labeling US oppression in Latin America as “imperialist.”

On October 27, the English and Latin American *Jacobin* sites published an interview with Adriana Salvatierra, an MAS leader and president of the Senate until the 2019 coup. The English version is titled “Now we can continue the revolution in Bolivia,” a phrase not to be found in the presumably original Spanish interview.

Salvatierra used a question on the recent Chilean constitutional referendum to reassure right-wing forces—the only question and answer that are entirely left out in the English version. “In Bolivia, they [the right] claimed the political Constitution [approved by the MAS administration] approved abortion... and one would say, ‘hey, the Constitution doesn’t say that anywhere,’” Salvatierra said, adding that the Constitution also “respects private property.”

It’s worth noting that both language versions included a passage where Salvatierra minimizes the threat of paramilitary fascist gangs by indicating, “Even [US Secretary of State] Mike Pompeo recognizes MAS’s victory.” This argument ultimately expresses the position that to forestall fascism, the interests of US imperialism must be met.

Speaking to an outlet they consider a “left” organ of the US political establishment, Morales and Salvatierra both used the opportunity to give reassurances to imperialism in the form of appeals to the Bolivian military and statements supporting private investments and “economic reactivation” amid the

deadly COVID pandemic.

Recognizing the pseudo-left pretensions of his interviewers, Morales noticeably sought to conceal his message somewhat, but not enough in the eyes of the English *Jacobin* editors.

In recent months, Morales has made constant appeals to the same military that overthrew him and massacred those resisting the coup, even suggesting to *El Perfil* in late April that “poor neighborhoods should organize popular kitchens with the Armed Forces, the police and state workers.” Expressing support for a policy of “herd immunity,” the MAS president-elect Luis Arce has plainly told reporters “infection is inevitable.”

Regarding the defense of business interests after the election, Morales welcomed “the willingness of the Confederation of Private Businesspeople [CEPB], a key sector in the economy, to support the efforts of the state to reactivate production and job creation.” The CEPB backed the false claims that the 2019 elections were fraudulent as the pretext for overthrowing Morales, and recognized Áñez once she took power.

The appeals to the Bolivian military carry special significance since they communicate to US imperialism and the Bolivian oligarchy that the MAS will submit to another overthrow should Washington and its stooges in the Bolivian armed forces demand it. Moreover, Morales and the MAS will again seek to demobilize any resistance. Before the 2019 coup, Morales had kept as his military chief General Williams Kaliman, who attended the US Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation—the new School of the Americas—and dealt the main blow in the coup, demanding that Morales resign.

Morales then resigned, leaving his followers behind while they were being massacred, detained and tortured by the military and police. He later acknowledged that the White House, fearful that his death would provoke greater unrest, offered to help him escape Bolivia alive. He instead accepted the offer of Washington’s allies in the Mexican military.

While the crackdown continued in the weeks after the coup, Morales, Salvatierra and other MAS leaders made continuous calls to halt the popular resistance to the coup and opened talks with the fascistic coup regime. Moreover, the Bolivian Workers Central (COB), a political bulwark of the MAS, took part in the coup by also demanding Morales’s resignation and then having a top COB leader join the Áñez regime.

In August, *Jacobin* not only bemoaned the “hardcore MAS supporters” who “regarded this as treachery” by the COB, but insisted that, “The coming developments will test the power of Bolivian movements—and their willingness to stand shoulder to shoulder with Morales and his allies.” It then absurdly glorified the “golden decade” under MAS rule in Bolivia, which remains the poorest country in South America, and claimed that it made “Bolivia a truly independent country.”

These arguments, along with the interviews in Spanish and omissions in English, follow a definite and telling logic. *Jacobin* and the DSA speak for layers of the wealthy middle

class whose stock portfolios and careers have greatly profited from US imperialism’s ransacking of the super-exploited workers and natural resources of oppressed countries.

On the one hand, these forces hope to provide a platform that will facilitate the efforts by the MAS to channel social opposition behind renewed illusions in bourgeois democracy, while US imperialism and its partners in the Bolivian bourgeoisie and military prepare another turn to authoritarianism.

On the other hand, *Jacobin* seeks to keep its English-speaking readers duped by the MAS, including by doctoring the interviews with its leaders. This serves two key purposes. Firstly, it conditions its readers to believe that fighting the threat of authoritarianism requires “standing shoulder to shoulder” with the official capitalist opposition to the “far-right”, i.e. the Democratic Party in the US against Trump. Secondly, it seeks to present opposition from below as illegitimate, thereby eroding support among US workers and youth to the struggles of Bolivian workers against their respective capitalist governments.

The full responses in Spanish, however, also fit the same class logic. The newly launched *Jacobin América Latina* is a platform utilized by these same layers in the US and their partners across the region to cultivate ties with the regional ruling elites. It offers them a platform, among other purposes, to appeal to the faction of US imperialism represented by the Democratic Party. Morales’s former vice-president Álvaro García Linera and numerous other bourgeois politicians belong to the editorial staff of the Spanish-language publication.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact