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Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil

Gripezinha – the little flu: neofascist Bolsonaro in the face of the pandemic

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One of the most disturbing phenomena of recent years is the spectacular rise, worldwide, of far right-wing, authoritarian and reactionary governments, in some cases with neo-fascist traits: Shinzo Abe (Japan), Modi (India), Trump (USA), Orban (Hungary) and Bolsonaro (Brazil) are the best known examples. It is not surprising that several of them reacted absurdly to the coronavirus pandemic, dramatically denying or underestimating the danger. This was the case of Trump in the first weeks, and of his English disciple, Boris Johnson, who even proposed to let the whole population become infected with the virus, in order for “herd immunity” to take effect in the entire nation – of course, at the cost of a few hundred thousand deaths. But in the face of the crisis, both had to retreat and in the case of Boris Johnson, he became seriously ill himself.

The case of Brazil is therefore special, because Bolsonaro, the head of the Government, persists in his attitude of denial, characterizing the coronavirus as a “little flu”: a definition that deserves to be included in the annals, not of medicine, but of political madness. But this madness has its logic, which is the logic of neofascism.

Neofascism is not a repetition of fascism in the 1930s: it is a new phenomenon, with characteristics of the 21st century. For example, it does not take the form of a police dictatorship, but respects some democratic forms: elections, party pluralism, freedom of the press, existence of a Parliament, etc. Naturally, it tries, as far as possible, to limit these democratic freedoms as much as it is able with authoritarian and repressive measures. Nor does it rely on armed shock troops, such as the German SS or the Italian Fascists.

This is also true for Bolsonaro: he is neither Hitler nor Mussolini, and he does not even have as his reference point the Brazilian version of fascism in the 1930s, PIÃ-nio Salgado’s integralism. While classic fascism defended massive State intervention in the economy, Bolsonaro’s neo-fascism is fully identified with neoliberalism, and aims to impose a socioeconomic policy favorable to the oligarchy, without any of the “social” pretensions of ancient fascism.

One of the results of this fundamentalist version of neoliberalism is the dismantling of the Brazilian public health service (SUS), which was already quite weakened by the policies of previous governments. In these conditions, the health crisis resulting from the coronavirus could have tragic consequences for the poorest sections of the population.

Another characteristic of Brazilian neo-fascism is that, despite its ultranationalist and patriotic rhetoric, it is completely subordinate to American imperialism, from an economic, diplomatic, political and military point of view. This also manifested itself in the reaction to the coronavirus, when Bolsonaro and his ministers were seen to imitate Donald Trump, blaming the Chinese for the epidemic. What Bolsonaro has in common with classical fascism is authoritarianism, a preference for dictatorial forms of government, the cult of the Chief (“Myth”) Saviour of the nation, hatred of the left and the workers’ movement. But he is unable to organize a mass party or uniform shock troops. Nor is he able, for the time being, to establish a fascist dictatorship, a totalitarian state, closing Parliament and putting unions and opposition parties outside the law.

Bolsonaro’s authoritarianism is manifested in his “way of dealing” with the epidemic, trying to impose, against the Assembly, against state governments, and against his own ministers, a blind policy of refusing the minimum sanitary measures, indispensable to try to limit the dramatic consequences of the crisis (lockdown, etc.). His attitude also has traces of social-Darwinism (typical of fascism): the survival of the strongest. If thousands of vulnerable people – elderly people with weak health conditions – die, it is the price to pay: “Brazil cannot stop!”

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A specific aspect of Bolsonarist neo-fascism is obscurantism, contempt for science, in alliance with its unconditional supporters, the most backward sectors of Evangelical neo-Pentecostalism. This attitude, worthy of Flat Earth Theory, has no equivalent in other authoritarian regimes, even those whose ideology is religious fundamentalism (ISIS!). Max Weber distinguished religion, based on ethical principles, and magic, the belief in the priest's supernatural powers. In the case of Bolsonaro and his neo-Pentecostal pastors friends (Silas Malafaia, Edir Macedo, etc.) it is really about magic or superstition: stopping the Pandemic with "prayers" and "fasts".

Although Bolsonaro has not been able to impose his lethal program as a whole, a part of it – for example, an easing of restrictions – may impose itself, through the President's unpredictable negotiations with his military or civilian ministers.

Despite the delusional behavior of the sinister character currently installed in the Palácio da Alvorada (Presidential Palace), and the threat he poses to public health, a significant portion of the Brazilian population still supports him, to a greater or lesser extent. According to recent polls, 17% of voters who voted for him regretted their vote; and a majority of the population is opposed to him being removed from his role.

The struggle of the left and the Brazilian popular forces against neo-fascism is still in its infancy; it will take more than a few nice pot protests to defeat this teratological political formation. Okay, sooner or later the Brazilian people will break free from this neo-fascist nightmare. But what will be the price to pay until then?

On April 2nd Bolsonaro made a significant statement: "70% of the population will be contaminated by Covid-19, this is inevitable". Of course, following the logic of "herd immunity" (initially proposed by Trump and Boris Johnson, later abandoned), this could perhaps happen. But it would only be "inevitable" if Bolsonaro managed to impose his policy of refusing containment measures: "Brazil cannot stop".

What would be the consequences? The death rate of Covid 19 in Brazil is currently 7% of those infected. A small arithmetic calculation would lead to the following conclusion: 1) If 70% of the Brazilian population were contaminated, it would be 140 million people. 2) 7% of mortality of 140 million is about 10 million. 3) If Bolsonaro managed to impose his policy, the result would be 10 million Brazilians dead.

This is called, in the language of international law, genocide. For an equivalent crime, several Nazi dignitaries were sentenced to hang by the Nuremberg Tribunal.

Source [Global Ecosocialist Network](https://www.ecosocialistnetwork.com/21/gripezinha-the-little-flu-neofascist-bolsonaro-in-the-face-of-the-pandemic/)./21/gripezinha-the-little-flu-neofascist-bolsonaro-in-the-face-of-the-pandemic/

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